Continuation of Fee-Free TAFE



The AEU has welcomed the Albanese Government's announcement to establish Fee-Free TAFE as an enduring feature of the national vocational education and training system, funding 100,000 Fee-Free TAFE places a year from 2027.

AEU President Correna Haythorpe said it was a decision that benefited TAFE students, teachers and the broader economy.

"Fee-Free TAFE has been life changing for students, with increased access for a range of people, especially those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances, and regional and remote areas," she said.

"This unprecedented access to TAFE has opened doors for a new generation of students who previously would not have been able to undertake vocational education.

"For TAFE teachers, Fee-Free TAFE has brought certainty with respect to the courses on offer."

Ms Haythorpe said locking in the architecture for Fee-Free TAFE was critically important, so that future governments could not take TAFE backwards, which had been seen in the past when governments failed to support TAFE.

"There is, however, still a TAFE teaching workforce piece that needs to be undertaken to attract and retain teachers with the skills and knowledge needed for the future," she said.

"Additionally, these teachers must be supported with appropriate teaching and learning facilities with investment in capital infrastructure and state of the art equipment.

"We look forward to continuing to work with the Albanese Government through their tripartite approach."

Ms Haythorpe also welcomed the Albanese Government's announcement of a further 20 per cent reduction of student loan debt for those who had studied at university or through vocational education.

"This change to student debt will be of significant benefit to not only students currently undertaking their studies, but also for those newly graduated teachers to reduce their debt and provide cost of living relief," she said.

“This announcement will not only help those who have previously studied and accrued debt, it will also make further education, whether at TAFE or university, more accessible in the future and that will produce dividends in attracting and retaining the teachers of the future.”

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has also welcomed the announcement.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O’Brien said: “From raising wages to lowering costs on household bills and making Fee-Free TAFE permanent, unions welcome the Albanese Government’s laser focus on cost-of-living relief for working people.

“Fee-Free TAFE is making education more affordable and accessible, easing pressure on household budgets, and ensuring more young people have the financial freedom to pursue their dream careers.

“Working people want stability to earn a decent living. Under the Coalition, TAFE was cut to the bone and now they are signalling more spending cuts if they win the next election. Australians just can’t trust the Coalition with TAFE.”

Since its launch in January 2023, over 508,000 Australians have enrolled in
Fee-Free TAFE in courses across essential sectors such as care, digital and tech, construction and early childhood education.

The announcement builds on the Albanese Government’s $30 billion investment over five years through the National Skills Agreement.

The focus on cost-of-living relief with vocational education contrasts with the previous government’s funding cuts to TAFE and shadow treasurer Angus Taylor’s current pledge to cut government spending if they win the next election.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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