

## The Future of TAFE: Rod Brooks Memorial Forum

*The political climate underwent what appeared to be a massive change at the last election.*

*What plans has the Rudd Labor Government for TAFE?*

*What has changed in attitudes to education and training?*

*How will the models of funding for schools and TAFE be affected by the Education Revolution?*

*How will attitudes to the teaching profession be affected by the Education Revolution?*

*How will TAFE's Outreach Programs and community access to TAFE be affected?*

### **TAFE: Best way to deliver skills**

*Australian Education Union 12 Oct 2008*

The AEU welcomes the Rudd Government's announcement of \$187 million to create 56,000 new training places.

The nation's economic security and prosperity depends on a solid skills base. The AEU is keen to work with the Government to ensure that this additional funding is well targeted to genuine areas of skills shortage.

The national TAFE system provides the necessary infrastructure and quality of provision to ensure the best targeted and most prudent use of government money. It is in a position to respond swiftly and appropriately to the Government's initiative.

Planned provision through guaranteed funding for TAFE remains the key to addressing the skills shortage.

### **TAFE: Teachers lobby**

Last month NSW TAFE Teachers spent three days lobbying members of parliament in Canberra this week, to challenge the Rudd Government's support for increased competition in the vocational, education and training sector.

"Current policy directions are aimed at increased marketisation of vocational education and training," said Linda Simon, Secretary of the TAFE Teachers Association. "We do not believe that this is in the best interest of the people of Australia, nor will it bring about the sort of outcomes the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister say they want."

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes enrol over 1.4 million students and are a vital part of the public education system. The AEU represents almost 175,000 education staff including those employed in 68 TAFE Institutes around Australia.

### **TAFE: Main vocational provider**

"TAFE is the main provider of vocational education and training in this country, but TAFE's ability to deliver the range of courses required due to skill shortages in a number of occupational areas and to meet the needs of specific groups including the unemployed and those in regional and rural communities, will be seriously undermined if continued funding to TAFE is cut. If TAFE has to focus on competing for its funds with all private providers, it will no longer be able to plan, retain its qualified tenured teachers nor to deliver a wide range of courses". This is the message we have taken to Federal Parliament. We urge MPs to ask the Prime Minister to provide the evidence that shows that a fully competitive training market will deliver the outcome Australia needs. We don't believe the evidence is there. This should cause serious concern for the Prime Minister and to the government."

"TAFE is a wonderful public education provider that builds career opportunities for some 1.5 million students a year. TAFE is too important to lose," said Ms Simon.

### **Access & equity under Rudd**

Linda Simon  
Federal President of the TAFE Division of the AEU

... What is also apparent across the

country is that social inclusion is being sacrificed for training in cost efficient areas, and for training in those areas where governments can make a 'quick buck'.

TAFE teachers in language, literacy and numeracy areas are being told that if they cannot make a profit their courses will be cut.

Maybe the contradictions are not apparent to governments, but they certainly are to us. Governments tell us that we have a critical skills shortage. Employer groups say it is having dire consequences for business. The Federal Government says we must target the unemployed and under-employed. And guess what skills many of these people will require in order to comfortably fill gaps in the labour market — language, literacy and numeracy!

It is important that the impact of Government policy on social inclusion is drawn to the attention of Members of Parliament now.

The AEU and its members have been meeting with Federal MPs. In the day-to-day life in Canberra, many are not aware of these changes taking place. Education policy is tightly controlled by the Minister's and Prime Minister's offices and the education bureaucracy. It is up to us, once again, to create a climate in which the Federal Government will need to be clear about the intent of its policies, and allow for debate on their consequences. Most MPs believe their party went to the elections with policies that supported TAFE, not ones that would dismantle it.

In creating this debate, there is no issue

that will cause more concern in the community than the lack of funding and support for those who most need it. If the Prime Minister claims that social inclusion is an important issue for him, and he has created this portfolio, then we must campaign to highlight the contradictions between the intent and the action.

We must campaign to ensure that TAFE is funded to continue to deliver these programs and to meet its commitments to second chance and further education.

*From Australian TAFE Teacher Winter 2008*

**TAFE: Huge fee increases**

*... ever-growing concern is of course the increase in individual, full fee paying students.*

Michaela Kronemann

Access and affordability have always been underlying principles for TAFE. Yet the continued and deliberate under-resourcing of TAFE systems by governments has led to increased reliance in recent years on

concessions to disadvantaged students than other states.

In NSW, tuition fees are determined by the level of qualification being undertaken, irrespective of the hours of study involved or whether the student is fulltime or part-time. In effect, this means that the NSW TAFE fee structure favours fulltime students. However, three quarters of TAFE students are employed prior to commencing their training and 89 per cent of TAFE students study on a part-time basis. Other TAFE systems across Australia continue to charge fees based essentially on the number of hours of study undertaken, with a maximum fee cap to protect students enrolled in many hours. In South Australia, the fees also vary by field of study.

In general, the cost of Advanced Diploma and Diploma courses is too high in NSW. With few exceptions, NSW students are paying several hundred dollars more than they would in other states even when studying fulltime. For higher level courses undertaken over two or more years, the

To put it in dollar terms, the federal government spends \$1,051 per public school student compared to \$4,515 per private school student. (Source: Productivity Commission Report)

The critical under-funding of our nation's public schools was highlighted in a recent OECD report that ranked Australia second last (26/27) out of developed nations in terms of direct public spending on public institutions.

**What is Needed?**

Independent research commissioned by the federal and state education ministers shows that an extra \$2.9 billion a year is needed for our public schools to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education.

Extra investment is required for our two million children educated in Australia's public schools to help:

Reduce class sizes: Australia has large primary class sizes compared to most OECD countries. With extra investment we can ensure class sizes go down.

Provide greater individual attention for students who need it: Research completed for the Federal Government warned of the need for a major investment in literacy and numeracy programs and specialist teachers to meet the needs of students who are struggling. We need to ensure the children that need extra help get it.

Access to modern learning environments and equipment: Every Australian child deserves to be taught in a school with modern buildings, learning spaces, music, art and sports facilities. A recent independent report has recommended an additional \$23 billion investment over the next 12 years to improve buildings and facilities in public schools.

| FULL TIME ADVANCED DIPLOMA COURSES (540 hours) |       |                  |                              |       |         |       |
|--|-------|------------------|------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| NSW  | VIC   | QLD              | SA                           | TAS   | CDU     | CIT   |
| \$1,420  | \$740 | \$718<br>(\$567) | \$211-\$1188<br>(\$351-1980) | \$945 | \$1,026 | \$784 |

both fee for service activity and increased fees and charges imposed on students.

Fees have increased in almost every system, including a further 10 per cent increase in CIT fees in 2008 as part of a planned 30 per cent increase. However the changes to the fee structure in NSW have meant that the vast majority of fee-paying students in that state currently face high and inequitable costs relative to other states. The New South Wales Teachers Federation is currently campaigning on the issue of student fees and the burden faced by NSW students.

In 2004, NSW introduced a new tuition fee structure which increased the cost to students by up to 226.9 per cent. Between 2002 and 2006, revenue from student fees and charges in NSW grew at a faster rate than any other system, an increase of 51 per cent compared to a national average of 25.2 per cent. Fees increased another 9 per cent this year, and a \$50 fee was introduced for government benefit recipients for each course, when the first course had previously been free.

Historically, NSW has apparently offered more generous fee exemptions and

costs in NSW are very substantially higher since a NSW student has to pay the full fee each year, irrespective of how many hours they study. Some 63 per cent of students studying at Diploma level and above are part-time. Where students are enrolled for a large number of hours in a year, the fee cap limits the fee that will be charged in other states.

*From Australian TAFE Teacher Winter 2008*

**Schools Funding**

In Australia the federal government shares responsibility with state and territory governments for funding schools. Money is provided for both the ongoing operations of schools and for the capital works (new buildings and equipment) that schools need.

Unfortunately at a federal government level there has been a dramatic decrease in the share of funding going to public schools.

Public schools teach almost 70 per cent of students but they receive only about a third of the money allocated by the federal government on schools.

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