

NSW Teachers Federation Media Release

TURNBULL'S TAFE TAKEOVER BAD FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING AND OUR KIDS.

4 February 2016

Our TAFE system has been at risk ever since Federal and State Governments began looking for ways to reduce government funding and outsourcing vocational education to the private sector, a move which has been a total disaster.

Now reports of a proposed Federal Government takeover of the TAFE sector will spell the end of an outstanding system that successfully prepares young people for taking their next important steps into the workforce.

“If the partial privatisation of Vocational Education and Training has been a failure, why on earth does the Turnbull Government think the full privatisation of TAFE would fix the problem,” said NSW Teachers Federation President Maurie Mulheron.

“It is very clear that privatisation of vocational education and training simply has not worked.

“School education and tertiary education receive public funding but Government bean counters have made a mess of the VET system by cost shifting to students through favouring private providers charging ridiculously high fees,” Mr Mulheron said.

He said the Federal Government should be taking steps to fix the VET FEE-HELP mess and give TAFE the funding it needs to get on with the job.

“The scale of the robbing by private providers has been breathtaking with billions of dollars being wasted and yet Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Vocational Training Minister Luke Hartsuyker think the answer is more of the same.”

“What the Government should be doing is guaranteeing funding for TAFE and capping the amount of money available for private providers.”

Mr Mulheron said the NSW Government should resist further changes to our vocational training system and instead start working towards repairing the damage that has already been done.

“So far the NSW TAFE system has seen 4,600 teaching and support positions lost and that can only mean one thing -- fewer courses being run, making it harder for young people to get the trade and vocational training they desperately need,” he said.

“Face to face course time for electrical trades and plumbing have been cut by half and that can’t be a good thing for properly skilling our current crop of apprentices.”

Under the NSW Government’s “Smart and Skilled” changes, fees have gone through the roof with costs for Early Childhood courses, for example, jumping from \$419 per annum in 2014 to \$6,500 a year in 2015.

“How can Premier Mike Baird begin to justify fee increases like that?”

“We are concerned that these proposals being outlined by the Federal Government will lead to even higher fees for students, pushing them further into debt under the VET FEE-HELP loans system,” Mr Mulheron said.

“If we are to maintain a viable vocational training system, we need greater support for the outstanding work being done in NSW TAFE,” he said.

“To do otherwise risks reducing the standards of vocational training being delivered and our young people certainly don’t deserve that.”