

Transcript of Federation Update from 12 October 2016

Between October 10 and October 21, all TAFE members are being asked to vote YES in support of a protected industrial action as part of ongoing salaries negotiations with TAFE NSW.

TAFE teachers have [not received a salary increase since the beginning of January, 2015](#), as TAFE NSW has refused to negotiate an acceptable [Enterprise Agreement](#). Earlier in 2016 Federation was forced to campaign against efforts to ram through an unfavourable [Agreement](#). That [campaign](#) was successful, and the [proposed Agreement](#) was [overwhelmingly](#) rejected. With continued delays in any further negotiations, Federation is now moving to take industrial action [in support of an acceptable Enterprise Agreement that provides a 2.5% per annum salary increase, available to all other NSW public sector employees, without the loss of conditions](#). This ballot is a mandated part of that process.

In 2011, the [NSW Coalition](#) government transferred TAFE out of the jurisdiction of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission, and instead placed it under the auspices of the Federal Fair Work Commission. As such, the rules for industrial action for TAFE teachers follow different rules to those for school teachers and other groups of Federation Members.

Under Fair Work rules, In order for industrial action to be considered legal, it must be approved by a ballot of all relevant members. 50%+1 of the membership must participate in the ballot, and of those who participate, 50%+1 must vote in favour. If that happens, TAFE members can take [industrial](#) action, but failure to get enough people participating in the ballot means it immediately fails, and no [industrial](#) action is permitted.

TAFE members have received a number of emails outlining the process and the importance of participation in this ballot, but we need every Federation activist to encourage TAFE members to vote – if you know a TAFE teacher, check if they're a member, and encourage them to get involved in this protected action ballot.

More information can be found on Federation's website at www.nswtf.org.au/TAFEPAB

In other news, Privatisation has become the theme of the Baird government, and no element of public service has been spared, including education, where the government has started to dismantle services on the periphery of public education.

In May of 2016, the government announced their intention to eradicate 138 of 158 qualified teacher positions in NSW gaols, to be replaced by an as yet undecided third party contractor, which removes the need for any educational qualifications to engage and teach in some of the most difficult adult learning environments around. This change was implemented without consultation, and as it did not require a change any legislation, without any debate in parliament.

As part of the ongoing campaign against this change, a petition was organised to force the matter to be debated in NSW parliament. Under the rules of NSW parliament, a petition that receives over 10,000 manual signatures must be acknowledged and scheduled for discussion in the house.

The petition against privatising Gaol education quickly attracted over 14,000 signatures, and on Friday, October 7, Federation officers and activists handed the signed petition over to Labor MP Guy Zangari to be tabled for debate in NSW parliament.

NSWTF CORRECTIVE SERVICES TEACHERS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, STEWART BURKITT:

“What we're calling for is an authentic genuine review into education provision in NSW jails. We haven't had that – we've had KPMG forming a conclusion and then working backwards to make that work. We've got people who are not adult education professionals involved in this. We, as the teaching [profession], have been asking to be involved in this for about two years. It's never been accepted – we've been sidelined all the way through and we're calling now for an authentic review with the involvement of the professionals, that's professional, experienced teachers, not inexperienced lower-qualified trainers.”

SHADOW MINISTER FOR CORRECTIONS AND MP FOR FAIRFIELD, GUY ZANGARI:

“Well, the people have spoken, 14,000 people have actually signed this petition and I have the honour and the privilege to present this to parliament. And to have this debate to have the government come out and say to the community why they are doing this, why are they privatising education in prisons? The secret selloff continues under Mike Baird. This is just another example. When you look long-term this is going to impact on the community when inmates are released back into the community and they don't have the necessary skills – basic literacy and numeracy – to get out and get a job and be positive. When inmates are going back into the community they've got to have these skills. Unfortunately what's going to occur is with these private providers they'll simply be ticking off competencies, taking the money and running. And this is a dark day for education in prisons in NSW. We are here, standing side-by-side with the community to present 14,000 signatures to the Table Office today.”

Another step in the government's relentless march towards privatisation is the recent announcement of plans to privatise 8 of the states 11 sport and rec centres, which feature prominently as the venues for many school camps, physical activity programs and other extra-curricular and community activities. Here's Deputy President, Gary Zadkovich.

NSWTF DEPUTY PRESIDENT, GARY ZADKOVICH:

“The Federation is opposing moves by the NSW government to privatise sport and recreation centres. These centres have provided many high-quality programs for our students for many decades. This quality will be at risk if the government hands over these centres to private providers. We've seen the disastrous effects of privatisation in TAFE, with private companies making a profit ahead of the quality of education and training. We do not want to see a repeat of the rorts and scandals of the VET sector. Nor do we want to see Work, Health and Safety standards in sport and recreation centres put at risk by profit-driven cost-cutting. Federation believes governments must retain responsibility for providing quality public services for the citizens of our state. To help us keep these centres in public ownership please go to the Federation website to send a protest letter to the government. You can also download a copy of the petition organised by our union colleagues in the Public Service Association and collect signatures for presentation to state parliament. If the government continues with its privatisation plan Federation will inform parents and carers in all public schools of our concerns and continue to campaign on this issue.”

Deputy President, Gary Zadkovich there. Further information about this issue, and the petition against privatisation of Sport & Rec centres can be found on Federation's website at nswtf.org.au/PSRC

Finally, in recent weeks the federal government have taken steps to end the VET-FEE HELP loans system that has been at the heart of the scandals and prosecutions that have rocked the private vocational education sector. Under this scheme, private providers have secured hundreds of millions in loans, with many providers being prosecuted by the ACCC for allegedly corrupt recruitment practices, and for taking money for courses and services that providers could not adequately deliver. The national debt from this scheme was almost three billion dollars in 2015 alone.

In early October the federal education minister, Simon Birmingham, announced an end to the flawed loans scheme, with a new system to replace it in 2017. Shortly after the announcement, and in almost prophetic fashion, came news of the collapse Australian Institute of Professional Education. APIE, which had previously been one of the largest private VET providers in the country, reportedly had more than sixteen thousand students under the VET fee loan scheme with court documents showing a graduation rate of only 1.3%. This leaves thousands of students with large debts and no qualifications, with the public purse likely to suffer the cost of thousands of unpaid loans.

In response to the end of the VET FEE Help scheme, the AEU and the Teachers Federation have renewed calls for a return to funding TAFE as the primary provider of vocational education. Guaranteeing that seventy percent of public funding goes to TAFE, and that no more than thirty per cent of public funding to be made available to private providers.

Minister Birmingham has already acknowledged the quality and value for money of courses provided by TAFE in his decision to excuse TAFE from the registration processes that private providers will be subject to.

While we wait for full details of the new loans scheme, and to see whether the government will provide greater funding security to TAFE, it has been announced that funding under the 2017 scheme will only be available to a limited number of courses. Of the over 800 courses currently open to publicly funded loans, only 347 are expected to be eligible under the new scheme, with the government establishing a list of what they describe as “worthwhile and value for money courses at quality training providers”, with business related courses, science, engineering and information technology courses featuring prominently on the list of those deemed ‘worthwhile.

Upcoming dates

Federation council next meet on Saturday, October 22nd, with further information and action on these issues to be discussed.

Also, coming up on October 28 World Teachers Day in Australia. World teachers day is recognised internationally on October 5th, however Australia is one of many countries for whom that date conflicts with school breaks or other events, and so October 28 is the day celebrated. Federation will have more information about World Teachers Day in Australia available, and invite contributions from all members who acknowledge World Teachers Day in their school. If you're school holds an event in celebration of teachers on October 28, email details to journal@nswtf.org.au with the subject 'World Teachers Day.'