

**TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AMENDMENT (TAFE FUNDING GUARANTEE) BILL
2016**

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Bill introduced on motion by Mr Luke Foley, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn—Leader of the Opposition) [10.21 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Technical and Further Education Amendment (TAFE Funding Guarantee) Bill 2016. This bill represents the very best of Labor values and will ensure the future health of TAFE in New South Wales. Whilst there is a place for the private sector to provide vocational education and training, it is the role of government to ensure there is a strong, affordable and accessible public education system. This bill will cap contestable public funding for private education providers at a maximum of 30 per cent. This cap will guarantee that TAFE, the public provider, receives a guaranteed minimum of 70 per cent of public funding, and potentially more. This will ensure the future of TAFE in this State by providing certainty of funding to students and staff. I turn now to the provisions of the bill.

Clause 3 of the bill inserts in the principal Act, the Technical and Further Education Commission Act 1990, a TAFE funding guarantee. That will deliver not only the guaranteed minimum 70 per cent funding for vocational education and training to be allocated to the TAFE Commission, but also it will ensure that the TAFE Commission receives in each of its regions not less than 70 per cent of the funding allocated to vocational education and training courses. The current Government has overseen the biggest cut to TAFE funding in TAFE's history. Since this Government came to office, \$1.7 billion has been ripped away from education and training. Yet the Government maintains the fiction that it "believes in TAFE". Why then has this Government sacked thousands of TAFE teachers and support staff since it came to government? Those are not the actions of a government that believes in TAFE.

Mr Michael Johnsen: It's all about the students.

Mr LUKE FOLEY: I note the interjection of the member opposite. I will get to students in a minute. Under this Government the number of TAFE courses has been cut and contact hours have been slashed. There is not much in that for the students.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Upper Hunter will cease interjecting.

Mr LUKE FOLEY: If this Government truly believes in our TAFE system why would it cut the number of courses offered to students? If this Government truly believes in the transformative power of TAFE why would it decrease the number of contact hours? Add course fee increases of up to \$4,000 a year and a very different picture to that of the Government's rhetoric emerges. Let us be clear, there are now 80,000 fewer students enrolled in TAFE today than there were in 2012. There are now 11,500 fewer students with a disability enrolled in TAFE than in 2012.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Upper Hunter will come to order. There will be no debate across the Chamber. The Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence.

Mr LUKE FOLEY: Members opposite laugh when I make the point that there are 11,500 fewer students with a disability enrolled in TAFE today than in 2012. We on this side of the House see that

as no laughing matter. It is impossible for this Government to argue that its actions have delivered a stronger TAFE system. At a time when we should be encouraging people to seek further education to upskill our workforce, the Government has tilted policy in the opposite direction. It does not make sense to make it more expensive for workers to further their education and to upgrade their skills. It does not make sense to cut funding, resources, courses and contact hours.

The real agenda of this Government lies, as ever, in its ideology. They do not like TAFE; they do not believe in it. As ever they believe government is always the problem and never the solution. The end result of this ideology being imposed on our vocational education and training sector in New South Wales will inevitably be the destruction of one of this State's great institutions—TAFE itself. That is why Labor proudly brings forward this bill, to save TAFE from the conservatives. We know that currently the Government has on its books a plan for a fire sale of campuses in places like Chullora, Epping, Belrose, Scone, Dapto, Vincentia, Maclean, Murwillumbah Corowa, Narrandera and Grenfell.

Mr Michael Johnsen: Wrong, wrong, wrong.

Mr LUKE FOLEY: The member opposite interjects. I would like him to name one of those campuses I have just named that the Government is not proposing to sell—just one.

The SPEAKER: Order! Interjections will not be tolerated. I will place the member for Upper Hunter on a call to order if he continues to interject.

Mr LUKE FOLEY: At a time when our economy is changing, when it is moving away from natural resources to a services-based economy, we of course need skilled workers. So why is the Government committed to ripping away such a vital institution that gives hundreds of thousands of people the skills for employment in the new economy? Why? Once again it comes back to the ideology. They just do not like public provision; they do not believe in it. They always believe the solution lies in the invisible hand of the market rather than in any role for the State. This is an ideological attack on one of the great institutions in New South Wales.

The Government wants to continue to take away money from TAFE and give more funds to private providers. But we have seen some private providers luring students to undertake courses they do not need with the promise of free iPads and computers. That behaviour has left students and the Government carrying unnecessary debt while some private providers continue to make large profits. This week we have seen a major private training provider, Australian Careers Network, file for voluntary administration and just last week Evocca College announced the closure of seven of its campuses in our State. This follows the collapse of Aspire College of Education. So why does the Government continue to prioritise private providers above a well-established and proven TAFE model?

It is explicable only by reference to the Government's ideological hatred of the public provision of vocational education. The Labor Party believes in a strong TAFE sector that continues to play a vital role in training and upskilling our workforce. We are giving the Government an opportunity to show that it has some belief in TAFE. The Government can repent by voting for this bill. Labor believes that, in order to save TAFE from the conservatives, the introduction of a TAFE funding guarantee is necessary—that is, a guaranteed minimum of 70 per cent funding for vocational education and training to be provided to one of this State's great institutions, the TAFE Commission. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Victor Dominello and set down as an order of the day for a future day.