



# NSW TEACHERS FEDERATION

TEACHERS FEDERATION HOUSE Locked Bag 3010 Darlinghurst NSW 1300

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Please address all correspondence to  
THE GENERAL SECRETARY

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In reply please quote: TA/244/PDG/FN-745

*Tendered by Lenore Hankinson  
NSW Teachers Federation  
20 January 2012*

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli, MP  
Minister for Education  
Level 34 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Fax: (02) 9228 5492

Dear Minister

## RE: INVEST IN TAFE FOR A BETTER STATE – TEACHERS, SKILLS AND PROSPERITY

Over many years the Federation has raised concerns around the impact of TAFE, and during the recent NSW State Election welcomed the pledges made by Coalition MPs and candidates committing to support the TAFE 5 Point Plan for a Better State which included:

1. Invest in services - Government must guarantee TAFE funding.
2. Look after public assets - Ensure that TAFE jobs and courses are not contracted out to the private sector.
3. Plan long-term - Invest in infrastructure for TAFE that ensures a skilled workforce.
4. Back our workers - Increase permanent teaching positions and invest in teacher training.
5. Govern for the common good - Ensure that everyone in NSW has affordable access to a TAFE education.

In particular, the pledges of support by NSW Nationals are consistent with your TAFE (Freezing of Fees) Bill 2007 and your community web campaign to ensure that the public provider remained affordable and accessible. In speaking to the Bill in the NSW Parliament during December 2007 Andrew Stoner stated:

*"...I attended public schools all my life, primary and high school. I accessed university opportunities when fees were not applicable. I am very grateful to the system that gave me that opportunity. But the Treasurer and the economic rationalists within the Department of Education and Training have an agenda to implement a full fee for service for regime, a users pay regime, in TAFE. That would be dreadful for those students coming from low income families or from disadvantaged backgrounds."*

Furthermore, during debate on the Bill in 2008 he stated:

*"Looking at the total of the Government's policies in relation to TAFE there have been significant cutbacks in funding; there has been a downgrading of teacher qualifications for teachers, which will affect educational results, and in a competitive environment that is a*

*dreadful thing; there has also been a cost-cutting restructure: and there has been, the subject of this bill, an increase in fees."*

The forthcoming state budget provides an opportunity for the O'Farrell Government to direct additional funding to the TAFE system to redress many of the issues outlined by Mr Stoner, and which would also resonate with the TAFE 5 Point Plan. The Federation, particularly its members in TAFE, would welcome this.

I also take this opportunity to draw to your attention the attached resolution carried by the June Council of the NSW Teachers Federation decision concerning the Federal Budget, and the recent reports *Skills for prosperity* from Skills Australia and the *Vocational Education and Training Workforce* by the Productivity Commission. The Federation is communicating its concerns as well to the Federal Minister.

The Federation rejects that the solution to underfunding as proposed by Skills Australia is for Certificate IV and above courses to be co-funded "between individuals and governments through an income-contingent loan", and for further market driven reforms and changes to TAFE governance arrangements.

The Federation notes with concerns comments attributed to Chris Eccles in the Sydney Morning Herald (11/6/11) regarding the introduction of income contingent loans, further market driven reform and privatisation of TAFE. Sadly, in states where such changes are introduced there has been a hike in TAFE course fees, a decline in affordability and in students enrolments. Such changes must be rejected.

The Federation appreciates the expressions of support which you made as Opposition Spokesperson concerning TAFE and looks forward to continuing to work with you around these matters. For further information concerning these matters contact Peter de Graaff, Assistant General Secretary Post School Education on 0419697199.

Yours sincerely



per Jenny Diamond  
General Secretary

Attach.

Bcc Bob Lipscombe  
TAFE Organisers  
Josie Keeley  
Rob Long  
Pat Forward (AEU)  
John Kaye

## INVEST IN TAFE FOR A BETTER STATE – TEACHERS, SKILLS AND PROSPERITY

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Recent reports by both Skills Australia and the Productivity Commission depict the public VET sector as a system in crisis, yet if there is such a crisis, it continues to be around the failure of governments to adequately invest in TAFE.

The 2011 Federal Budget resulted in little extra funding for TAFE, with much of the of the government's claimed \$3 billion skills budget coming from existing programs that have been rebadged, redirected or were never implemented. The modest \$172.8 million Quality Skills Incentive which was announced in the 2010 federal budget, and which would have largely gone to initiatives to improve teaching and learning in TAFE institutes, was withdrawn without a cent having been spent.

The continuing under-funding of TAFE by successive governments driven by the ideology of privatisation and market reform is unsatisfactory. No other education sector has sustained such long term underinvestment as TAFE. In spite of privatisation and market ideology, the 60 TAFE Institutes across Australia deliver 85 per cent of government funded training. The crisis in funding within the public VET sector has resulted from government spending per hour on public vocational education and training falling by 12 per cent since 2003 and 22 per cent since 1997. The recommendation by Skills Australia for governments to invest an accumulating \$12 billion to 2020 in the VET sector, highlights and supports, similar funding claims made by teacher unions of the amounts required to increase the participation targets set by COAG. Funding increases to TAFE must not be contingent upon further market driven reforms and changes to governance arrangements.

The Federation rejects that the solution to underfunding is recommendations for Certificate IV and above courses to be co-funded "between individuals and governments through an income-contingent loan".

Significant errors contained in the recently released report by the Productivity Commission on the *Vocational Education and Training Workforce* are of deep concern to Council. The Federation condemns the damaging Productivity Commission claim that up to 40 per cent of trainers and assessors in the TAFE sector do not even have the Certificate IV. The Productivity Commission chose to ignore data derived from a DEEWR survey in 2010 which estimated that 90 per cent of trainers and assessors in TAFE held teaching qualifications. The AEU's 2010 survey of 2,800 of its TAFE teaching members showed that 99 per cent held teaching qualifications at or higher than a CIV TAA (78 per cent held teaching qualifications higher than a CIV).

It is regrettable, that although the Productivity Commission acknowledged that the Certificate IV was a high risk qualification, it recommended that this continue to be the entry level qualification for the VET sector. In response to calls from the profession for teachers in the VET sector to have higher qualifications than the Certificate IV, the Commission responded by claiming that it was "unable to find robust quantitative evidence that teaching qualifications have much impact on the quality of student outcomes." Moreover it was claimed that "students are reasonable judges of teaching quality" so student satisfaction surveys for the VET sector provide a good "indication about the quality of teaching delivered." In regard to suggestions that those delivering the Certificate IV TAA to others should hold at least a Diploma TAA, the Commission argues "that this initiative would represent an overly costly solution" and that "lower cost solutions should be explored" such as "the acquisition of appropriate Skill Sets, or the setting of appropriate teaching experience requirements, that would create lesser barriers to entry into this occupation."

It is abhorrent to the profession that the Productivity Commission believes that within the VET sector the quality of teaching, and the skills training needed for a modern and prosperous economy can be produced on the cheap without investing in TAFE teacher qualifications. Moreover, Council is outraged that this approach to the profession should be used as a justification to attack TAFE

teacher awards and conditions, and to promote further casualisation of the TAFE workforce in an effort to find "efficiency" in a "value for money" race to the bottom.

Federation calls on MPs who have pledged support for the TAFE 5 Point Plan to reject these changes. The 5 Point Plan which MPs pledged to support included government guaranteeing TAFE funding, that TAFE jobs and courses are not contracted out to the private sector, increasing permanent teaching positions and investing teacher training, and ensuring that everyone in NSW has affordable access to a TAFE education without incurring debt.