

Morrison Government's contestable funding has failed

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The announcement that NSW will be sending TAFE students to registered clubs to do their courses is further proof of the failed and damaging contestable funding policy of the federal and state governments.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported on 16 October: "As part of the agreement, Premier Gladys Berejiklian committed to 'facilitating a partnership between clubs, TAFE and other educational [and] training organisations' if the government is returned in 2019."

The agreement includes "formalising the role clubs can play in providing space for training and education".

The funding cuts from failed contestable schemes is resulting in TAFE college closures and is now forcing TAFE student to study in local clubs. NSW TAFE has already endured the closure of TAFE colleges at Dapto, Trenayr and Quirindi, and the transfer of Crows Nest, Singleton, Petersham and Meadowbank colleges to public high schools. Federation is concerned about the future of Bega and Loftus TAFE campuses, given local media reports.



In 2012, tall state and federal governments struck COAG agreements to increase access for private colleges to public funding for vocational education through student loans. Labor also provided incentive funding for state governments to remove guaranteed funding to TAFE colleges and create a flawed student voucher system.

The federal policy failed dramatically with private for-profit companies ripping off students studying diploma-level courses. The cost to the taxpayer was billions of dollars wasted on dodgy private training while TAFE colleges suffered dramatic funding cuts.

In January 2017, the federal Coalition Government introduced a revamped VET Student Loan (VSL) scheme. It was reported in The Daily Telegraph on 17 June last year that this new loan resulted in diploma enrolments in NSW TAFE dropping 51 per cent in its first six months.

Contestable funding continues today under the Morrison Government and student enrolments continue to slide. The Daily Telegraph reported on 17 May this year that: "Enrolments for TAFE's most popular 20 diploma courses have more than halved over the past two years, particularly in courses where there is already a skills shortage. Early childhood education is down 63 per cent, and building and construction enrolments down 80 per cent."

Federation members have completely lost confidence in the federal student loans and the state Smart and Skilled policy.

Every day head teachers, teachers, managers, support staff and students are faced with the consequences of the policy failures.

These contestable student funding systems encourage short, quick education with large class sizes and pressure to complete students in a reduced time. This is leading to increased class sizes, reduced course delivery hours, less time to learn and deletion of permanent, temporary and casual teachers and support staff.

“Tick and Flick” has become a common derogatory term teachers are using to describe this new era of vocational education.

Federation is receiving a dramatic increase in requests for support from individual members. Our members’ health is being affected and many teachers are using various methods including workers compensation, sick leave and extended leave to cope with the damage caused by contestable funding.

Head teachers’ work load is untenable. The new head teacher span of control over multiple campuses, particularly in rural and regional, is causing problems as they basically have to cover too many colleges.

Members continue to list problems caused by the contestable funding failure, including:

- the untenable compliance workload including ongoing internal and external audits
- a freeze on recruitment and replacement of support staff
- community service obligation funding cuts
- foundation studies teachers have reported a 50 per cent cut to the learner support budget
- for the TAFE 16 upgrade, part-time casual teachers are not funded with no release to attend the course and not enough time to complete assignments
- processes for the purchase of consumables and equipment have failed. Teaching sections can’t purchase new equipment, for example building sections can buy nails and timber but can’t buy a new hammer or fix a broken electric drill
- cuts to course delivery, for example commercial cookery has been cut from a three-year course to one year and nine months in some regions
- plumbing certificate III proposed to be cut next year from 864 hours to 620 hours delivery
- cuts to the use of DOTT and coordination rates for part-time casual pay across the board
- ongoing problems with the EBS student management software.

These funding cuts have damaged TAFE’s educational delivery, undermined teaching work, and slashed funding and support for our students in most need.

Federation will continue to oppose the marketisation of vocational education and training and the contestable funding model, by demanding that at least 70 per cent of state and federal VET funding is guaranteed for the public TAFE system.

Rob Long, TAFE Organiser