

TAFE Forum considers flawed policy

December 12, 2018

Teachers, industry leaders and community members rallied at a TAFE Forum in the Banks electorate hosted by the NSW Teachers Federation in light of falling enrolments in the sector.

The forum, held at Revesby Workers Club on 6 December, highlighted the devastating consequences that a contestable funding model has wrought on the public TAFE system in NSW and nationwide since its introduction in 2012.

NSW Teachers Federation President Maurie Mulheron stated that since the policy's introduction, 260,000 fewer students are studying at TAFE colleges across Australia, representing a 30 per cent drop in participation in vocational education and training (VET).

Local TAFE campuses, such as Padstow and Bankstown, which were once "vibrant and teeming with students" have become "virtual ghost towns", according to local teacher and Careers Advisor Linda Downey.



Since 2015, Padstow TAFE has suffered the total closure of Automotive, Business Administration, Information Technology and Commercial Cookery courses, the closure of the popular Training Restaurant, while the Aeroskills courses have been severely cut back.

Industry leaders in electrotechnology Norm Cahill and Aeroskills' Stephen Re spoke of the vital role that TAFE plays in educating and skilling future tradespeople and engineers. Of particular concern to industry are cuts to course delivery hours as a consequence of the move to a contestable funding model.

Other speakers at the forum included Tara Koot, Apprenticeship Officer for the Electrical Trades Union, and Kerry Fozzard, a local small business owner and founder of The Child Protection Foundation.

Mr Mulheron concluded the forum by outlining the clear distinction between the policies of the Shorten Labor Opposition and the Morrison Coalition Government, pointing out that Labor's policy is a guaranteed minimum two-thirds of state and federal VET funding to TAFE and a move away from the catastrophic policy failure of contestable funding.

"Unless we change the federal government, TAFE will not survive," Mr Mulheron said.