

## Government funding can stop TAFE decline

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The Morrison Government's obsession with private vocational education providers at the expense of TAFE is hurting the career prospects of thousands of Australians who need access to affordable, high-quality vocation education, says Federation Deputy Secretary (Post Schools) and Australian Education Union Federal TAFE Secretary Maxine Sharkey.

The best way to reverse the fall in enrolments in government-funded vocational education was to restore funding to TAFE and reinstate it as the primary provider of vocational education in Australia, Ms Sharkey said.

According to a new report by the *National Centre for Vocational Education Research* (NCVER), student numbers, subject enrolments and training hours at public vocational training providers fell in 2018.

"TAFE is one of the crown jewels of the Australian education system. However, it's clear that years of funding cuts and official disinterest by successive federal Coalition governments have left TAFE, our world-class publicly owned vocational education provider, in a weakened state," Ms Sharkey said.

"This has resulted in falling student numbers and TAFE campus closures. The solution is quite simple. We need a strong public TAFE sector that is fully funded."

NCVER's figures for 2018, compared with 2017, show:

- estimated student numbers decreased by 1.9 per cent
- subject enrolments decreased by 5.7 per cent
- hours and full-year training equivalents decreased by 6.4 per cent.

The figures also reveal that since 2013, the year the Federal Coalition was elected, the number of students in government-funded vocational education has fallen by 25 per cent, from 1.48 million to 1.1 million. In addition, the number of hours of vocational education delivered has fallen by 28% between 2013 and 2018.

"The introduction of private-for profit education providers has been a disaster for Australia's vocational education system," Ms Sharkey said.

"History has shown that private providers aren't interested in quality education — they are interested in profits."

