

Morrison Government incompetence hurting TAFE, jobs, economy

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A shortfall of almost \$1 billion in spending on vocational education highlights the federal Coalition Government's intention to starve the TAFE sector at a time when Australia is in the grip of a skills crisis.

A federal Department of Education report has revealed \$5.27 billion was budgeted for a series of apprenticeship, skills and training initiatives between 2014-15 and 2018-19, however only \$4.35 billion was spent in that time.

AEU Federal Deputy President Maurie Mulheron said that this showed that the Morrison Government had failed to appreciate the vital role TAFE graduates play in keeping the Australian economy operating, especially in tough economic times.

"There are 140,000 fewer apprentices now than when the federal Coalition was first elected," Mr Mulheron said.

"To have more than \$900 million in unspent vocational education funding in such an environment is just scandalous.

"These figures show just how misguided the Morrison Government's single-minded favouritism of profit-seeking private training providers over our public TAFE sector really is."

Mr Mulheron said the unspent funds are yet more evidence that the Morrison Government has never believed in public education.

"For years the federal Coalition has systemically starved TAFE of funding and forced people to engage with private sector training providers, yet now we learn that there is almost a billion dollars in unspent TAFE and training funding," he said.

"[On 17 October] we saw the Morrison Government slash \$3.9 billion from the Education Investment Fund. This was money intended to be invested in desperately needed infrastructure improvements in the TAFE and higher education sector.

"This government clearly is not interested in ensuring that people across Australia have access to high-quality vocational education. With high unemployment and drought affecting employment and training opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas, we should be increasing investment in TAFE in these areas, not cutting it."

Mr Mulheron said that the public TAFE system must remain the central provider of vocational education in



Australia.

He called upon the Morrison Government to:

- guarantee a minimum of 70 per cent government funding to the public TAFE system. In addition, no public funding should go to private for-profit providers, consistent with other education sectors
- restore funding and rebuild the TAFE system, to restore confidence in the quality of the courses and qualifications and the institution
- abandon the failed student loans experiment, and cancel the debts of all students caught up in private for-profit provider scams
- re-invest in the TAFE teaching workforce and develop a future-focused TAFE workforce development strategy in collaboration with the profession and unions
- develop a capital investment strategy in consultation with state governments, to address the deplorable state of TAFE facilities around the country
- support a comprehensive independent inquiry into TAFE.

“The AEU will hold the Commonwealth accountable for its fundamental responsibility to Australian students to ensure that TAFE remains public, strong, vibrant and fully funded,” Mr Mulheron said.