

Scone TAFE sale: victim of Government's own policies

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Federation has slammed the NSW Government's sale of the state-of-the-art Scone TAFE campus in Australia's equine capital as the nation battles a skills crisis and rebuilds from the COVID pandemic.

Relieving Deputy Secretary (Post Schools) Phil Chadwick said TAFE NSW had not consulted adequately with staff and students, and had only contacted Federation after the site was listed for sale online.

Mr Chadwick said the campus was "irreplaceable", with stables, a riding area, and farrier's workshop featuring the same equipment and latest technology being used by industry.

"The Government has taken six years to run down or white-ant the enrolments at Scone TAFE so they can sell the property off for a song," Mr Chadwick said.

"Those types of facilities are absolutely irreplaceable and we're just incredulous they would be, at this point in time, trying to liquidate an asset such as that when it's so vital to the training needs of the community in the post-COVID environment.

"It's not just people in Scone, it's the people of NSW.

"The government needs to remember they are merely the custodians of resources such as this, they are not the owners."

The site also includes Hunter Local Land Services, which provides local landholders with services and advice in agricultural production, natural resource management, biosecurity and emergency management.

Mr Chadwick said the sale announcement comes after the July 2019 opening of a TAFE Connected Learning Centre (CLC) in Scone's Main Street.

"It's impossible to replicate the practical activities you can do on 17.9 hectares on a quarter-acre block in a suburban street," he told the Newcastle Herald.

"How do they expect the people of Scone to accept that that's an improvement, that they're protecting and enhancing, they're actually moving forward and developing TAFE?"

"What they're simply doing is they're providing lip service to the people of Scone to confuse and distract them from the real issues that they're gutting a viable resource within their local community."



A spokeswoman for TAFE NSW told the Herald it was committed to delivering high-quality training across the Upper Hunter but the site had been "significantly underutilised".

Mr Chadwick countered that the NSW Government's 2015 Smart and Skilled reforms had made some courses unaffordable and led to a reduction in the number on offer at Scone.

He said communities in regional NSW "should be extremely concerned when a CLC opens in a location away from a TAFE campus - that's a pretty good indication that in a very short period of time that the government intends to sell off the local TAFE college".