

Coffs Harbour TAFE rally at the loss of trades courses

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The NSW Government is closing vital TAFE trades courses on the North Coast leaving regional building contractors struggling to cover construction demand.

Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education Geoff Lee is closing the award-winning bricklaying and floor and wall tiling courses at Coffs Harbour TAFE, leaving North Coast apprentices and their employers in a difficult position.

Bricklaying at Wollongbar and Kingscliff TAFE colleges was cut last year as was floor and wall tiling on the Wauchope TAFE campus, meaning apprentices from across the North Coast will have to travel to Newcastle to learn their trade.

A second-year apprentice will have to travel from Coffs Harbour to Newcastle TAFE three days a month, driving the busy Pacific Highway at 3am in the morning to make classes.



The loss of these courses will be a devastating blow to local building contractors who are already struggling to keep up with demand for new housing across the region.

The Coffs Harbour campus of North Coast TAFE has won the national Golden Trowel – awarded by the Concrete Masonry Association of Australia (CMAA), Australia's peak industry body for concrete masonry manufacturers – three times.

Its students also won the WorldSkills award for floor and wall tiling.

Minister Lee neglected to consult the industry or teachers before pulling the rug from under their feet.

Coffs Harbour TAFE Teachers Association members rallied in support of the teachers who will lose their jobs when the sections close for good next month.

They were joined by Public Service Association members, Coffs Harbour TAFE students as well as Labor candidate for mayor of

Coffs Harbour Tony Judge.