



MEDIA RELEASE

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TAFE rejects claims it won't be able to deliver skills training under Labor

Claims that, under Labor, TAFE will not have the capacity to deliver training for skilled jobs must be seriously questioned, and confirms why a national inquiry into post-school education is needed.

"Labor's commitment that at least two-thirds of public funding will be directed to TAFEs makes perfect sense," the CEO of TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), Craig Robertson said today.

He was responding to an article in the *Financial Review* ['Private providers warn Labor against prioritising TAFE'](#) and claims that TAFE no longer has the capacity or facilities to meet training demand after years of funding cuts by Commonwealth and state governments.

"TAFEs operate across Australia and each TAFE offers a full suite of training options to meet the needs of students and businesses in the communities they serve," Mr Robertson said.

"Most of the training for the 4.2 million students recorded in the total VET system in 2017 was in short ticket courses such as first aid, responsible service of alcohol or in school VET programs. TAFEs offer the bulk of the high value qualifications which set students up for life.

"This makes TAFE a national treasure, and communities are right to be concerned that lack of funding puts this service at risk," Mr Robertson said.

A network of strong and stable TAFEs will be vital to Australia's future – training to meet demand for jobs to serve our growing population and the need to help people re-train for jobs emerging in the new economy powered by technology and automation.

TAFE also helps people return to work and assists others to upgrade their literacy, numeracy and digital skills so they are ready for work. TAFEs work hand-in-glove with industries to help grow their effectiveness and engage with communities to help them build economic resilience. And they deliver Australian work-focused training off-shore and to international students.

"The return to a fully-contestable market for training is a recipe to repeat our recent past which has caused so much harm to students," Mr Robertson said.

"The VET sector is only just recovering from open funding arrangements where governments did not have the tools to guard against providers profiteering at the expense of students.

“It makes sense for government to increase funding to TAFE so it can leverage its investment to ensure a stable supply of training,” he said.

The network of TAFEs across Australia is ideally placed to meet student aspirations and respond to business skills needs – not reliant solely on centrally controlled qualifications. Ongoing and reliable funding for important wrap-around services to students and business will be vital.

Free TAFE in Victoria is proving incredibly popular. Many Victorians are now engaged in training to prepare for a return to the workforce or to upgrade skills to be more productive in their current job. TAFE is seen as a trusted partner in assisting people to get back into work and to meet their career aspirations.

Regardless of the election result on May 18, TAFEs stand ready to engage constructively with either party in government.

“The outcome we seek is to help grow opportunities for Australians and Australian business, not just a contestable funding model,” Mr Robertson said.

“The reported comments suggest we haven’t learnt the lessons or made the changes that would prevent the sector repeating its recent history,” he said.

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TAFE Directors Australia is the peak national body representing 28 TAFE institutes, including six dual sector universities with TAFE divisions.