

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF  
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 892  
AUSTRALIA HAS A SKILLS SHORTAGE  
YET TAFE IS SHORT CHANGED – AGAIN.**

Both Federal and State politicians are full to the brim with economic hype: Jobs, jobs, jobs and training programs.

But when the numbers go up, it is all highly questionable rhetoric. Both Federal and State Government budgets have let the youth of Australia down once again. TAFE has always been the poor relation of the University sector. But as the prestigious Universities flounder financially through lack of international students, so our public TAFES flounder to the point of financial bankruptcy through lack of proper public finances.

Privatisation policies and public financial neglect are catching up with both levels of government and the next generation of workers.

### **The Federal Budget and TAFE**

[The Australian Education Union](#) has this to say about the Federal Budget:

### **Federal budget fails public schools and TAFE students again**

The Morrison Government's 2021-22 Federal Budget is another profound fail for public school and TAFE staff, students and parents across the nation.

“Australia’s public education system is one of the only institutions that touches the lives of Australians in every community, and as such should be a source of immense pride and celebration,” said Australian Education Union Federal President Correna Haythorpe.

“Instead, across primary, secondary and TAFE, this Federal Budget fails students in every corner of our nation.

“Since 2013, TAFE has suffered over \$3 billion in funding cuts. These cuts have had a devastating impact on TAFE.

“TAFE is best positioned to deliver high quality vocational education and skills to help our nation recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, but it must be properly funded.

“The Morrison Government is delivering millions of dollars of taxpayers’ funds to poor quality private colleges and the job network at the expense of TAFE.

“If this Government was serious about funding vocational education to help people get a stable and secure job, it would rebuild with TAFE,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Australian public schools are experiencing booming enrolment growth, yet this Budget fails to deliver the capital works funding that provides modern, 21st century classrooms and facilities.

“Public schools face a \$19 billion funding shortfall over the next four years. This is a direct result of the Federal Government’s failure to put public education first.

“As a result, public school staff are denied the resources they need to provide the education and support their students deserve.

“The Federal Government must understand the critical importance of funding every public school properly to ensure every child has a high quality education, regardless of their background,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“A federal budget that delivers for public education would include a guarantee of a minimum 70 per cent of all government funding directed to the public TAFE system, a commitment to fund public schools to a minimum of 100 percent of the Schooling Resource Standard and the establishment of a capital fund for public schools to help meet rising enrolment growth and infrastructure needs.”

**To date, TAFE has mainly been a State responsibility.**

## **The Victorian Budget**

According to the Victorian Budget Papers

The Victorian Budget 2021–22 invests **\$383.8 million** to give more people the skills they need for emerging and in-demand jobs. A new skills authority will make sure training matches the needs of students, employers and communities. Funding is also being increased for TAFE facilities, and for high-quality affordable training.

**\$99.2 million** to further cut costs for students who undertake study in priority areas – with a TAFE or other registered training provider.

**\$72.4 million** for further upgrading of TAFE campuses, including major redevelopments in Broadmeadows and Shepparton, and planning for training provision at Melton.

**\$12 million** for TAFEs to upgrade facilities and equipment to support training for apprentices and trainees.

**\$85.9 million** to set up the [Victorian Skills Authority](#). The Authority will draw on existing expertise to build even stronger connections across the sector. It will analyse data and job-market insights, and publish for the first time a comprehensive annual skills plan. This will sharpen how the sector responds to employment demands – and give students confidence that training will lead to a job and a career.

**\$2.7 million** for Victorian Aboriginal students to undertake Certificate II and III in Learning an Australian First Nations Language at TAFE, for free, through Marrung: Preserving Aboriginal languages.

**\$7.9 million** to enhance practical placements for TAFE students (in areas such as allied health and community services) by increasing funding for placement support officers.

**\$6.2 million** to increase places in pre-accredited digital literacy and employability skills courses, boosting the job prospects of educationally disadvantaged Victorians. Funding will also deliver a new literacy and numeracy assessment tool for TAFEs and other providers, including Learn Local providers in the area of adult and community further education.

**\$7 million** to support the work of a new Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery, which will foster collaboration across the TAFE network. This will help TAFEs share services, enhance quality, and better meet the training needs of students, employers and communities.

**\$88.8 million** to make vocational education and training even more accessible for more Victorians, through more fee concessions for eligible students.

**It should be noted that these millions are not just for our public TAFE colleges but are there to be shared out among the private colleges which have been proved, again and again to be inadequate and indeed, corrupt to the tune of billions of dollars.**

**[The Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union](#) has this to say about the latest Victorian Budget allocations for TAFE.**

## **State budget fails TAFE**

The Victorian government's 2021-22 State Budget has failed to address the need for significant investment in TAFE, putting at risk the opportunities for Victorians affected by COVID-19 and the state's ongoing economic recovery.

AEU Victoria has highlighted the critical role TAFE plays in Victoria, training the workers we need to deliver the services and infrastructure our community relies on.

“It was extremely disappointing to see no reference in the Budget to one of the key areas of recommendations in the recent Macklin report on Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy – the need for funding reform,” said AEU Victorian branch president Meredith Peace.

“Victoria cannot claim to be the education state unless there is proper investment in vocational education, with TAFE at its centre.

“The state government said they would ‘save TAFE’, but you can't ‘save TAFE’ when institutes are not funded to cover the cost of delivering courses as found by the government's own review.

“The piecemeal increase in the budget in per student contact hour funding does not address the funding shortfall. Our TAFEs remain the lowest funded in the nation.

“TAFE teachers have been raising concerns about the lack of funding for vocational education and training for years. Their concerns have been echoed by business, academics, education experts and by Jenny Macklin in her recent review,” Ms Peace said.

“Free TAFE has been an important investment, but it will only work if it is underpinned by funding that actually covers the costs of running the courses. If the Victorian Government doesn't lift their investment in TAFE, institutes will continue to struggle to run the courses needed, free or otherwise and will continue to struggle financially.”

A significant number of TAFEs in the most recent annual reports were in deficit. Put simply, the government cannot continue to leave our TAFE system in this situation.

“Action must be taken by the Andrews Government to address this funding gap if TAFEs are going to continue to be the centre of Victoria's vocational education system,” Ms Peace said.

The AEU Victorian Branch is calling for implementation of key recommendations of the Macklin Review.

“The recently announced Victorian Skills Authority is an important step in the right direction, but that alone will not provide the ongoing support TAFE needs now.

TAFEs are at the centre of the vocational education system and the government must develop a fair and transparent funding model that actually covers the cost of providing the education and training. Victorians have a right to properly funded TAFE courses to get the skills and knowledge they need to gain secure and decent jobs.

“TAFEs in Victoria are struggling financially. That is the reality, as borne out by the recent letters of comfort issued to several institutions by the Andrews Labor Government last month.

“Without proper investment in TAFE, the State Government will fail to provide the education and training needed to ensure we have a highly-skilled and sustainable workforce to deliver the services and infrastructure we all rely on.”

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