

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 815
MORRISON GOVERNMENT'S TAFE POLICY
REACHES NEW LEVELS OF HYPOCRISY –
AND STUPIDITY**

In the last week, Coalition Government's policy of privatisation of the TAFE system has reached new depths of stupidity – and hypocrisy.

A key platform for their legitimacy in government is that they will provide jobs. A key platform for the legitimacy of their immigration policy is that those jobs will be filled with the labor of Australian citizens.

But their employment rhetoric a mere smokescreen for their hypocrisy and downright lies.

Two things occurred in the last week which illustrate the gap between their rhetoric and the reality. These are

1. The fining of a shonky VET college while public TAFE funding is cut back.(29 October 2019)
2. The raiding of the education budget to pay for drought relief. They have transferred \$3.9 billion from the Education Investment Fund (EIF) into its Emergency Response Fund for drought relief – with the support of the Labor Party (17 October 2019) <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/news/fed-govt-ends-education-investment-fund>

1. Private New South Wales VET College fined while TAFE loses out

Scott Coomber of the AEU reported the following at)

<https://news.nswtf.org.au/blog/news/2019/10/private-vet-college-fined-while-tafe-loses-out>

A Federal Court ruling against a failed private training college has highlighted the Federal Government's folly of funding for-profit VET providers at the expense of the public TAFE system.

The ruling has been followed by revelation in the federal Education Department's annual report that the government fell almost \$1 billion short of budgeted spending on vocational training programs over the past five years, at the height of the skills crisis facing Australia.

The court handed down a record \$26.5 million fine to Empower Institute, as well as a demand it repay more than \$56 million to the Federal Government for funding it received to run courses.

The company put itself into liquidation when the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) commenced action in late 2017, which means the fine is unlikely to be paid and inquiries are yet to determine how much the firm can repay the government.

New South Wales Teachers' Federation's Acting Deputy Secretary (Post Schools) Phil Chadwick Sharkey said the failed college underlined the shortcomings of funding private vocation training providers ahead of TAFE.

"Many millions of dollars have been funnelled to these private providers, which have either failed or are under investigation," Mr Chadwick said.

"At the same time, this Federal Coalition Government has wound down the public TAFE system to a shadow of its former self, with funding and staffing cutbacks reflected in a drastic decline in enrolments.

"We have students who have been left with heavy debts, no qualification and no job prospects."

The federal Education Department's latest annual report confirms that since 2014, the Coalition Government has failed to spend a massive \$919 million of their own TAFE and training budget, a shortfall of more than 17 per cent.

Shadow education minister Tanya Plibersek said: "Apprentice and tradie programs have been worst affected, including apprentice incentives for business, support to help people finish apprenticeships, and a fund designed to train Australians in areas of need."

A total \$5.27 billion was budgeted for a series of apprenticeship, skills and training initiatives between 2014-15 and 2018-19 but the government spent only \$4.35 billion over the period.

Empower Institute was among a number of VET providers that failed after a Federal Government crackdown in 2015 on rorting of the taxpayer-funded VET-FEE HELP loan scheme. Some colleges stood accused of targeting vulnerable people, such as Centrelink clients, with the offer of free laptops.

"At a time when the economy is facing a national skills shortage, the government should be doing all it can to get school leavers into vocational training," Mr Chadwick said.

"Instead of bolstering the public system, the government has thrown money at these private providers under the neoliberal mantra that competition makes the economy stronger.

"In so many ways this approach proved to be destructive, and none more so than the vocational education sector and the damage inflicted on what was a world-class public educator."

The private sector never has, never can and never will, educate or prepare Australian children for their life after school. When will our Governments leave behind the never - never land of neo-liberal ideology and face the immediate realities of our next generation?

2 Federal Government Funding Disaster Relief by Stripping Billions from Education Infrastructure

On 17 October 2019 The AEU, in a Media Release, revealed that the Morrison Government has passed legislation to fund a national disaster relief package by stripping 3.9 billions of dollars from the education Investment Fund originally intended for investment into education infrastructure, into a drought relief fund.

The Bill was passed with Labor's support, with the Greens and Senator Jacqui Lambie voting against the measure.

<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/news/fed-govt-ends-education-investment-fund>:

Is Public Education Politically Friendless?

The AEU still appears to place its hope in a spineless Labor Party, while the Greens and even Jacqui Lambie had the guts to vote against robbing TAFE to pay drought affected farmers.

The Labor Party does, however, have the sense to mouth the right rhetoric. On 30 October Correna Haythorpe of the AEU welcomed Labor's continued commitment to address Australia's skills crisis and strengthen the vocational education and training sector. Ms Haythorpe also welcomed Mr Albanese's announcement of "Jobs and Skills Australia", which he described as a collaborative model to guide investment in human capital.

The Morrison Government however, should be held accountable for the dire effects their funding policies have had upon the Australian TAFE sector and the Australian economy. Correna's 30 October Media Release is very informative and attempts to hold the Coalition to account.

See <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/media/releases/2019/october/301019>

DOGS are saddened by the faith placed by the AEU in the Australian Labor Party. As a strong lobby group, the AEU would be more effective as politically unaligned, falling back on basic principles rather than false promises.

Public education and our liberal democracy is best served by statement of the principle that public funds should be for public education only.

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<http://www.3cr.org.au/dogs>