

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF  
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 876**

**NEO-LIBERAL POLICIES OF THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION  
PUNISH TERTIARY AND TAFE VICTIMS OF COVID**

At the point in Australia's social and economic history when clever young, energetic tradespeople and computer experts are desperately needed, Australian governments are still falling back on outdated, failed neo-liberal policies. User-pays, markets fix everything and even echoes of 'the survival of the fittest' and 'society does not exist' are surfacing in government TAFE policies.

The most recent indication of attacks upon the public TAFE sector comes from the Productivity Commission, which has suggested that vocational students should be charged minimum upfront fees to avoid perceptions of 'free money' and colleges should be subject to "market testing". They also talk about public providers being given 'greater operational autonomy'. This is code for 'private is better, decentralise, run down and sell off.

We have already seen this with the primary and secondary sector. Now, the neo-liberals are attacking even further, the TAFE sector.

[The AEU Victorian branch has charted the abject failure of a decade – or more- of VET marketization](#) and privatisation by governments at all levels and the catastrophic damage it has wrought on the sector.

To add insult to the injury being perpetrated on the next generation, however, the Productivity Commission has suggested that the Australian government should try to recover unpaid student loans from people who have died

We are told that

*The public thinktank made the controversial calls in its review of the skills and workforce agreement, which found Australia's deal between the state and federal governments has failed to meet key targets.*

In other words, neo-liberal policies and privatisation has failed – dismally. And the recommendation is –more of the same!

Outrageous!

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