

# REBUILDING VICTORIA'S TAFE SYSTEM



Cover: AEU TAFE member Renae  
Monument with student Rebecca  
Leslie at Melbourne Polytechnic  
Floristry. Photo : Meredith O'Shea



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TAFE students from Kangan Institute's  
Indigenous Education Centre.  
Photo : Meredith O'Shea



# FOREWORD

The public TAFE system in Victoria has endured a tumultuous period over the past 10 years. From 2008-14 we saw the steady decline of TAFE due to the actions of successive governments.

Since 2015 there has been a period of stabilisation, with much-needed government investment in TAFE and greater regulatory control across the whole system.

We've seen the 'rescue' and the 'stabilisation' of TAFE, but it is far from being 'saved'.

This document sets out the recommendations of the AEU Victorian Branch for further action by government to genuinely rebuild our public TAFE system, restoring its position as the pre-eminent provider of high-quality vocational education and training.



**Meredith Peace**

President

AEU Victorian Branch

# KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Funding

### Contestable funding

- At least 70% of state government VET funding to be quarantined for public provision through TAFE, with the remaining 30% allocated on a contestable basis to providers, including TAFE.

### Cost of provision

- Develop a 'One Victorian TAFE' model to allow for efficiencies of scale and streamlined and strengthened governance.

- Government to provide additional funding to TAFEs in recognition of the greater costs the public system carries, compared to private providers.

### Funding equality

- Victoria's recurrent expenditure per annual hour to increase to at least the national average.

## Quality education

### Curriculum

- Develop a Victorian comprehensive curriculum across all qualifications.
- Link delivery of a Victorian curriculum to provision of government funding.
- Ensure quality professional development for staff in the area of curriculum development and instructional design.

### Compressed delivery

- Link providers' government funding to mandated numbers of hours of delivery.

### Specialist settings

- Develop specialist TAFE centres whose expertise is shared across all TAFE institutes.

## Workforce recommendations

### Building the workforce

- The Department of Education and Training should work with TAFE institutes to undertake comprehensive workforce planning and development, to ensure the ongoing workforce needs of the future are met.
- The government should consider an advertising campaign to promote public TAFEs and the career opportunities that exist for new entrants from industry.

- The government must provide financial incentives, such as bursaries or scholarships (which would enable them to make the transition without experiencing personal financial hardship) for prospective teachers to undertake study to become qualified teachers, so they can study while gaining on-the-job experience.

### Career development and progression

- DET must work with TAFE institutes and the AEU to ensure that provisions in the new in-principle TAFE Teachers Agreement 2018 (TTA 2018) relating to security of employment

(including reductions in the levels of contract and casual work) are understood and implemented effectively.

- The government must invest in initiatives such as scholarship programs to provide support for current staff to upgrade skills and qualifications.
- Resources must be provided to allow staff to maintain industry currency; and professional development for teachers to improve and develop their teaching practice, including curriculum development and pedagogy.

### **Minimum qualifications**

- Minimum teacher education qualification levels for VET teachers must be raised and regulatory

oversight of the awarding of those qualifications strengthened. The minimum standard should be AQF Level 5, with a phased introduction to a Level 6 or above over three years.

- Teachers delivering vocational education and training should be fully qualified (degree or above) and registered as a TAFE teacher through the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). This will ensure no provider is able to conduct training without employing a qualified teacher.
- Vocational qualification must, at least, be at the level being taught. In most instances there must be a minimum of four years' vocational experience prior to commencing.

## **Links with schools and industry**

- Develop incentives to strengthen and embed links between schools, TAFE, universities and industry.

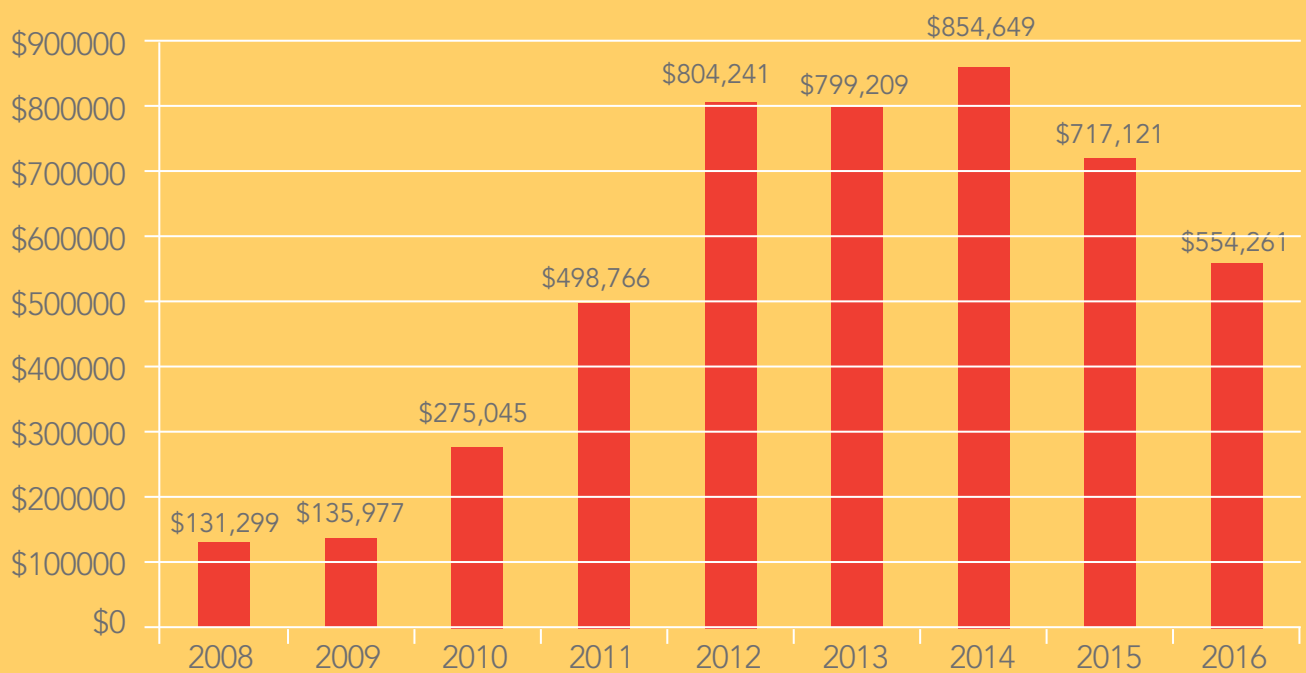
### **VETiS recommendations**

- Funding for VETiS must be lifted to accurately reflect the cost to schools of running these programs.
- Develop incentives for public school and TAFE partnerships to ensure schools-based programs are of high quality.

### **Apprenticeships and traineeships**

- Strengthen links between school-based apprenticeships and industry to encourage post-school pathways to employment.
- Ensure traineeships are in areas of skills shortage and benefit the student.
- Develop regulations, including auditing employers that have rolling traineeships, to prevent employers utilising traineeships as a form of cheap labour rather than quality skills development.

# Figure 1: Victorian government payments to non-TAFE training providers\*



\* NCVER (2017), Australian vocational education and training statistics: financial information, [ncver.edu.au](http://ncver.edu.au)



# BACKGROUND

## Attacks on TAFE

In 2008, the Victorian TAFE system provided high-quality education and training to 200,397 students across 842 qualifications – this constituted 66% of VET provision in the state.

As a result, 87% of the government funding for vocational education was being delivered to TAFE institutes that were educating the majority of students in this sector. TAFEs were not competing with other providers for this funding; it was allocated on the basis of the students they enrolled. There were 6,309 EFT teachers employed to teach those qualifications, with 64% employed ongoing and the remainder employed insecurely on fixed-term contracts or casually.

At the time, teachers were employed under a multi-business agreement (MBA) covering all stand-alone TAFE institutes. A new MBA commenced in 2009 for three years.

In 2008, the Brumby Labor government changed how funding was allocated in the vocational education sector. All funding was made contestable, and TAFE institutes were required to compete with community providers

and the private for-profit sector for the same 'bucket' of government funding (see figure 1).

At the time, government argued that this change would result in reduced costs and greater opportunity and access for students, as well as increased quality in education.

No changes were made to the regulatory environment to ensure government subsidies allocated to providers were being used appropriately in the provision of quality education and training in areas that would likely lead to employment for students and ensure industry needs were met.

The AEU strenuously opposed this change, arguing that:

- government should not be handing over millions of dollars to a private sector driven by profit, as opposed to the public provider (TAFE) whose aims are to provide high-quality education and training to all, based on delivering real skills and real jobs for the community
- government was abrogating its responsibility to ensure Victoria maintained a strong, viable, public provider of vocational education and training

- TAFEs were not competing on a level playing field with private providers
- the changes would result in increased costs for students.

In response, the AEU launched its *TAFE4All* campaign to fight these changes, to highlight the quality education and training our TAFEs provide, and to promote the importance of public provision of vocational education.

In 2011, the newly elected Baillieu Liberal government began a series of cuts that ultimately slashed government funding to TAFE by \$290 million (to cover the budget blow-out caused by private for-profit RTOs rorting the system), including \$170 million that TAFEs used to provide direct support to students, such as career counselling and welfare support.

It was clear that the Baillieu government had little commitment to ensuring Victoria had a strong, viable, public TAFE system. Despite significant warning signs regarding poor quality education and training, cost of provision in the private sector, and the need for greater regulation, Baillieu oversaw a period in which TAFE enrolments declined significantly. TAFE's proportion of the 'market' fell to an all-time low of 27% in 2015 – although by 2016 its share had increased slightly to 34%.

TAFE student Brett Matthew at  
Melbourne Polytechnic Floristry  
Photo: Meredith O'Shea



Reports over the following years showed that the AEU's concerns were justified, as private providers moved predominantly into low-cost training where they could minimise costs and maximise profits, often by using unconscionable student recruitment and inducement practices.

By and large, these private RTOs offered training in areas where there was no skill shortage and, as a consequence, employment outcomes for students were poor. Additionally, the quality of provision declined so that the qualifications students had been awarded were worthless, and many tens of thousands had their qualifications withdrawn.

There has been a multitude of media reports over recent years highlighting the unscrupulous actions of many private providers, who have delivered substandard training at high cost, leaving students out of pocket when providers collapsed – or worse, with qualifications that were not worth the paper they were written on. Industry and employers have also been on the public record indicating shortages of employees in certain areas, or employees who are not able to demonstrate the required skill levels, even though they had (on paper) obtained the appropriate qualifications.

## Rebuilding TAFE

The future of TAFE was a key issue in the 2014 state election. Through the *TAFE4All* campaign, the AEU highlighted the damage done to the sector, but with a strong message that it was public TAFEs who could deliver 'real skills and real jobs'. This included the use of mobile billboards in marginal electorates and in regional Victoria, along with community forums to discuss the state of TAFE, as well as the solutions.

The then-Andrews Labor opposition also campaigned heavily on this issue, as it was clear in polling that the community held TAFE in high regard, despite the damage of a contestable funding model and debilitating budget cuts. This was particularly relevant in rural and regional Victoria, where reliance on TAFE is much higher both for students and local industries, and where private providers are not a strong force.

The Andrews opposition promised to 'Save TAFE' – this included a commitment to conduct an independent review of vocational education, provide a \$250 million rescue fund over four years, and to increase regulation to weed out the worst of the dodgy private providers. The Napthine government made no commitments to TAFE during its campaign.

Once elected, the Andrews Labor government followed through on those commitments: undertaking a VET funding review chaired by Bruce McKenzie (the 2015 McKenzie Review), injecting the

\$250 million rescue fund and, crucially, increasing regulation, which has seen a number of private providers driven out of the industry and students supported when they were left in limbo mid-qualification.<sup>1</sup>

The McKenzie Review highlighted a number of key issues, which remain important in the context of the next phase to rebuild TAFE. The notion of contestable funding is predicated on both TAFE and other providers competing for the same bucket of funding. Government then allocates contracts to providers to deliver the education and training.

The reality is that TAFE is not competing on a level playing field with private providers.

There are no requirements for private providers to ensure education is delivered by qualified teachers, as is the case in TAFE. There is no recognition that in delivering a quality education, TAFEs incur far higher costs and, as public sector entities, carry greater obligations. There are also no requirements that the hours of education that providers are funded to deliver are actually delivered to students.

This has become known as 'shaving of hours' or compressed delivery, which may see a provider funded to deliver 100 hours of education and training, but actually only delivering 50 hours of direct instruction to students. This practice has been far more prevalent in the private sector than in TAFE.<sup>2</sup>

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1 State Government of Victoria (2015), *VET Funding Review Final Report*

2 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/private-college-students-study-fewer-hours-for-same-outcome/news-story/57c385a69161d02890c14647c43da931>

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“THERE IS AN UNRESOLVED TENSION IN EXPECTING TAFE INSTITUTES TO SIMULTANEOUSLY COMPETE ON A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD, DELIVER QUALITY TRAINING, SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES, MEET THE ADDITIONAL COSTS IMPOSED BY GOVERNMENT, AND REMAIN SUSTAINABLE.”

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*The McKenzie Review*

The McKenzie Review specifically highlighted the impact of greater costs on TAFE as compared to private providers, including “material costs, obligations and restrictions”. This is best summed up in the report’s statement that:

*There is an unresolved tension in expecting TAFE institutes to simultaneously compete on a level playing field, deliver quality training, serve their communities, meet the additional costs imposed by government, and remain sustainable.*

This sentiment is reflected in a number of recommendations, as follows:

54. That the government fund the costs, obligations and restrictions imposed on TAFE institutions, including asset maintenance, board composition, public sector financial and operating obligations, government approval requirements and investment restrictions, allocated between TAFE institutes based on student contact hours.
55. That the government review the costs, obligations and restrictions it places on TAFE institutes.<sup>3</sup>

Since that time, the Andrews government has released its 2017 *Skills First* policy – which provides additional funding solely prioritised for TAFE and

also determines that TAFE will be regarded as the preferred provider, where possible, for government initiatives such as infrastructure projects, NDIS and family violence.<sup>4</sup> While these changes are welcome, the increase in TAFE’s portion of the so-called ‘market’ is negligible and the numbers of student enrolments overall is not increasing.

The 2018/19 Victorian state budget also delivered a range of new initiatives and support for TAFE, with a further investment of \$644 million. The most significant of these was an investment of \$172 million to provide free TAFE courses over two years. This will provide training free of tuition fees (not including any student services fees or materials fees that TAFEs may charge) for 30 non-apprenticeship courses and a further 18 courses that provide pathways to apprenticeships. This training will be available for all Victorians eligible for Victorian government-subsidised training. This initiative alone is to be applauded and could well see TAFE claw back some of the ground lost to the private market over the last 10 years.

In addition, the budget also included support for the re-introduction of trade papers for apprenticeships, capital investment in three regional TAFEs, and investment to meet growth in industry demand.

## Saving TAFE

TAFE must be restored as the pre-eminent provider of high-quality vocational education in Victoria. This must be an ongoing priority for our state government.

The AEU believes there are many positive and proactive mechanisms available to government to ensure that:

- we have strong public provision that makes sure students are job ready
- there are real jobs available and the needs of industry are met
- students are engaged in further education to fully participate in civil society.

To achieve this, the AEU believes that four broad areas must be addressed:

1. Funding vocational education and governance of TAFE
2. Delivering high-quality vocational education
3. Supporting the workforce
4. Links with schools and industry.

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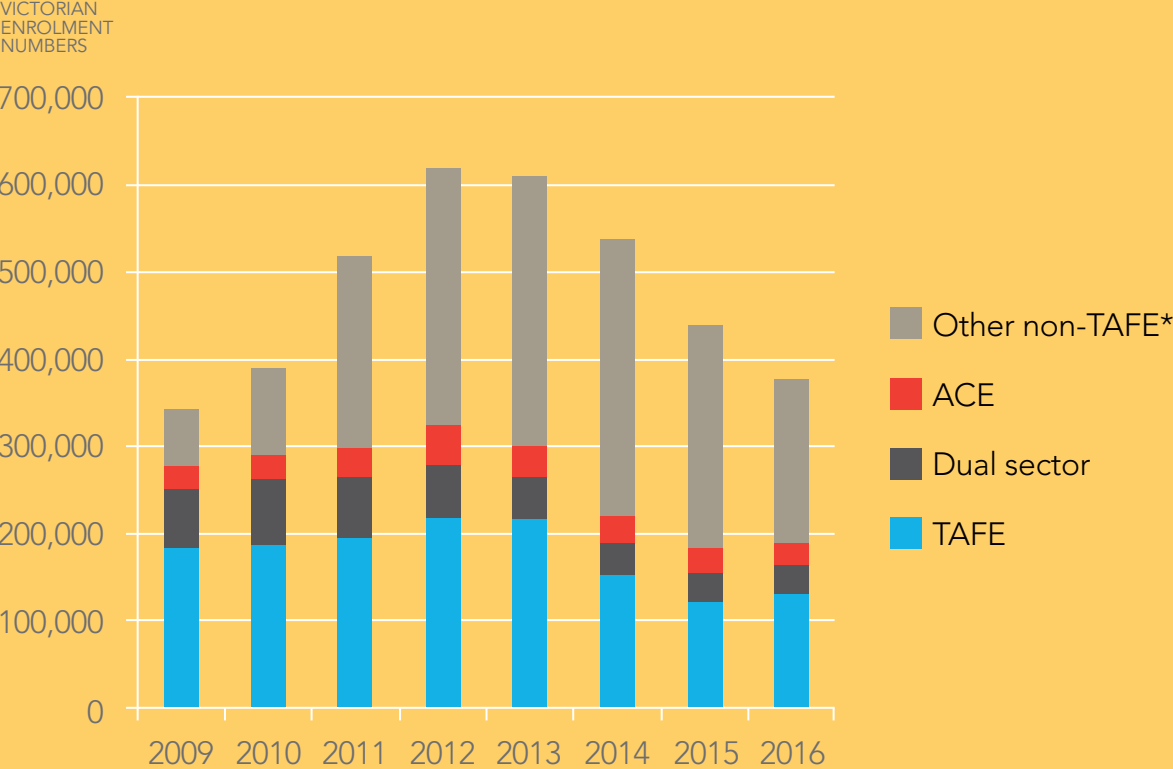
<sup>3</sup> State Government of Victoria (2015) *VET Funding Review Final Report*, p.77

<sup>4</sup> State Government of Victoria (2016) *Skills First. Real training for real jobs*. Department of Education and Training.



# Figure 2: VET Program Enrolments

Note: In 2016, privately operated organisations represented 86% of this category.  
Source: NCVER\*



\* NCVER (2018), Government-funded students and courses, <http://vocstats.ncver.edu.au/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml>

# Funding vocational education and governance of TAFE

Funding is vital for quality provision of public education. As universal education is a public good, governments have an obligation to ensure that appropriate resourcing is provided to ensure all young people have equal access to a high-quality education. The loss of funding to TAFE, whether through budget cuts or through a change in funding allocation, has had a profound, negative effect on the standing and viability of TAFE over the past 10 years. These impacts include the quality and numbers of courses available or delivered; the diminution of TAFE as the provider of choice of VETiS; the loss of significant numbers of experienced staff; declining enrolments; increased cost to students; and skills shortages.

## Contestable funding

The AEU has consistently emphasised that the contestable funding model is predicated on both TAFE and other private

providers competing for the same 'bucket of funding', despite the fact that TAFE is not competing on a level playing field.

There are no requirements for private providers to ensure qualified teachers deliver vocational education, as is the case with TAFE. There are also no requirements that providers actually deliver the hours they are funded to deliver.

The competition that currently exists is often contrary to the needs of students or to industry and employers. The sector is in danger of becoming completely driven by a business model that maximises profits by undercutting costs and quality, rather than ensuring students are always provided with quality vocational education, which delivers real skills and leads to real jobs.

TAFE must be given the opportunity to gradually rebuild and increase capacity. Given the loss of significant numbers of teachers, teaching expertise and student enrolments (see figure 2), the contestable

funding model must be abolished and replaced with a guarantee that at least 70% of government funding for vocational education is quarantined for public provision through TAFE.

## Recommendations

- At least 70% of state government VET funding be quarantined for public provision through TAFEs, with the remaining 30% allocated on a contestable basis to providers, including TAFE.

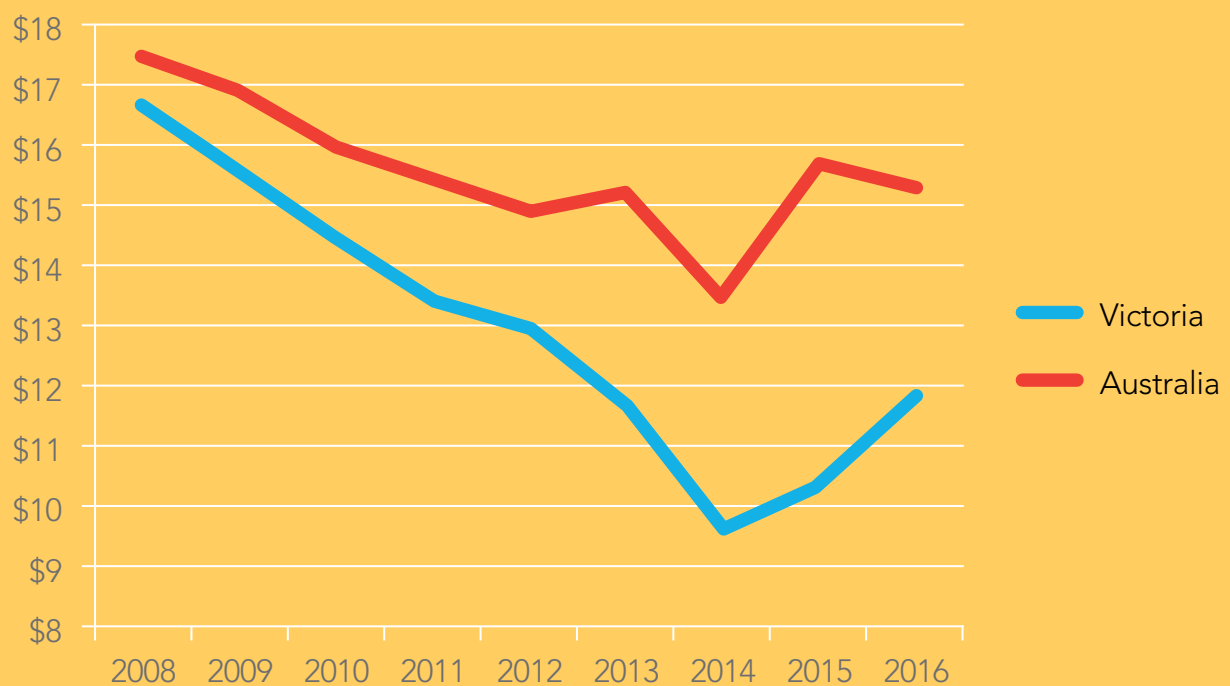
## Cost of provision

As previously stated in the background section of *Rebuilding TAFE*, the McKenzie Review specifically highlighted the impact of greater costs on TAFE when compared to private providers, including "material costs, obligations and restrictions".

The reality is that the level of funding has not kept pace with the cost of provision, and the move

### Figure 3: Total government real recurrent expenditure per annual hour (2016 dollars).

Source: Productivity Commission\*



\* Australian Government Productivity Commission (2018), *Report on Government Services 2018* (Table 5A.2), <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2018/child-care-education-and-training/vocational-education-and-training>

away from the public TAFE system to majority private provision, has made it increasingly difficult for TAFEs to be viable.

The AEU believes that it is time to create 'One Victorian TAFE' and move away from stand-alone, autonomous TAFE institutes, dual sector provision (TAFE within the governance of the university) and universities with private vocational education operations. This would allow more streamlined and efficient governance, consistency in regard to compliance and provision and, in the longer term, the capacity for specialisation and focus on local industry and employer needs.

Government must also provide additional funding to TAFEs in recognition of the costs imposed by government and the role TAFEs play in serving their local communities, which private providers do not bear.

### Recommendations

- Develop a 'One Victorian TAFE' model to allow for efficiencies of scale and streamlined and strengthened governance.
- Government to provide additional funding to TAFEs in recognition of the greater costs the public system carries, as compared to private providers.

## Funding equality

Victoria is lagging behind other states and territories when it comes to adequate government funding for vocational education, as measured by student contact hour rates. Victoria continues to be the lowest funded of all Australian states and territories, as reported by the most recent annual *Report on Government Services* (see figure 3).

Victoria's recurrent expenditure in 2016 (per annual hour) was the lowest level of funding of any state or territory in Australia for vocational education: \$3.50 per hour behind the national average and \$6.21 per hour behind NSW.

Despite the significant and welcome reinvestment by the Andrews government, Victorian TAFEs are still hugely impeded by contestable funding and massive budget cuts and have only progressed from a perilous state to one of precarious stabilisation.

### Recommendations

- Victoria's recurrent expenditure per annual hour to increase to at least the national average.

# QUALITY EDUCATION

The delivery of exceptional and relevant curriculum is critical to demonstrating the high quality of education and training that TAFE can deliver.

Quality means much more than compliance, which has become a bureaucratic burden and has arguably contributed to a decline in quality. The onerous workload and duplication between state, federal and institutional requirements prevents teachers from spending the necessary time on teaching and learning, curriculum development and direct support for their students' individual needs.

## Curriculum

To ensure a high-quality and relevant curriculum, we must develop comprehensive curriculum across all qualifications and move away from the competency-based approach, without undermining national competency requirements.

The current approach lends itself to skills development, as opposed to comprehensive education. It does not ensure that students will be job ready when they finish their education or be equipped to respond to a changing employment environment.

National training packages do not specify or mandate a set

curriculum. Victoria should lead the way by mandating endorsed curriculum and linking providers' government funding to the use of the endorsed curriculum.

This would not undermine the national competency requirements and would enhance Victoria's reputation in vocational education provision, in line with its ambition to be the 'Education State'.

In an environment where young people are more mobile employees and navigating a rapidly changing employment market, it is essential that all qualifications incorporate education that is not singularly focused on one industry or job. There should be a base range of skills included in all qualifications – including literacy and numeracy, teamwork, communication, collaboration and problem solving – which will assist with employability within a specific industry and across a range of industries.

This is where the development of comprehensive, relevant curriculum is essential, alongside professional development for staff to ensure expertise in the area of curriculum development. Various models exist around the world that embed a broad educational approach to vocational education, such as Canada's Niagra College.

There also needs to be greater consistency across the state. It is reasonable for students, parents and employers to expect that the requirements and expectations of a qualification are essentially the same, no matter where a student completes that qualification. This would require setting statewide requirements for all qualifications. This consistency would be further enhanced by enabling moderation of assessments between teachers and the establishment of moderation networks across TAFE institutes.

In addition, to increase the quality of delivery, it would be effective to link these requirements to funding. For example, if a provider is given government funding, then they are committing – through their contractual arrangements – to meet the statewide requirements.

Consideration should also be given to the genuine collaborative involvement and engagement of industry. This would provide benefits for all parties, specifically students, with industry demonstrating a tangible contribution to the vocational education system. TAFE teachers would also benefit from industry experience and the confidence that students are gaining relevant experience, which will assist them in gaining employment.



The benefits for industry include access to working with TAFE teachers on applied research projects to benefit their specific industry.

### Recommendations

- Develop a Victorian comprehensive curriculum across all qualifications.
- Link delivery of a Victorian curriculum to provision of government funding.
- Ensure quality professional development for staff in the area of curriculum development and instructional design.

### Compressed delivery

Compressed delivery has directly undermined the quality of teaching and learning in the vocational sector and, more broadly, damaged its reputation. This practice must be driven out of the sector if full confidence is to be regained.

The hours of education which providers are funded to deliver ('nominal hours') should match the hours delivered to students.

Compressed delivery, also known as shaving of hours, results in

students being provided with fewer hours of timetabled direct instruction than the provider is funded to deliver. For example, a provider may be contracted and funded to provide 100 hours of education and training, but direct instruction of students may in fact only be for 50 hours. This means the course content is delivered in a reduced period of time, students have less direct contact with their teacher, and the teacher's workload is increased, both in terms of volume and intensification.

Shaving of hours denies students access to the teaching and learning they are entitled to receive, and can only lead to lower quality outcomes. It also places enormous pressure on teachers who don't have the necessary time to focus on the most important work – that is, teaching and learning. It also intensifies their workload, as they have to teach more classes and complete the related compliance requirements. Overall, this is a recipe for ensuring our young people, and those looking to retrain, are at risk of being provided with an education that is not of the quality they or the community have a right to expect, and that teachers want to deliver.

### Recommendations

- Link government funding to providers to mandated numbers of hours of delivery.

### Specialist centres

Finally, work needs to be done to investigate and develop the idea of TAFEs as specialist centres. This does not mean students would have to travel to a particular institute to do a specific qualification only offered at that location. Instead, a model could be developed whereby particular TAFEs are responsible for the development of curriculum, meeting compliance requirements and engaging with employers and industry, and this is then shared across those TAFEs that also want to offer that qualification. This is similar to work currently being done at William Angliss, where expertise is shared with other TAFEs to deliver the centrally developed curriculum.

### Recommendations

- Develop specialist TAFE centres whose expertise is shared across all TAFEs.

# 75%

OF TAFE TEACHERS  
ARE CURRENTLY  
EMPLOYED ON FIXED-  
TERM CONTRACTS OR  
IN CASUAL ROLES.



# WORKFORCE

Teachers are TAFE's most important resource. Without them, the government cannot ensure the quality of the education and training provided. Without teachers, the government cannot 'save TAFE'.

Saving TAFE will require a range of new measures not only to support the remaining workforce, who have borne the brunt of the damage done, but also to implement initiatives that will attract new entrants to meet the twin demands of attrition and increasing enrolments. Without these measures, the changes introduced by the Andrews government to revitalise the public vocational provider will not have the desired impact, leading to dire consequences for the state's capacity to meet skills shortages and community needs.

## **Building the workforce**

The deleterious changes to TAFE over many years have seen between 2,000 and 3,000 TAFE teachers lose their jobs. This loss of people and their expertise has significantly reduced the capacity of TAFEs to offer a range of courses to the community, to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population and to develop the skills required by industry. In addition, this has occurred at a time when industry and the economy are changing rapidly

and TAFE needs to improve its capacity to respond.

The workforce has become increasingly casualised, to the point where 75% of TAFE teachers are currently employed in fixed-term contract or casual roles.

In short, these changes mean that TAFE will struggle to have the capacity to quickly increase its offerings to students.

Government must consider a range of initiatives to attract new teachers into the profession, as well as supporting and retaining existing teachers. Given the huge loss of teachers from the TAFE sector, and the expected growth in enrolments due to the new free TAFE courses to be introduced in 2019, it is imperative that these measures are put in place as a matter of priority.

Workforce planning is critical, and the move to 'One Victorian TAFE' would enable this to occur more easily. DET, in conjunction with TAFE institutes, must more effectively map the workforce needs across industry and the community. This is essential to inform government where existing staff need to be further developed or qualified and to attract new entrants in relevant areas.

Career change programs provide an opportunity for individuals

with industry experience to transition into teaching, with government support. This would involve a period where they are studying, while simultaneously gaining on-the-job experience. It is imperative the government understands there is no 'quick fix' to initial teacher education. Short, intensive programs such as Teach for Australia, can undermine the quality of provision and are not a long-term solution to rebuilding the workforce.

Rebuilding the workforce will also require government to provide financial incentives to prospective teachers, to enable them to make the transition without experiencing financial hardship, which would be a deterrent to many. Incentives could include a bursary that requires an individual to work for a minimum period of time post-qualification as well as guaranteed ongoing employment, in exchange for the financial support.

Government should also consider an advertising campaign, such as the one currently being run for the Victorian police force, to make people aware that jobs are available and that teaching is an attractive career option. As well as attracting new teachers, this would have the additional benefit of promoting the sector and underlining its importance to the state's economy.

Melbourne Polytechnic Horticulture & Landscaping teacher Jeff Alcock with students.  
Photo: Larry Chew



## Recommendations

- DET, in conjunction with TAFE institutes, to undertake comprehensive workforce planning and development to ensure the ongoing workforce needs of the future.
- The government provide financial incentives for prospective teachers to undertake study to become qualified teachers, so they can study while gaining on-the-job experience. Incentives such as bursaries or scholarships would enable them to make the transition without experiencing financial hardship.
- The government should consider an advertising campaign to promote public TAFEs and the career opportunities that exist for new entrants from industry.

## Career development and progression

Responding to increased demand is not just about attracting new teachers into TAFE. There is already significant capacity within the TAFE teaching workforce to respond to some of the change occurring. However, this is a workforce that has largely been neglected in the face of fiscal restraint and shrinking enrolments. Government must implement a range of initiatives to support and develop the current workforce.

The TAFE workforce has become increasingly casualised, with 75%

of teachers currently employed on fixed-term contracts or in casual roles. To deliver successful quality education and training to students, we need a strong workforce of teachers in secure and ongoing employment.

Recent changes in the new in-principle Victorian TAFE Teachers Agreement 2018 (TTA 2018) should see a dramatic change in these employment practices. However, a change in workplace culture is also required, recognising the value of providing security of employment not only to the individual but also to the institution and, most importantly, to the students.

Broadening of teacher expertise and building on qualifications is also an essential part of attracting more teachers to the role, as well as providing students with the highest quality education. TAFE teachers must be supported to upgrade and broaden their skills to provide increased job satisfaction, career progression and a first-class learning environment for students.

DET has made an important start, committing through agreement negotiations to allocate \$5 million to a teaching capability development fund that will support staff to upgrade their qualifications and undertake professional development.

Other initiatives could include:

- additional support for existing staff to upgrade their qualifications
- professional development
- greater support for maintaining industry and educational currency, including allowing provision within existing workloads
- a greater focus on the importance of teaching and learning as central to individual workload requirements and delivery of high-quality education and training.

The introduction of scholarship programs could be utilised to offset the costs of retraining, to attract new entrants into the profession, and for existing teachers wishing to upgrade or broaden their qualifications. There must also be greater provision of professional development to allow TAFE teachers to upgrade skills and to further develop their industry expertise and teaching practice. Such grants or support for professional development could be linked to applied research in the TAFE sector.



### Recommendations

- DET must work with TAFE institutes and the AEU to ensure that provisions in the new in-principle TTA 2018 relating to security of employment, including reductions in the levels of contract and casual work, are understood and implemented effectively.
- The government must invest in initiatives, such as scholarship programs, to provide support for current staff to upgrade skills or qualifications.
- Resources must be provided to allow staff to maintain industry currency, and professional development made available for teachers to improve and develop their teaching practice, including curriculum development and pedagogy.

### Minimum qualifications

To provide students with the highest quality education and to ensure TAFE remains at the centre of our education and training sector, TAFE teachers must be qualified.

The AEU believes all teachers delivering vocational education and training should be qualified teachers and there should be a transition to registering all TAFE teachers through the VIT, as is already the case for both schools and early childhood teachers.

This would ensure no provider is able to provide vocational education and training without a qualified teacher; it would meet the understandably stringent government requirements in relation to child safety; and it would assure the community on the quality of the workforce.

This would also mean that private providers would have to operate on a level playing field, rather than undercutting costs by employing staff who are not qualified teachers to conduct training. This could be effectively implemented by linking these requirements to the provision of funding in the contracts issued by government. A further benefit is the standing of the profession and the sector, where public perception is all too often an inaccurate view that a TAFE qualification is of lesser value than a university qualification.

### Recommendations

- Minimum teacher education qualification levels for VET teachers must be raised and regulatory oversight of the awarding of those qualifications strengthened. The minimum standard should be AQF Level 5, with a phased introduction to a Level 6 or above over three years.
- Teachers delivering vocational education and training should be fully qualified and registered as a TAFE teacher through the VIT. This will ensure no provider, private or public, is able to conduct training without a qualified teacher.
- Vocational qualifications must, at a minimum, be at the level being taught. In most instances there must be a minimum of two years' vocational experience (with a view to expanding this to four years' experience) prior to commencing.

# LINKS WITH INDUSTRY AND SCHOOLS

The links that TAFE has with secondary schools and industry are vital to its future. During the period of decline over the past 10 years, there has also been a decline in the numbers of secondary schools who have partnerships with TAFE institutes to deliver VETiS qualifications in whole or in part.

This has occurred largely due to the increased cost of TAFE, although concerns regarding quality have been raised. There also appears to have been a disconnect with industry, as they have sought alternative arrangements for training and there have been more general concerns raised about skills shortages and the availability of appropriately qualified or skilled employees.

In 'rebuilding' the vocational education system, it is essential that the links between schools, TAFE and industry are strengthened, and that government actively engages in supporting the building of cooperative relationships to enhance and strengthen the system. This can only be to the benefit of all those involved – most importantly for students, who

are seeking high-quality, relevant education and training that will result in opportunities to gain employment.

Industry is one of the key beneficiaries of the vocational education provided by TAFE. While there are already links between TAFE and industry, this is an area that must be developed further by using the new 'applied research' provisions in the in-principle TTA 2018. Government needs to investigate how these links can be strengthened, to enable TAFE to develop and implement relevant, quality qualifications that meet the needs of students, industry and the community.

In addition, industry needs to view its relationship with TAFE as a contributor rather than simply a beneficiary. It is no less an investment in industry's future than it is for the student's future, so industry should look at ways it can contribute to the 'cost' of the system, as occurs in a number of European countries. This does not mean becoming a substitute for government's responsibility to fund our public provider, but could amount to provision of equipment or expertise, direct opportunities

for students to gain experience within industry or perhaps involvement, in partnership with TAFE teachers, in student assessment.

## Recommendations

- Develop incentives to strengthen links between schools, TAFE, universities and industry.

## VET in Schools (VETiS)

In recent years, the number of students enrolled in VETiS has declined. By way of explanation, schools tend to cite the high cost of running these programs in addition to running a comprehensive VCE program. Schools are expected to cover the cost of these programs, completed as part of a student's VCE or VCAL, in part through the school resource package and in part through VETiS funding. The reality is that it is extremely difficult to deliver both a comprehensive VCE and VCAL program, including VETiS, with the funding currently provided. This results in students missing out, or having limited opportunities to choose additional or alternative programs of interest that may have led to alternative career options after secondary school.



Melbourne Polytechnic  
Plumbing & Services TAFE  
AEU member Dale Marshall  
with student James Munabo.  
Photo: Larry Chew



VETiS funding has been capped since 2013 (at the 2012 amount) and the differential funding bands provided for qualifications are also inadequate. The funding cap must be removed and the level of funding in each of the bands lifted. The funding must more accurately reflect the actual cost of running programs – which can include costs for travel, staffing and materials – if schools are going to genuinely be able to offer students a range of academic and vocational subjects and qualifications.

To strengthen cooperative or auspice arrangements between schools and TAFE, an incentive-based model could be introduced whereby public schools that use public TAFE receive a greater level of funding than those using the services of a private provider. Alternatively, TAFEs could be provided with incentives to develop arrangements with public schools.

In the eyes of the community – parents in particular – the standing of vocational education programs has declined, especially compared to the more academic pathway of VCE. If vocational education is to properly recognised and valued, it is essential that government raises awareness and shifts opinions about vocational education, either as part of a secondary school program or as a valid post-school pathway.

These initiatives could include such things as addressing the gaps in career education and advice students receive at school, support for teachers to access post-graduate career qualifications, greater and more relevant opportunities for students to gain industry experience, access to the new secondary technical schools to expose students to possible qualifications or career opportunities, and advertising campaigns to raise awareness in the community.

### Recommendations

- Funding for VETiS must be lifted to accurately reflect the cost to schools in running these programs.
- Develop incentives for public school and TAFE partnerships.

### An integrated system

The 2018/19 state budget included a range of initiatives in some of these areas, including careers education, which will address some of the gaps. However, one of the greatest challenges remains ensuring the system works in an integrated way to deliver the best outcomes for students.

The importance of exposing secondary school students to vocational options cannot be underestimated. It may be a one-off opportunity students experience – perhaps at a TAFE, with an employer, at their school, or at a technical school

– that opens their eyes to the possibilities of a career achieved via a vocational qualification or a combination of university and vocational qualifications.

We should no longer view educational pathways as linear, given research indicates employees are more likely to change employers a number of times during their careers and that many jobs of the future don't yet exist. It is, and should be, in the students' interest to re-build a system that allows students to move in and out of – and across – the available pathways. To achieve this, there has to be strong cooperative relationships between all the players in the sector: schools, TAFE, industry and universities. There are already examples of this, but this cooperation needs to be strengthened and built across the system if we are to meet the needs of all students.

TAFE offers a level of expertise and experience in vocational education that schools cannot. It follows that this expertise must be utilised when schools are developing or providing vocational opportunities for their students. As such, it would be sensible for schools to focus on the provision of vocational programs – of an introductory nature, or as units within full vocational education programs, – and that these not go beyond Certificate II level, except where this is done in partnership with TAFE.

Melbourne Polytechnic student  
Hoa Duc Nguyen.  
Photo: Meredith O'Shea





The new technical schools opened by the Andrews government in 2017 and 2018 are in their infancy, but already show considerable potential to provide opportunities for students to be exposed to new areas of science and technology in specialised areas linked to local industry needs. These new options, along with other specialised public vocational colleges, need to be monitored to see how well they improve opportunities for students in vocational education and to see whether they contribute to improved outcomes for students and change perceptions of the value of vocational education.

### **Apprenticeships and traineeships**

Apprenticeships and traineeships are an integral part of the vocational system, but the recent and steady decline in numbers of students participating is of great concern. The recent Headstart program announced by the Andrews government to support apprenticeship programs in secondary schools, with the option

for students to stay at school and complete their studies in Year 13, is to be commended. This is a good opportunity to ensure that students undertaking these qualifications are linked with TAFEs and employers throughout their study, both to gain relevant expertise and industry knowledge and experience, but also to improve opportunities for employment upon finishing their secondary schooling.

The relevance and success of the traineeship program needs further analysis to ensure it is delivering positive outcomes for students. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests some employers are using traineeships as a form of cheap labour, rather than genuine opportunities for students to gain relevant education and useful skills that will result in employment. If this is what the system is delivering, then changes must be made to ensure students are the actual beneficiaries and that the traineeships offered are in areas with genuine skill shortages.

### **Recommendations**

- Strengthen links between school-based apprenticeships, TAFE, and industry to encourage post-school pathways to employment.
- Ensure traineeships are in areas of skills shortages and benefit the student.
- Develop regulations, including auditing of those employers that have rolling traineeships, to prevent employers utilising traineeships as a form of cheap labour rather than quality skills development.



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Melbourne Polytechnic Plumbing & Services David Barnes with student Nathan Perrone. Photo: Larry Chew



AEU head office  
126 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford 3067 | Phone 03 9417 2822  
Email [melbourne@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:melbourne@aeuvic.asn.au) | Web [aeuvic.asn.au](http://aeuvic.asn.au)

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