

THE AUSTRALIAN



TAFE TEACHER

● VOL 54/1 ● AUTUMN 2020

Taking centre stage

Why TAFE
is essential to
our social and
economic
recovery

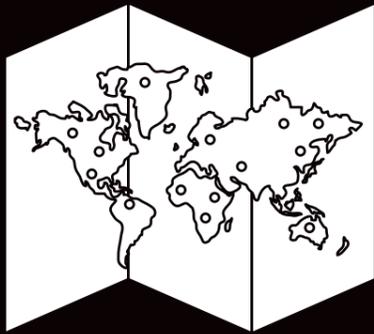
State of our TAFE
survey results



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Contents



06

TAKING CENTRE STAGE



10

NZ MARKETISATION



25

OUR ESPS

Features

05 COVID 19
AEU advises National Cabinet.

06 TAKING CENTRE STAGE
TAFE is essential to economic and social recovery.

10 NZ DITCHES MARKETIZATION MODEL
Righting the wrongs in VET policy.

14 STATE OF OUR TAFE SURVEY
The results are in and they are a wake-up call for government.

18 AFRICAN REFUGEES
Why Governments should promote participation in TAFE.

25 UNSUNG HEROES
Celebrating our Education Support Personnel (ESPs).

Regulars

04 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

22 MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

29 AROUND AUSTRALIA



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Hardie Grant MEDIA

Hardie Grant Media,
Ground Level, Building 1, 658 Church St, Richmond 3121
Tel: (03) 8520 644 • Fax: (03) 8520 6422
Email: tafeteacher@hardiegrant.com

AEU and subscription enquiries:
Australian Education Union Federal Office,
PO Box 1158, South Melbourne Victoria 3205
Tel: (03) 9693 1800 • Fax: (03) 9693 1805
Email: aeu@aeufederal.org.au
facebook.com/AEUFederal
@AEUFederal

Editor Susan Hoggood
Publisher Fiona Hardie
Account manager Hannah Louey
Art director Dallas Budde
Design Natalie LaChina
Printer Printgraphics Printgreen
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Your national TAFE Council Executive members

ACT Karen Noble
aeuact@aeuact.org.au • 02 6272 7900 • aeuact.org.au

NSW Maxine Sharkey
mail@nswtf.org.au • 02 9217 2100 • nswtf.org.au

NT Vacant
admin@aeunt.org.au • 08 8948 5399 • aeunt.org.au

QLD Dave Terauds
qtu@qtu.asn.au • 07 3512 9000 • qtu.asn.au

SA Tony Sutherland
aeusa@aeusa.asn.au • 08 8172 6300 • aeusa.asn.au

TAS Simon Bailey
support@aeutas.org.au • 03 6234 9500 • aeutas.org.au

VIC Greg Barclay
melbourne@aeuvic.asn.au • 03 9417 2822 • aeuvic.asn.au

WA Gary Hedger
contact@sstuaa.org.au • 08 9210 6000 • sstuaa.org.au

Federal TAFE office bearers

Federal TAFE President:
Michelle Purdy
Federal TAFE Secretary:
Vacant

www.aeufederal.org.au

From the president

Welcome to the new look TAFE Teacher magazine



Michelle Purdy AEU Federal TAFE President

Before the emergence of COVID-19, we were busy channelling our disappointment over last year's election result into thinking about how we can improve our campaign and make sure that the Morrison Government steps up and takes TAFE seriously – the redesign of this magazine was just the start.

Right now, with this unprecedented situation evolving so quickly, supporting our members through this crisis has become the priority, particularly those who are in precarious employment. The AEU is also aware that members are dealing with significant workload increases as TAFEs react to rapidly changing state and federal policies in response to the pandemic.

While it clearly isn't business as usual for anyone, what hasn't changed is the AEU's commitment to working in the best interests of our members.

AEU reaffirms commitment to TAFE

I can report that the passion for TAFE was very much alive at the AEU's Federal Conference in February with TAFE Secretary Maxine Sharkey giving a great presentation explaining the particular

work pressures that TAFE teachers face from audits in a panel on valuing our member's work.

The Conference's theme of *Resilience, Determination, Hope* was backed up by the conference statement that reaffirmed continuation of the AEU TAFE campaign to ensure that 'TAFE be returned to its rightful place as the preeminent provider of vocational education'.

I gained hope from hearing the leader of the opposition Anthony Albanese

but it seemed to be great therapy for some members who were able to get a lot of their issues off their chest, knowing that we would listen and use the comments to take action. We'll be using the results as an evidence base for briefings, submissions, campaigning and lobbying activities.

Thank you again to everyone who took the time to fill it out. To see the full report on the TAFE survey go to page 14.



state that "TAFE is the heart and without it there is no blood running through the vocational education system," and admit that Labor has not always got it right for TAFE. And from Adam Bandt, the new leader of the Australian Greens in one of his first public speeches, who spoke to the crucial importance of TAFE for the future of our planet, while reaffirming the Greens commitment to a fully funded TAFE system with no public funding for private providers.

Survey results are in

Our rethinking of the campaign will be massively informed by the phenomenal response we had to our State of TAFE survey at the end of last year. It was a big ask – we know TAFE staff are overworked and we know the survey was very long –

TAFE 2020 Conference

The National TAFE Council Executive was due to hold its own conference in April – *TAFE 2020 and Beyond* – bringing together politicians, academics, TAFE staff, policy and decision makers to chart a new vision for TAFE. Unfortunately, we had to postpone the conference due to COVID-19.

We were also due to launch a newly commissioned piece of research from the Centre for Future Work on the positive impact of TAFE to the economy at the conference. We will have more on that in the next issue.

In the meantime, stay safe, be assured your union is still working for you and I hope you enjoy your new look TAFE magazine. ●

The impact of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on TAFE across Australia

AEU response

At the outset of the pandemic, the AEU secured early meetings with the Prime Minister and Federal Education Minister, Dan Tehan who both committed to working constructively and regularly with the union as the situation evolved.

The extract below forms part of the communication to the Prime Minister and was sent as the TAFE Teacher went to press when TAFE's across the country were transitioning to emergency response plans.

The post-school education sector is a critical part of the Australian economy and will play a role that will be necessary for a post-COVID-19 recovery. TAFE currently delivers a wide range of qualifications and as the principal provider of high-quality vocational education and training must be supported to significantly expand its place in the sector.

To date, the National Cabinet and the Federal Government have both been silent on the issue of TAFE in the new world of education under COVID-19. Yet, AEU members working in TAFEs across the country are suffering the same stress and anxiety as other education workers, but operate under increased pressures.

A significant proportion of workers in TAFE are fixed term and casual employees who have no certainty of ongoing employment or income following the end of this first quarter. Like other education institutions TAFE has been unable to procure the sanitation items necessary to ensure the ongoing health and safety of staff and students.

Considerations for vulnerable workers in other parts of the education

The AEU calls the government to immediately guarantee:

that the health and safety needs of the TAFE workforce will be prioritised by the National Cabinet to ensure that those workers who remain on site can do so safely

that vulnerable workers will be supported to work from home

Ongoing funding of TAFE to ensure that vocational education and training is delivered by the public provider – allocation of 70% of the current federal budget for vocational education and training to TAFE through the elimination of the competitive funding arrangements for that proportion of funding

Payment of TAFE funding on enrolment (in the same way as universities are funded), rather than on completion of a qualification, to provide certainty for TAFE about funding streams.

These measures will also enable staff, particularly those who are in casual employment, to have certainty around their ongoing employment. This will be critical if we are to ensure that TAFE institutes are well placed to continue to provide quality vocational education and training now and but also so that the sector is not decimated and incapable of being up and ready to resume normal operations post COVID-19.

sector, particularly the option to work from home, are not universally available and present particular challenges given the mode of delivery of vocational education in TAFE.

Large parts of vocational education are practical and not suited to online learning and assessment. Many TAFE learners are not suited to online and/or high-level independent study. They do not have the resources (laptops, IT skills, internet) for this style of learning and assessment. Many are not confident, independent learners. Some learners are now additionally disadvantaged, and this is causing inequity to become further embedded. These factors are particularly pronounced in the adult migrant education program and skills for education and employment programs.

Action needs to be taken now. Employers are withdrawing students from TAFE due to its inability to provide adequate distancing in classrooms, laboratories and workshops. Students are absenting themselves in large numbers and they will become increasingly disengaged unless a clear message is sent – a message that says that we have put the health and wellbeing of students and staff, their families and community first, and that TAFE has the capacity and commitment to work with them to help them continue and complete their studies.

Australia's workforce needs TAFE students to complete their qualifications when it is safe to do so – once the nation is in a better position we need the ways and resources to provide expanded training to meet skill shortages with well trained staff, who have studied at TAFE. We will need more TAFE teachers who are well resourced to do their jobs. ●

TAFE is the answer

Australia is facing a decade of complex social and economic challenges including a skills crisis, high youth unemployment, automation and climate change and now a response to COVID-19. Investing in a strong TAFE system is the obvious answer to resolving them. Policy makers just need to join the dots.

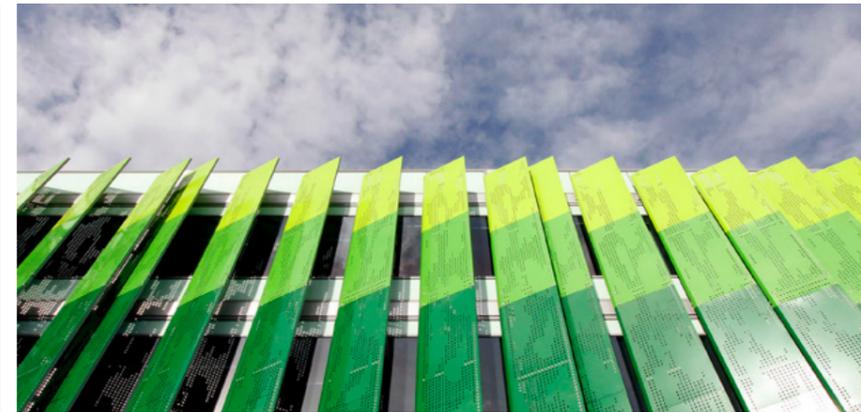


Half the new jobs over the next five years will require VET qualifications, according to a report by the Department of Jobs and Small Business, yet still TAFE is being starved of funding. Investment has dropped to its lowest level since 2008, when the Australian Government began its series of vocational education funding reforms.

Correna Haythorpe, AEU Federal President, called this underinvestment "a shameful decade of neglect," pointing out the recent announcements by Prime Minister Scott Morrison to strip funding from TAFE.

Last year the government cut \$325.8 million in funding from TAFE budgets, equivalent to almost 11 per cent of total federal funding to the sector. The TAFE sector was also deprived of access to the \$4 billion Education Investment Fund, money which was intended to be invested in desperately needed infrastructure improvements in the TAFE and higher education sector.

Earlier this year it was revealed that the Federal Coalition failed to spend nearly \$1 billion budgeted for a series of TAFE apprenticeship, skills and training initiatives.



Ms Haythorpe used these figures to hold the government directly accountable for the current national skills shortage. Last year the figures for apprentices taking up training dipped as low as 140,000 fewer than when the government was first elected.

For years the Federal Coalition has systemically starved TAFE of funding, yet now we learn that there is almost a billion dollars in unspent TAFE and training funding.

The lack of appreciation for the vital role that TAFE graduates play in keeping the Australian economy operating, particularly in tough economic times, is apparent. The government is not only preventing people from accessing quality training, but preventing them from accessing the labour market and well paid jobs.

The Department of Jobs and Small Businesses Job Outlook Data states that the four growth sectors of the future will be health (particularly ageing), construction, education and IT — all sectors that would benefit from investment in a strong TAFE sector.

TAFE is going to be more important to the employment prospects of Australians than ever before. Yet there is no indication that policymakers are connecting the dots and preparing TAFEs to meet the future needs of these sectors.

People without jobs and jobs without people

Australia is already short of workers in many fast growing occupations. The Australian Industry Group's Workforce Development Needs survey revealed that 75 per cent of employers are experiencing skills shortages and finding it difficult to fill vacancies.

Last year the government cut \$325.8 million in funding from TAFE budgets, equivalent to almost 11 per cent of total federal funding to the sector.

This is playing out most visibly in the construction industry. Australia is in the midst of a population boom and governments are investing heavily in infrastructure to keep up. The lack of homegrown talent means that employers are having to look overseas for people in a bid to keep the projects on track.

As a result, the government is issuing more temporary skilled worker visas for welders, carpenters and electricians than ever before, with the amount growing from 7200 to 9200 nationally from 2018 to 2019.

The skills crisis is not just confined to urban infrastructure projects, it will be felt keenly in the rural and regional areas most affected by the bushfires that need

Marketing spin over a proper plan

The Assistant Minister for Vocation Education, Training and Apprenticeships, Steve Irons MP outlined his vision for TAFEs in a speech to the TAFE Directors Convention in Brisbane late last year. He proclaimed "the \$525 million package announced in this year's budget is a new beginning for vocational education and training in this country".

Yet there was not one single mention of public TAFE in the 2019-20 budget and this money which funds the Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow package based on the recommendations of the Joyce review is not a new investment. It is made up almost entirely of repurposed funds from the existing Skilling Australians Fund which was not spent due to Victoria and Queensland refusing to sign up. It does not come close to replacing the \$3 billion that has been cut from VET since 2013.

Mr Iron's announcement to establish ten training hubs across Australia to tackle youth unemployment in key regions also rang hollow when TAFEs around the country are being closed down.

He then called on TAFE Directors to "do things like meet with the National Careers Ambassador and perhaps provide input to the National Skills Commission" putting the onus on TAFE staff to be proactive rather than actively seeking out expertise.

In response, Correna Haythorpe, AEU Federal President, has challenged the Federal government to prioritise TAFE in the 2020-21 budget due in May. "This Budget must provide significant reinvestment in TAFE and scrap endless industry and employer focused committees, concocted expert panels and dubious celebrity ambassador appointments that emerged from last year's budget as the Government's response to the Joyce report."



With national youth unemployment trending considerably higher than a decade ago ... there is no shortage of people to undertake the work.

massive reconstruction. Homes, schools, businesses need to be rebuilt and having TAFEs delivering accredited vocational education courses in those devastated areas would drive economic recovery and provide a much needed boost to the communities

It would also mean that we can compete internationally and take advantage of rapidly expanding export markets too.

With national youth unemployment trending considerably higher than a decade ago at 12% — nearly three times higher than the rate for Australians aged over 25 — there is no shortage of people to undertake the work. This figure increases to 14% in Tasmania, Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia where funding cuts to TAFE have hit especially hard.

Opportunities in aged care

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is running a national campaign called My Chance, Our Future to draw attention to this youth unemployment crisis. While it warns that the equation between getting a qualification and a job is not simple as not all jobs are suitable for everyone, it points to a strong Vocational Education system as a necessity. Their campaign snapshot spotlights that demand for carers, particularly for people who are aged or live with disability, is growing faster than the figures for enrolment in courses. Indeed it is projected that Australia will need to triple the carer workforce by 2050.

Karen Noble of the Canberra Institute of Technology warns that this demand should not be seen as a market to be exploited. “There’s no doubt that with

our ageing population we need young people to consider and get trained up for careers in aged care, but it is vital that there is proper planning for these jobs and training is not rushed. At TAFE it takes a minimum of four to six months to complete the entry level qualification. This includes knowledge and skills, learning in simulation and well-structured and supervised industry placement. Anything less results in substandard education and low quality workers, who themselves become vulnerable employees.”

Karen says she is astonished to still be asked: “Can I do this Certificate all online? Can it be faster and why do I have to do so much?” Other providers, and reduced funding, have set the bar low and conditioned the market to expect this training to be fast, cheap and requiring little effort. Yet we only have to look at the evidence presented in the Royal Commission into Aged Care to see what happens when training is rushed.

Fourth Industrial Revolution

Rapid technological change in the first 20 years of this century continues to disrupt the way we work and is making TAFE more important to our national development and the employment prospects of Australians than ever before. Policy makers need to be thinking now about the repercussions of new technologies and the transition for workers. To maintain that vocational education should be built on units of competency that have been derived from current jobs, while it is widely reported that 50% of people today will be doing jobs in the future that haven’t been created yet is illogical. There is an urgent need to build capabilities so young people can adapt to changing circumstances and build and easily transfer their skills throughout their careers.

Australia’s narrow competency based qualifications need to be broadened to teach twenty-first century capabilities including critical thinking, creativity, adaptability and entrepreneurship. If we want young people to tackle the big issues facing our society and come up with solutions these skills will be vital.

Industry’s stranglehold over national qualifications development needs to be reduced with a return to teachers having greater input into the curriculum. This change would allow for a much more agile response to local needs, rather than the ‘just in time courses’ that are

“There’s no doubt that with our ageing population we need young people to consider and get trained up for careers in aged care, but it is vital that there is proper planning for these jobs and training is not rushed.”

● **Karen Noble**
Canberra Institute of Technology

being driven by industry demands today. In addition, there must be a properly resourced commitment to ensuring that all young people have strong core literacy, numeracy and digital skills as a basis for ongoing participation in work and community.

TAFE vital to a just transition

As Australia transitions to a clean energy future, workers will need to reskill and retrain as jobs become redundant. It’s impossible to simply redeploy coal miners as solar panel installers or wind turbine engineers. A workforce development plan with a strong TAFE at the heart will be essential for avoiding skills shortages that may create barriers to investments in a low carbon economy. It’s urgent that we start thinking about this now. We need to make sure that people are not left behind.

Unless governments address the crisis in the TAFE sector as a matter of urgency, the consequences for Australians — and the society and economy — will be dire.

The vocational education sector needs a complete structural overhaul to restore TAFE to its centre. Tinkering at the edges of the current market based system and allowing profit margins to drive which courses are delivered will fail to equip Australians with the skills and qualifications needed to participate effectively in our labour market and solve the complex challenges of this century. ●

Public money for public good

It stands to reason that public money — taxpayer money — should be used for the public good, but that also means that it should not be given to private operators to undermine that investment.

The Tasmanian Government’s decision to keep Drysdale School of Hospitality as a valuable part of TasTAFE is a credit to its high student and employer satisfaction rates. Its new Tourism and Hospitality Student Scholarships will provide more Tasmanians with the expertise to take advantage of the jobs being created across the state by its booming tourism industry.

However, while TasTAFE struggles for funding the state government is handing millions of dollars to the hospitality industry to conduct feasibility studies into forming a privately operated training organisation that would directly compete with Drysdale, a deliberate attempt to undermine TasTAFE that can only be described as privatisation by stealth.

New Zealand ditches marketisation model

Since 2018, the vocational education and training sector in Aotearoa New Zealand has been going through a period of radical and exciting transition, with reforms that will see the most significant changes to the sector in a generation.

Article by Sharn Riggs

The creation of a single unified polytechnic delivering quality, accessible, affordable tertiary education across the country in a collaborative mode is the goal. There has been much opposition to these changes from many quarters but our members who have been working in a sector which has seen polytechnic after polytechnic failing financially over the last 20 years, facing review after review, know that these changes can only be an improvement on the free market model that has reigned and has so spectacularly failed.

February saw the first concrete step in this transition, with the passing of the Education (Vocational Education and Training Reform) Amendment Bill, and law changes that in the words of Minister of Education Chris Hipkins, “formalise the process of creating a strong, unified, sustainable system to set us up to respond to skills shortages and prepare for the future of work” in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This strong, unified system will see a refocus on education provision for the whole country, including those providers

TEU members know the reforms provide a once in a lifetime opportunity to right the wrongs made over more than two decades of competition and uncertainty

currently struggling outside of our urban centres. It will see an end to competition between vocational education providers over a shrinking pool of student fees and subsidies, and an end to increased uncertainty and stress among staff. It will ensure students continue to have access to learning opportunities in their communities and especially it will provide a unified funding system that recognises the uniqueness and challenges of the vocational education system and the role of the classroom in work-based learning.

Massive union win

The passing of the Bill and the reform of New Zealand’s vocational education and training sector has been a massive win for the Tertiary Education Union | Te Hautū Kahurangi o Aotearoa (TEU) and for our members.

As Aotearoa New Zealand’s largest tertiary education union and professional association representing almost 10,000 academic and general/allied staff in the tertiary education sector, TEU members know the reforms provide a once in a lifetime opportunity to right the wrongs made over more than two decades of competition and uncertainty. An opportunity to right the wrongs of years



of underfunding and divisive policies, that damaged the vocational education and training sector to the detriment of education and learning in New Zealand.

New Zealand’s vocational education and training sector supports the country’s future IT specialists, nurses, teachers, builders, mechanics, retailers, social workers and community leaders. Where there is crossover in these programmes with the university sector, our learners in vocational education often perform better than their university-trained peers, particularly when it comes to the practical application of their training. The new unified system — by reducing the need for competitive practices — will allow the vocational education and training sector to refocus on these strengths, and on its core commitment to lifelong learning, quality teaching and research in vocational education and training.

The announcement of the reforms came at a time when Treasury figures analysed by the TEU indicated that cumulative underfunding to the sector reached \$3.7 billion in 2019 from 2009 levels. Our analysis further indicated the funding hole would increase to more

Funding cuts have far outpaced the drop in student numbers over the same period. And the situation was only set to get worse as cash-strapped institutions continued to look at ways to slash costs to deal with the flawed approach of the previous government

than \$6 billion over the next three years. Funding cuts have far outpaced the drop in student numbers over the same period. And the situation was only set to get worse as cash-strapped institutions continued to look at ways to slash costs to deal with the flawed approach of the previous government, including cutting courses, and in 2019 alone instigating more than 130 reviews covering all aspects of tertiary provision.

Regional providers have been the worst hurt because education has been treated as a marketable product for the last two decades, in a market that cares little about regional development.

Now the government has offered students, staff, communities, and local businesses the space to help create a system that works for us all, and a system that continues to be open to the voice of students, staff and communities.

Changing priorities

The shift in emphasis that the reforms are set to bring is evident in the shift in language used to describe the operations, objectives and aspirations of the sector. In place of the focus on economic outcomes, we are seeing a return to the language of community, of staff, students and families; of social and professional outcomes, and improved futures for the good of all New Zealanders.

The Education (Vocational Education and Training Reform) Amendment Bill also includes a greater emphasis on reflecting Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the original agreement of partnership between Māori and the Crown), promoting equity and supporting Māori and Pasifika learners. In meeting the needs of all of its learners, the Bill states the NZIST must operate in a way that allows it to meet the needs in particular of those who are under-served by the education system, including, but not limited to, Māori, Pacific, and disabled learners. It aims to achieve this through meaningful partnerships with Māori and Pacific employers, and communities at a local level, including whānau, hapū, iwi, and Pacific communities.

The Bill further states the NZIST must operate in way that allows it to reflect Māori-Crown partnerships in order to ensure that its governance, management, and operations give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi; recognise that Māori are key actors in regional social, environmental, and economic development; and respond to the needs of and improve outcomes for Māori learners, whānau, hapū, iwi, and employers.

Decentralisation

Key to ensuring the success of these reforms, the success of education in both our regions and main centres, and the success of the new national Institute, will be ensuring professional decision making remains at the level of the region, rather than the centre. The decision to legislate for the inclusion of staff and student representatives on council is a key step, but TEU knows we must also be active in informing the new structures so that students and staff are not only represented, but heard.

These are significant inclusions for all New Zealanders, for the future of our society, and for tertiary education in Aotearoa. It has been, and continues to be a journey of monumental change and transition.



This is a big step for the sector, but one which is closer to where we collectively see the future of tertiary education in New Zealand.

New Zealand's coalition government must be commended for the shape and tone of the reform's consultation process.

Throughout 2018, the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission engaged with vocational education and training sector stakeholders, including learners, employers, iwi, business, industry groups, local government, education and training providers and their staff, and a variety of peak bodies. The TEU was there every step of the way, holding all-staff meetings at every vocational education and training provider across New Zealand, ensuring the concerns of members were heard at the highest levels of the conversation.

But for TEU members, the conversation did not begin in 2018. The questions

asked of the review, and the solutions proposed through the reforms have been a part of an ongoing conversation which the TEU membership has led on campuses around Aotearoa. This conversation always emphasised a commitment to quality public tertiary education, accessible and available to all across the country. We set out a vision of a sector that is adequately resourced, one that values effective collaboration and the contribution of all staff and local communities, and one that energises regional communities and plays to their strengths.

Board presence

In August 2019, the IST Establishment Board Unit was created, and was made responsible for setting up the new



institute for 1 April 2020. Members of the Board include those representing the interests of Māori and of business, of employers, council members of education providers, experts in public policy, finance, and TEU Communications and Campaigns Officer and former TEU National President Dr Sandra Grey.

Sandra's place on the Establishment Board is a credit to her leadership within and knowledge of the tertiary education sector, and she has played a pivotal role in ensuring academic freedom for both staff and students, and for staff and student voice and representation on NZIST's council is enshrined in legislation. It is also indicative of the rejuvenated relationship TEU now has with Government, and their willingness to engage in open dialogue with and

PICTURED
TEU members at rallies around New Zealand.



input from a broad range of stakeholders and advocates.

Come 1 April 2020, for staff and students, change will not be immediate. There will remain uncertainty in the short term, and we will face a number of challenges. This is a big step for the sector, but one which is closer to where we collectively see the future of tertiary education in New Zealand. A step closer to having high quality, accessible public tertiary education that is available to students wherever they live, to vocational education and training providers which are part of a nationwide, tiered network of provision.

This is a once in lifetime opportunity and our TEU members, our staff and students, need to be there, to continue to be part of the conversation and a part of shaping the new system and Institute.

It will not be rolled out initially in its finished form. It is a process that is going to require continued input and consideration from TEU members as the professionals, experts and knowledge leaders in the sector. We need to make the time to ensure that member voices — allied and general staff, and academic staff, together alongside students — are engaged in this process to ensure that the end result is going to be the delivery of better education and opportunities for all staff, students, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities across New Zealand. ●

SHARN RIGGS is National Secretary at TEU|Te Haut Kahurangi o Aotearoa. Sharn was due to speak at the AEU's TAFE 2020 Conference.

Staff from every TAFE in the country took part in the survey, with 1438 people responding in total.

STATE OF OUR TAFES SURVEY

A wake up call for government

The AEU's comprehensive survey reveals TAFE teachers are working an additional day per week over and above their paid work, resulting in soaring teacher workloads at all levels.

Article by Jonathon Guy, AEU Strategic Research Officer

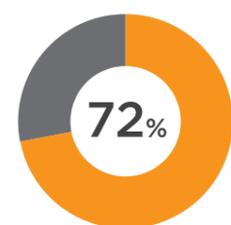
The first in-depth look at the working life of the TAFE workforce for a decade shows how working hours and workloads have increased and jobs have changed under the demands of ever-changing regulatory compliance requirements:

- 72% of respondents say that their working hours have increased over the last three years
- 93% of respondents said that the pace or intensity of their work has increased over the last three years
- Only 2% say their workload is always manageable, due to excessive administration and management demands

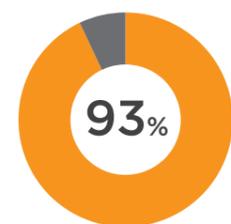
Staff from every TAFE in the country took part in the survey, with 1438 people responding in total, broadly representative of the population (49.0% female, 50.5% male, and 0.5% non-binary and 1.6% Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander).

Unsurprisingly, workload was the key issue. Across all respondents working in TAFE, both full time and part time, working hours exceed contractual hours by an average of 26%. Full time workers reported average working hours 21% above their contractual working hours — this equates to an additional day of unpaid work every week.

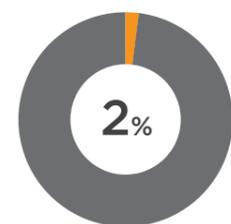
RESPONSES BY THE NUMBERS



say working hours have increased



say pace/intensity of work has increased



say their workload is manageable

In line with other international workload studies of further and higher education teaching staff, part time workers reported that they are the most likely to work hours that substantially exceed their contracted work time. In this survey, the average part time TAFE employee who responded to the survey stated that their work time exceeds their contracted hours by an average of 43% and those employed on very small fractions (0.2–0.4 FTE) are most likely to report working well above their contracted hours with many reporting that they are working double the amount of time they are paid for each week.

Those at the earlier stages of their teaching careers are working the most excessive hours. On average, TAFE members in their first three years of working in the sector are working an average of 28% more hours each week than they are contracted to work and 30% are working in excess of 45 hours per week on average. Some early career teachers have reported working in excess of 65 hours per week.

Survey respondents were asked 'Over the last three years, other things being equal, have your working hours increased, stayed the same or reduced?'. Across the sector nearly three quarters of people stated that their workload had increased over the last five years, almost half (46%) stating it had increased significantly and 26% stating it had increased slightly, while 21% indicated that their working hours had not changed and less than 7% stated that working hours had reduced.

FIGURE 1 CHANGES IN WORKING HOURS OVER TIME



Workload intensifies

In addition to increased and unsocial and non-family friendly extended working hours, a significant component of workload pressure and stress can result from having to work at a continually high and unrelenting pace or intensity.

Three quarters of respondents reported that the pace and intensity of their work had increased significantly in the last three years, and another reported that it had increase slightly. In total, the vast majority — 93% — reported that the pace or intensity of their work had increased over the last three years. Only 2% said that it had reduced, either significantly or slightly.

“I have an average workload of about 45-55 hours per week on campus, then additional marking and work from home and over weekends. During the last four weeks, I have easily worked an average of 60 hours per week just to try and have my work done in time to meet grading deadlines.”

● Lecturer / Queensland

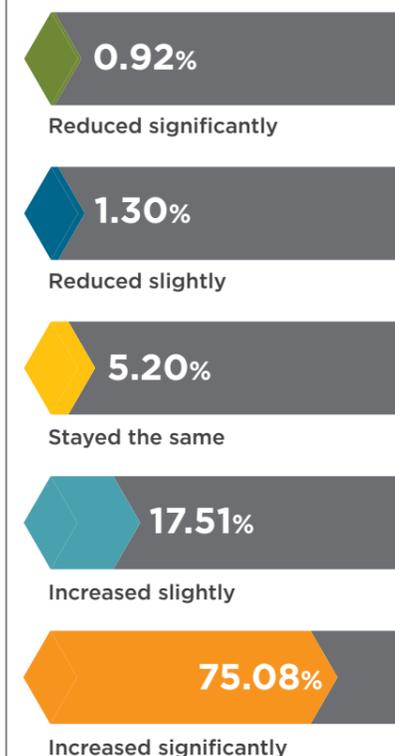
“I’m exhausted, over worked, I feel like I have no life other than working and sleeping — my family miss out on much time with me. Even though bosses talk about work life balance the workload still remains and does not disappear.”

● Lecturer / South Australia

“I am suffering workplace stress due to increased workload and having no additional resources available. There is no recognition by higher management of the time required to teach online programs. We are frequently required by the tuition assurance scheme to pick up students from failed RTOs without additional teachers.”

● Lecturer / Queensland

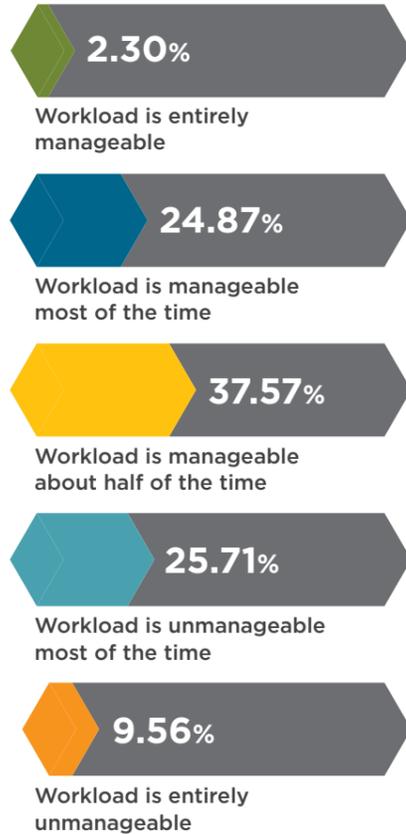
FIGURE 2 CHANGES IN INTENSITY OF WORKLOAD



Are workloads manageable?

When asked whether they are able to manage their workloads day-to-day 10% said that their workload is entirely unmanageable, more than a third (35%) reported that their workload is unmanageable most of the time and a further 38% said that it is unmanageable half the time. In total, 73% reported that their workload is unmanageable at least half the time and only 2% of people said that their workload is entirely manageable.

FIGURE 3
MANAGEABILITY
OF WORKLOADS



Changes in work time composition

In addition to quantifying the hours worked and intensity of work performed by staff each week, a key goal of the survey was to determine whether the composition of workloads has changed over the last three years, and whether any changes had altered the relative proportion of time that staff in TAFE spend on the various tasks that constitute the whole their workload.

By far, administration was seen as having the largest increase as a component of total work time, with 96% in total saying that it has increased as a proportion of total work time in the last three years and 84% saying it has increased significantly.

A clear majority of TAFE members surveyed also responded that the time they spend on Quality Assurance has increased significantly (61%) as has time spent on marking and assessments (51%). Two thirds (68%) said that the time

they spend on preparing and assessing students resitting examinations has increased — a result which points to the failure of Competency Based Training as the dominant approach to learning in Vocational Education.

It is telling to note the activities that members were least likely to have said increased as a proportion of their overall work were research, reading and time spent teaching.

The contributory factor for TAFE members was increased administrative work. This was selected as the number one factor by more than half of respondents and selected as the top factor affecting workload by more than three times any other factor.

“Constant restructuring of management and IT/ software systems has created confusion, and I and other teachers have found new and changing systems obstructive, dysfunctional and difficult to navigate.”

● TAFE Teacher / New South Wales

Resources have declined, class sizes have increased and significant investment is needed

We asked TAFE members if they were aware of how funding cuts and resource limitations had affected their institution. More than two thirds (68%) were aware that their institution had stopped providing particular courses in the last three years, and across all subject areas a lack of funding was the most common reason for course closure, followed by insufficient student numbers, and a lack of qualified teachers. The most frequently defunded courses were Creative Arts, Engineering and Languages, Literacy and Numeracy courses.

Eighty-one per cent of those who were of their departmental budget said that the budget in their department has decreased in the last three years and nearly half (49%) of those in teaching roles said class sizes had increased.

FIGURE 4
CHANGES TO
DEPARTMENTAL
FUNDING



Changes to funding

Improved IT equipment and material support for workplace delivery were cited as requiring significant additional investment to be brought up to standard by an overall majority of respondents (54% and 50% respectively) and considered to require some upgrading by an additional 35% and 40% respectively. The need for substantial capital works and equipment investment in our TAFE campuses is so great, that across the seven areas of resource that we asked about (as shown in the table below) only a minority of respondents considered current levels of investment to be adequate. For IT equipment, material support for workplace delivery, technical and administrative equipment and trade equipment the percentage of TAFE members who considered investment to be adequate was only around 10-12%.

ASQA compliance is overriding Professional Development

During the survey period a significant concern for our TAFE members was the new ASQA Certificate IV TAE requirements. We anecdotally heard of TAFE teachers not being able to do their jobs until complying with the new requirements, or the requirements being applied differently across jurisdictions and causing delays in assessment and qualification for students.

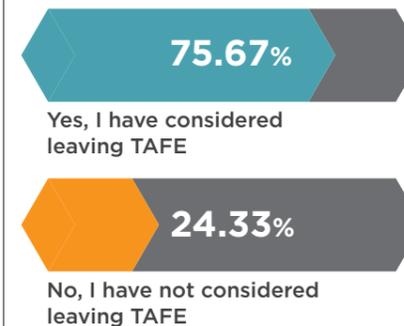
In total, 70% said that the ASQA Trainer and Assessor compliance requirements had impacted them, 31% said that it had increased their workload and 6% had to stop teaching or assessing until they were found compliant.

On average, respondents said that they had spent an average of 70-80 hours to date on compliance activities, with the majority (78%) doing all this work unpaid and in their own time. It should be noted here, that these compliance requirements are not a one off occurrence, but are an ongoing burden that will add to the workload and stress of TAFE members for as long as they are in place.

“I am planning to leave TAFE because teaching has become pushing the poor students through assessment tasks and making them sign paperwork. There is little time for them to learn and no chance of providing necessary specific attention to those who need it. Validated tasks which we are forced to teach are unrelated to my students’ lives and real needs and are often of poor quality.”

● TAFE Teacher / New South Wales

FIGURE 5
CONSIDERATION
FOR LEAVING THE
TAFE SECTOR



Experienced and valuable TAFE staff are considering leaving the sector.

One of the most concerning outcomes from the survey is that more than three quarters (76%) of respondents said that they had considered leaving the sector in the last three years. 94% of those were currently working in the job that they had considered leaving. Workload and excessive hours, management approach to and lack of support for staff and arduous compliance requirements were the most commonly cited reasons for wanting to leave.

Urgent wake-up call

The survey results should act as a wake-up call to the Federal Government. Without significant reinvestment in TAFE as the anchor of vocational education in Australia, the sector will not be able to train the huge amount of skill, experience and professional expertise that clearly makes up the TAFE workforce.

The AEU will use the results from the survey to inform the direction of future campaigns and as an evidence base to lobby for urgent change. ●



WINNER

Congratulations to Donna Kerr of TAFE Gippsland for winning an iPad in the State of Our TAFE’s survey.

PICTURED:
Phillip Smith from TAFE
AEU Vic Branch and Donna Kerr.

Why we need more African refugees in TAFE

There are economic and social reasons for governments to promote higher education participation of refugee-background Africans

Article by Dr Tebeje Molla / Research fellow, Deakin University

In the past 30 years, Australia has settled thousands of African refugees. But many arrived at a young age and with low educational attainment. That presents challenges in trying to encourage more to participate in higher education.

High educational attainment is an important factor for employment and social integration of refugee youth.

Yet only about 10% of young people from the main countries of origin of African refugees go to university within five years of arrival. That trend has not changed much in the past 25 years.

For those who do enter higher education, completion is a serious challenge.

In the past 17 years, only one in five African refugee students completed their undergraduate course.

Nationally, just under half (46%) of domestic students who commenced undergraduate university courses in 2009 completed their degrees in four years. When the cohort length increases to nine years, the completion rate is three quarters (74%) of students.

RIGHT Improved higher education attainment amongst African refugee youth achieves more than just increasing employability opportunities.

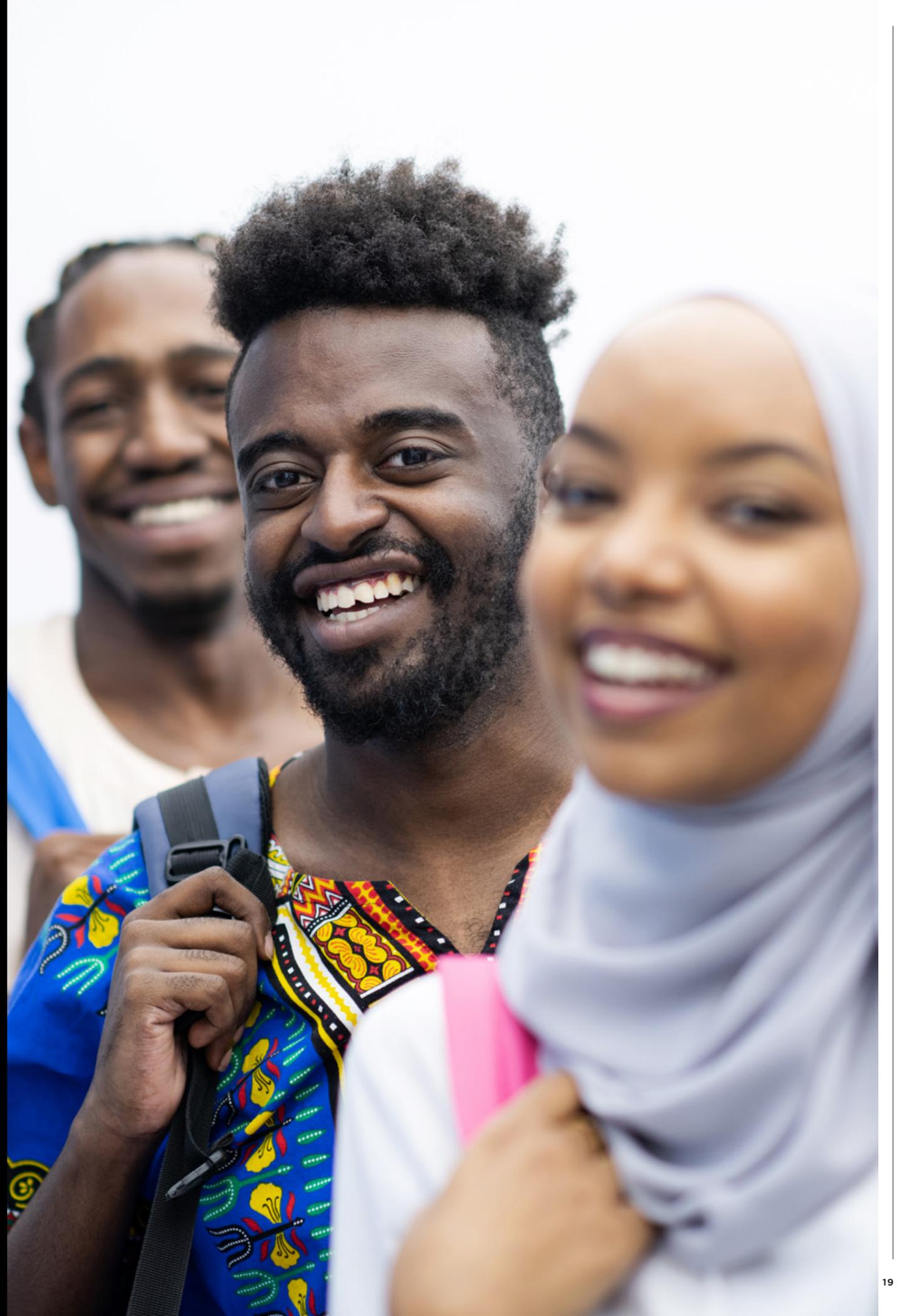
The challenge for young refugees

Many African refugees arrived in Australia with interrupted educational experiences. They may have endured the trauma of war, violence and family separation. These negative effects of forced displacement can inhibit them from taking full advantage of educational opportunities.

In the early stage of their settlement, young African refugees faced informational barriers in relation to available educational options and accessing financial support. In exploring pathways, they have a limited social network to rely on.

Most African refugees come from non-English speaking countries and limited English language proficiency is a stumbling block. Fragmented educational histories also mean they enter the Australian education system with limited academic skills.

Black African youth face explicit racism in educational institutions and public spaces. Experiences of racism cause stress that can negatively affect academic engagement. Studies in social psychology show the stress of racial bias hinders learning.



PICTURED
(Below right) South Sudanese student, Akolda Bil, performing as a youth worker at Yarra Youth Services.



As a result of the combined effects of the above issues, young refugees often get low school results, so many fail to meet entrance requirements of most universities. Institutions that attract low-ATAR students may not have sufficient resources to run effective enabling programs such as courses for academic skills development.

High expectations

Most African parents hold high expectations for their children's academic achievement.

But career educators in selected secondary schools in Melbourne have told me there often exists a significant gap between what parents want and what students are able to achieve.

In other words, due to unrealistic parental expectations, African students miss viable higher education options.

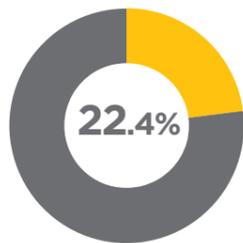
For example, students who cannot meet entrance requirements of most universities, could find TAFE diplomas more rewarding than university degrees. But career educators told me that often, due to parental pressure, students are less interested in non-university degrees.

What can be done to improve things?

Equity practitioners in schools and universities are aware that enabling programs that benefit refugee students are resource-intensive. For educational institutions to secure

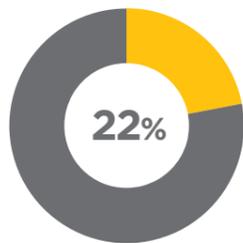
AFRICAN ORIGIN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

In 2016, the unemployment rate of people from African origins was



over three times higher than the national average (6.9%).

This group had low access to professional occupations of



compared with 49% for the general population.

the necessary resources, the issue needs first to be recognised at a policy level by governments.

Early intervention is critical. Such intervention can be in the form of expanding tailored educational opportunities at the settlement stage. These may include intensive lessons on academic skills, information on alternative pathways to university, and supplementary academic support within schools.

We also need to avoid negative representations of African youth in the public conversation. Black African youth are often incorrectly labelled as inherently violent, dangerous and unsocial, as we've seen in recent "African gang" media portrayals.

This sort of depiction distorts public perception of people of African origin. And it reinforces racial bias in the community. Research shows that experiences of racial discrimination results in academic disengagement.

Why we need more African refugees in higher education

Widening participation in higher education can boost human capital and productivity for the nation. A recent report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development shows that in Australia the key driver of youth unemployment is low educational attainment.

In 2016, the unemployment rate of people from the main countries of origin

Students who cannot meet entrance requirements of most universities could find TAFE diplomas more rewarding than university degrees.

of African refugees was as high as 22.4%. This is over three times higher than the national average (6.9%).

The group also had low access to professional occupations (22%), compared with 49% for the general population.

A lack of knowledge and skills means not only poor employment prospects but also high youth disengagement. The youth incarceration rate is disproportionately high among African communities.

In 2017, young people of African background accounted for 19% of the total population in youth justice in Victoria. Yet in 2016, Africans accounted for only 1.5% of the state's population.

As the Australian Human Rights Commission cautions, structural barriers may leave African communities on the margins of society. In a fair society such as Australia, lasting marginal existence of any group is detrimental. It undermines economic prosperity, democratic order, and social cohesion.

Improved higher education attainment does not just boost the employability and income of African refugee youth, it also equips them with the necessary skills and confidence to meaningfully engage in the political and cultural spheres of life. ●

DR. TEBEJE MOLLA (Mekonnen) is a Research Fellow (ARC-DECRA) in the School of Education at Deakin University. On completing his postdoctoral fellowship, he was awarded the Australian Research Council's Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA, 2019-2021). His DECRA project explores higher education participation of refugee background African youth in Australia.



TAFE helps turn refugee Akolda Bil's life around

FOR SOUTH SUDANESE student Akolda Bil, achieving the Melbourne Polytechnic Student of the Year award is something he never thought was possible.

When he was only five years old, Akolda's mother decided they would leave their home in South Sudan and head to Egypt, before finally settling down in Australia a few years later.

"Packing up your home and leaving behind everything you know is one of the most terrifying things you can do. But my mum knew there were better opportunities for us in Australia."

Scared of the unknown but excited by the possibilities, they began their new life in Newcastle, before moving to Melbourne eight years later.

When he was 17, Akolda enrolled in the Yarra Youth Service 'Living it Up program'. Here he spent time learning basic life skills such as cooking, playing games and sports with other members, and connecting with various youth workers.

The program was flexible and allowed him to choose to learn about topics that interested him.

"I really loved all my youth workers. They made me feel supported and understood, which was invaluable to me as a 17-year-old in a new city."

Inspired by his youth workers, Akolda completed his Diploma of Community Services at Melbourne Polytechnic.

He now works as a Youth Worker at Yarra Youth Services and a Youth Leader with the Drum Youth Services.

"I've come full circle. It's amazing to now be working with the people that helped me. It feels good to be repaying the favour to other young people."

"I love being able to work with kids and the feeling of helping guide someone through difficult times in their lives. It helps them to have a youth worker with the same cultural background. I sometimes see my younger self in them."

"Not many people from my home country finish tertiary studies, so it's a huge achievement for me to get this award."

"Before this diploma, I was working smaller jobs and didn't have much ambition. Studying wasn't something I believed I was capable of doing and I'm so thankful that I had the opportunity to do so. It's given me a path to follow and a dream to pursue."

"My mum fought hard for me to live in Australia. I hope this award makes her proud of her decision."

Members speak out

There is no doubt that teaching is a challenging and rewarding profession that has the potential to impact the lives of others. We asked a selection of members from across the country to tell us what inspired them to become a TAFE teacher.



● **DR KERRY TRABINGER**
(Hospitality, Culinary and Tourism)
Canberra Institute of Technology, ACT

I WANTED TO be a teacher ever since I was in year one and had an amazing engaging teacher. At the age of 15 I was homeless, however the President of the Parents & Friends Association of my high school took me in and instilled the importance of education so I was able to complete Year 12.

As I could not afford to go to university to complete teaching qualifications I commenced an Internship with Tourism Queensland. When I moved into International Travel I was required to undertake a Fares course at Canberra Institute of Technology. The teacher, Paula Thompson was inspirational and I decided I wanted to be a travel teacher like her.

After being in the industry for 10 years I commenced as a casual travel teacher. I then moved to contract then permanent then Head of Department. I have now been at CIT for 27 years and during this time I have continually upgraded my qualifications starting with the Cert IV in TAFE up to a Doctor of Education. Over the last 15 years I have trained CIT teachers from many disciplines in improving their teaching delivery both face to face and online to be engaging and innovative.



● **RICHARD MEYERS**
Heavy Vehicle Teacher
Wetherill Park TAFE College, NSW

I HAVE ALWAYS had an interest in motor vehicles of all shapes and sizes and a keen interest in motor sport. When I left high school this led me to pursue an apprenticeship in the motor trade. I was fortunate to get an apprenticeship as a heavy vehicle mechanic.

One of things I enjoyed the most was the day release from work to go to “tech” as it was called back then. The classes covered a wider range of work than I did on the job and the teacher’s knowledge and understanding of the industry was amazing. I still remember thinking at the time what a great job being a tech teacher would be.

I completed my apprenticeship and stayed on the tools for 18 years, the trade was great but I was looking for something to improve myself. I saw a job ad for the TAFE at Wetherill Park in Western Sydney and applied. It provided me with an opportunity to further my education and gain a teaching qualification and further hone my trade skills. I really enjoy the interaction with students it’s the best part of the job and I get to pass on the knowledge and skills that were passed on to me.



● **JARRYD MCALLEN**
TAFE Teacher, Bendigo Kangan Institute,
Automotive Centre of Excellence, VIC

I BECAME A TAFE Teacher because I was excited about passing on the skills and knowledge of my trade to others and I really enjoy working with and supporting young people to achieve their goals.

Being a TAFE teacher enabled me to combine all my skills, both from my automotive background as well as my youth work background. I also saw becoming a TAFE teacher as a good career path.

Through the later part of my own apprenticeship I started mentoring and training the newer apprentices which was really rewarding. I continued to train and support apprentices during my 12 years in the automotive industry as a motorcycle mechanic.

My passion for training apprentices led to taking a role as an apprentice training advisor going out into industry to meet with employers and encourage them to sign up apprentices to their training. This work inspired me to get my education qualification so that I could teach and I began teaching shortly afterwards and have been a TAFE teacher now for three-and-a-half years.

I especially enjoy the satisfaction of seeing older apprentices — some up to 65 years old — build their confidence and gain their trade, as well as young refugee students gaining employment and independence.



● **CHRIS EDMONDSON**
Denmark TAFE Campus, WA

I RETURNED TO teaching in the vocational sector in 2016 after a stint in broadcasting media and many years working and touring as an independent musician around regional WA.

Having initially trained as secondary Media Studies teacher and a period teaching in country schools, I jumped at the opportunity to teach as a part of a music industry skills team at the Denmark campus of South Regional TAFE.

We are a small regional campus and the music courses we deliver courses focus on music performance, music business and sound recording, but in many ways that’s just the tip of the outcome iceberg.

Vocational training in the arts delivers a raft of positive social outcomes which in many ways are impossible to measure, but hugely beneficial to our students and in turn the broader community.

I also work a couple of days a week in a CAVSS role (Certificate in Applied Vocational Study Skills), building the foundation skills of our students while operating within a sphere of social advocacy.

CAVSS is a great opportunity to work across the campus in a pastoral role and a firm reminder that teaching above all else, is about people.



● **DAN FOSTER**
Claremont College, Tasmania

I SOMEWHAT STUMBLED into teaching after I returned to Tasmania around five years ago, after running a workshop in Darwin and travelling.

I was offered a part-time role at Mackillop High School as a technical aide. My father, a cabinetmaker (who had by this time passed away as a result of long-term exposure to timber dust), had also started a teaching career late in life, after working as a technical aide at this very same school. It seemed like fate had decided the same career change was in order for me — I was finding it increasingly difficult to work in the industry with some health problems associated with dust exposure and the mental stress of running a small business. The teaching environment suited me, and the next year I was employed on a full-time basis as a trades teacher.

The following year I moved to Claremont College to teach Certificate II in Construction, and I stayed in this role for around 18 months. From the first time I had entered the classroom as an adult however, I had known that TAFE was where I would really like to be. Teaching apprentices the skills I had learnt over my trade career was my ultimate goal, and when a role came up in 2019 in Construction and Allied Trades, I jumped at the opportunity.



● **JENNIFER TREVINO**
ESL Teacher, TAFE QLD

I STARTED AS an English language teacher at TAFE in February 1990, 30 years ago.

I had taught for three years in a public secondary school in Ipswich, where I grew up, in the late ‘80s under the Bjelke Petersen government, where I felt like the kids and I were boxed in and limited by rules and restrictions that destroyed creativity, spontaneity and enthusiasm. So the most wonderful thing about TAFE when I first began there was the autonomy I was afforded in the classroom. I felt respected and trusted as a professional.

I have taught in various language programs but particularly in the Adult Migrant English Program which TAFE Qld has been delivering since 1990. It is incredibly rewarding teaching new arrival refugees and migrants and then watching them progress into employment or further education, often continuing in TAFE, which provides many pathways and outcomes.

Over the years I have overheard many students, young people and second-chancers, talk about what they value about TAFE, and invariably it is how practical and applicable to the real world their studies are, and how supportive and available their teachers are.

Truly public education in a democratic society generates progress, creativity, and equality within diversity. And that’s why, despite the funding crises that have been weighing us down in recent years, I have no plans to retire from teaching at TAFE. ●



Call for 2020 nominations

Rosemary Richards Scholarship

Rosemary Richards was a proud feminist, unionist and educator. A trailblazing leader, she was committed to advancing gender equality across the AEU. In her memory, the Rosemary Richards Scholarship continues her legacy by building the capacity of women as activist and leaders.

This is an opportunity for an AEU woman member with an idea for an innovative project, research or study experience that will increase her skills and experience in the union's work at state/territory, national or international level. By extension, it should also support the AEU's women members.

The Scholarship is valued at \$10,000 and is intended to cover all project expenses including, but not limited to, travel, attendance at conferences, workplace visits, training and developmental opportunities, work-shadowing, research, project design and implementation.

All women AEU Branch or Associated Body members are strongly encouraged to apply. Contact your local Women's Officer for more information.

Application forms and further information are available on the AEU website: aeufederal.org.au/noticeboard

The **submission deadline** for application forms is 1 May 2020.

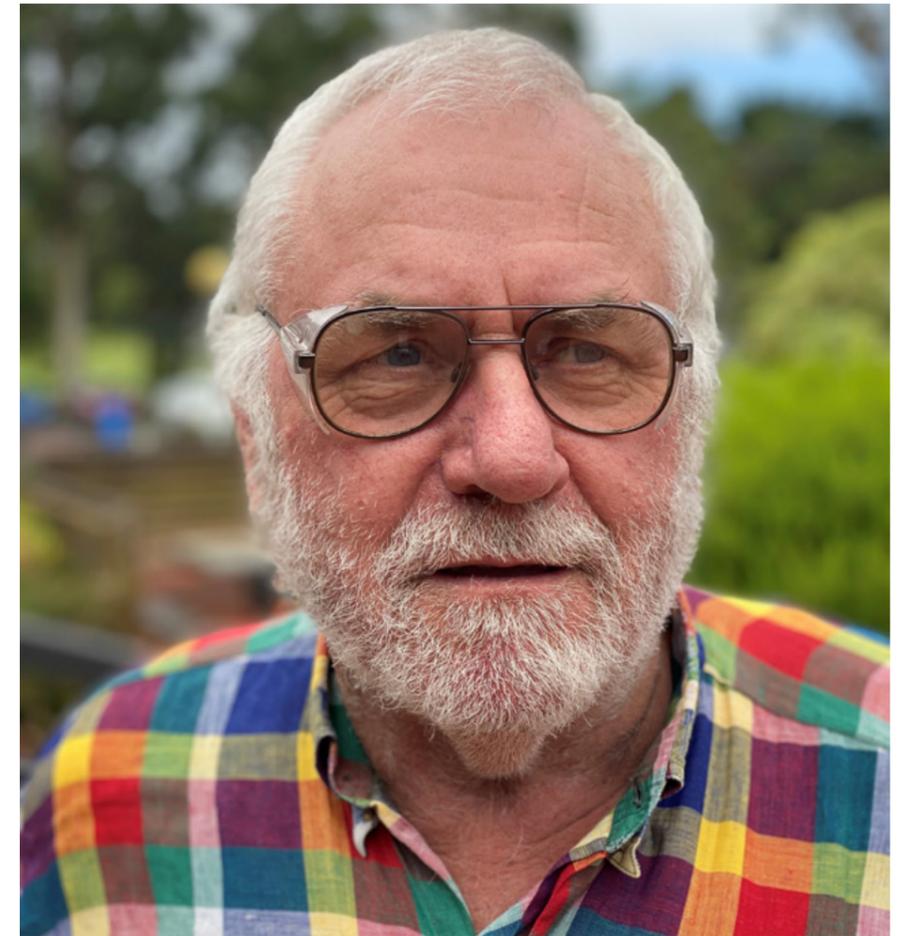


Unsung heroes

Education Support Personnel (ESPs) are the lynchpin that hold TAFEs together, albeit this may happen behind the scenes. We asked four ESPs to talk about their careers.

Article by Michelle Purdy

Education International has committed to raising awareness of the highly valued, yet often invisible, role of support staff through their World Education Support Personnel Day on 16 May. If you haven't expressed your appreciation of ESPs in your team or institute lately please make the time to thank those who support you and your students. As we all know a little appreciation and recognition from those around us can make a big difference in coming to work every day.



NEIL HAUXWELL
Language, Literacy and Numeracy Specialist
TAFE Gippsland

I've been at TAFE in various roles for about 25 years. My teaching job in General Education was declared 'redundant' eight years ago, so I had a spell teaching at a local school and in prison education. I then came back to TAFE and have worked in student support roles. Currently I'm a Language Literacy and Numeracy Specialist and I've supported students in most of the trades and in the Diploma of Nursing. The work has given me a good overview of how TAFE is travelling.

In a regional TAFE such as this, apprentice groups have continued to diversify — more streams in the same class, a bigger range of workplaces and employer training needs. With Free TAFE the ages, backgrounds and entry skills of students has diversified too.

What has not diversified much is the range of learning resources that we can offer students. For TAFE to play its role in responding to local employment changes and retraining requirements we should be developing VET pathways for people with any level of formal education. This needs a large range of better learning resources and the integration of LLN skills development into VET. This process creates challenges but we need to tackle the problems of learner diversity rather than just throwing up testing walls or rolling out the old defence of blaming the schools for not producing VET-ready students.

I'm hoping that we can develop ways in which we can use our Learning Support Assistants more in trade groups so that teachers are better supported and all students can learn according to their needs. I'm privileged to see students learning, teachers teaching and admin staff doing the best they can in a sometimes difficult environment. TAFE's a community that deserves a fair go at federal and state levels, for all our future's sakes.



● **KYLIE FRANTZ**
Administration Officer
Canberra Institute of Technology

My work at Canberra Institute of Technology over the last 14 years as an Administration Officer has been in the Science Department. Our department incorporates Environmental Sciences, Laboratory Studies, Forensics and Animal Studies.

In this role I help teachers get their paperwork organised for class, assist with the enrolment of students and provide other administrative support to the team. I feel so lucky that I also get to work with the teachers and members of their industry such as Veterinary Nurses and the zoo.

I really like encouraging students that

“If I can help them get through a tough time by providing some positive encouragement, to me, it’s worth that little bit of extra effort.”

are struggling. If I can help them get through a tough time by providing some positive encouragement, to me, it’s worth that little bit of extra effort.

A lot has changed over my time at CIT including Finance and Human Resources. They used to be embedded in the organisation so that if we needed help it was right at hand. Now Finance and HR are both centralised and it is harder to get support. I have seen lots of changes during my time at CIT. There have been many restructures and courses come and go.

I am constantly inspired by seeing so many students achieving their goals. I admire the enthusiasm of our teachers and the level of their knowledge.

● **NICK FRECH**
Assistant Contracts Officer
TasTAFE

Looking back to 2001 when I started at TAFE, I wonder where did the time go? I’ve had a few different roles including Participation Assistant and Administrative Assistant. Currently I’m an Assistant Contracts Officer. TasTAFE delivers some Federal government programs which have different invoicing and reporting processes from other programs. I help co-ordinate the day to day processes for those and provide support and advice to administrators, teachers, and education managers delivering those programs. I’m also a point of contact between TasTAFE and external agencies.

I’ve been fortunate to receive some really good support and mentoring from team members over the years. I’m on the other end of that now where I’m recognised for my knowledge and I get to mentor other staff. I find that really rewarding.

One of my teachers once said, “It’s not how well you can teach, it’s how well you can tap dance”, and that applies to my role as well. Once you get into it there’s a lot about administrative roles which are dynamic. The role I’m in even more so. I enjoy interacting with people, helping them and problem solving. This role gives me plenty of opportunity to do all of those.

I’ve just moved campuses as part of TasTAFE’s plan to consolidate delivery at one campus in my city. This has been a particularly challenging process for me, but so far so good (big shout out to the facilities staff!).

Work issues are different for me than a teacher would experience but the end result of workload pressure and stress are the same. My partner passed away a few years ago so that’s had quite an impact on my work life too. Thankfully in my team we’re all pretty supportive of each other which makes a big difference. I’ve also accessed Employee Assistance Counselling; if you’ve got something similar available to you and it might help with whatever you’re going through, please check it out.



TOP TO BOTTOM
Nick Frech from TasTAFE
and Sandy Curtis from TAFE
Gippsland.

● **SANDY CURTIS**
Librarian
TAFE Gippsland

After 22 years and counting as a Librarian with TAFE Gippsland I can honestly say that I love working in TAFE. It really aligns with my values of providing access for all. We have students from all walks of life. TAFE provides a level playing field and an educational environment where people can stretch themselves — that’s gold!

Over these decades I have gained several degrees and numerous other qualifications to enhance my knowledge and the changing world of libraries. I became the President of the Victorian Association of TAFE Libraries (VATL) which encompasses the wider TAFE network. Taking an active part in VATL helps me and other TAFE librarians feel less isolated and we can advocate for a better deal for library staff.

Due to the increased demand for flexible access to library resources and the subsequent growth in online databases, we no longer have staff on every campus at TAFE Gippsland with staffing down from seven to three full time employees. I do a lot of campus hopping to cover the three campuses that I look after. The work of a librarian has changed considerably from the traditional role we once had covering and checking in and out of books. There has been some automation and the range of activities now include administration, managerial requirements, bill paying, going into classrooms, library inductions and troubleshooting for students. We run training in academic skills tailored to the subject areas being taught. We work with staff one-on-one or with groups to meet their needs. In TAFE libraries we provide a service to students and staff that is quite distinct from public libraries.

We have less oversight and scrutiny but more autonomy which is one of the upsides of the changes to our institute.

TAFE libraries and librarians contribute an enormous amount to the learning environment for students and staff. I feel gratification and pleasure that our contribution is valued. ●

MICHELLE PURDY is the Federal TAFE President at the AEU.

Around Australia

ACT

KAREN NOBLE

THE ACT experienced a very rough start to 2020. The smoke, fires and close connection to the events and losses of the region continue to weigh heavily and most people say they returned to work “very tired”. For CIT, it was accompanied by an unexpected and worsening funding situation. Last year was troubled with significant budget constraint but 2020 brought the news of further funding reductions from the ACT Government, even in areas of known skills shortage.

Preparing to be well-organised for students, and getting off to a confident start was undermined, and extremely frustrating.

Commencement of traineeships and apprenticeships has been slow as now there is only one Apprenticeship Network Provider for the ACT where previously there were three. This has delayed training commencement and frustrated arrangements with employers.

Department rearrangements continue with teaching and support positions lost. Once again, too many highly experienced and needed teachers and support staff

Some fantastic things continue in the ACT and CIT. With Canberra Innovation Network and local industry CIT will host Canberra’s first Trade Hack to explore ways for all trades to reduce waste. In October 2019 CIT music, media, arts, fashion, technology and design hosted ‘Orange Wolves’, a multi-disciplinary immersive event. Six retired action buses were transformed into small cinemas, music venues, fashion parades, maker spaces, and installation spaces. The event was a great celebration. These events show CIT’s strong involvement with the ACT Community — keeping us connected, supporting students, industry and education. ●

NSW

PHILLIP CHADWICK

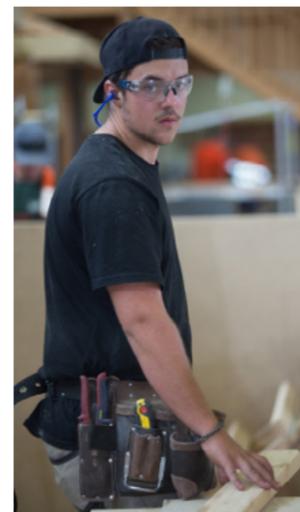
BARGAINING FOR the TAFE Managers EA has concluded. Following the managers yes vote, the FWC approved the Agreement on 10 February and it came into effect on 17 February 2020. The nominal expiry date of the Agreement is 31 December 2021. The new EA provides TAFE managers with a 2.5% salary increase each year for two years. This is in line with the NSW Public Sector Wages Policy, which limits increases in employee related expenses to 2.5 per cent per annum, with any additional increase to be funded by employee related cost savings. From 1 July 2021 the superannuation guarantee is set to increase from 9.5% to 10%. The NSW State Wages Policy means that any increase in the superannuation guarantee will need to be included as part of the 2.5% salary increase.

Hot on the heels of last year’s requirement for teachers to update their professional qualifications to

the latest incarnation of the certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE40116), TAFE NSW has embarked on an ambitious program to achieve compliance with clause 1.13 of the standards for RTOs (2015), regarding teacher currency and competency. The Demonstrating Vocational Currency and Competency (DVCC) project is apparently a result of feedback from recent ASQA reregistration audits in 2019. Most TAFE teachers have excellent currency and competency but have not documented the required evidence sufficiently to meet the standards for RTOs.

As a consequence of merging 10 autonomous TAFE institutes into one RTO, difficulties present in merging the existing data bases that kept the records of teachers qualifications and ongoing professional development. Consequently, all teaching staff had to resubmit all of their qualifications, licences and evidence of professional development to a new online platform that apparently satisfies ASQA’s audit requirements. There has been a great deal of confusion over the type of evidence and the depth of detail required to achieve DVCC compliance. This has caused enormous angst within teaching ranks, and resulted in dramatic increases in teacher work load. Teachers are expected to demonstrate currency and competency against every unit of competency they are programed to deliver and record that evidence in what is known as an Individual Delivery Plan (IDP).

Originally a deadline of 3 February 2020 was set for all teaching staff to have completed their IDP. This goal was later found to be completely impractical and the deadline set for full time teachers has been extended until 27 April 2020, and part-time casual teachers have



until October 2020. The 3 February 2020 deadline for head teachers remained.

The new Skills Points and Standards and Compliance divisions have been given charge of developing a suit of ASQA compliant assessments to be used statewide. Given the enormity of the task, the priority of developing assessments has been given to the top 84 courses, based on student enrolments. Teaching sections that deliver courses outside of the top 84 are left to develop their own compliant assessments. Not unlike the DVCC, there has been substantial confusion as to what constitutes an ASQA compliant assessment. TAFE NSW has taken an approach that each and every performance criteria and each and every required skills and knowledge dot point of each and every UOC must be assessed. Apparently, this is so assessments can be mapped back against a UOC in an audit. TAFE NSW has determined that to achieve competency the student must record a result of 100%.

The size of the skills point assessments are daunting; teachers have reported that single assessments can range anywhere between 30 to 70 pages, with the student

required to print their name on every page. Practical exams are equally daunting as the assessment environment must match exactly the specifications of the training package. Teachers report that they are expected to hire actors to engage students in role play during the assessments, while carpentry sections are expected to build full size 30 m2 single bedroom houses solely for the purpose of assessment.

Equally daunting is the marking of assessments and the provision of feedback to students. Written feedback is to be provided to each and every student on each and every assessment question, regardless of whether the student answered the question correctly or incorrectly.

We have been inundated with inquiries from teachers from every discipline and from every region seeking to raise their concerns about the practicality of these exams.

On top of this, NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has announced yet another review into TAFE NSW, to be conducted by David Gonski and Peter Shergold. The findings are expected to be released sometime mid-year. One aspect of the review is to consider introducing HECS-style loans to TAFE apprentice trade students. The NSW Premier also stated private industry should take a greater role in VET. This has raised serious concerns that the review may be used as a means to an end, further privatisation of TAFE in NSW. This review comes on top of news that the NSW government has recently spent more than \$6M on consultants to examine the role of TAFE NSW.

The NSW Teachers Federation has stated in a related press release that the union would take the opportunity presented by the

TAFE review to highlight the failed privatisation policies of successive state and federal governments. Returning TAFE to being the preeminent provider of Vocational Education and Training is integral to the state’s future productivity and prosperity.

Instead of instituting a HECS-style fee system, TAFE should be free, as any imposition of fees was a serious barrier for poor and disadvantaged students to get the training they need to secure good, well-paying jobs. ●

QUEENSLAND

DAVID TERAUDS

THE RECENT TAFE Qld employer ballot for the replacement EB passed with a 97% yes vote. The TAFE Educators Agreement 2019 was certified by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission on 31 January 2020.

Key enhancements contained in the new agreement include:

- Key enhancements contained in the new agreement include:
- a 2.5 %, per annum wage increase (backdated to 1 July 2019)
- a one-off payment of \$1250 (pro-rata)
- a four-year agreement expiring 30 June 2023
- a revised Educator classification structure
- coverage of Educational Team Leader and Higher Education roles.

TAFE Queensland has made arrangements to process back pay and the one-off \$1250 payment, over the March pay dates. Structural changes will be implemented in April pay dates.

The 2019 agreement committed to a review of the temporary to permanent employment conversion

process. The union and TAFE Queensland’s commitment to this process is underlined by the review commencing in late 2019 prior to certification. By the end of the year, most TAFE institutes had processed conversions and more than 150 TAFE Queensland staff, including over 100 teachers and tutors, had been approved for permanency. Approximately 70% of temporary educators employed for two years or more have been converted to permanent status.

Rationales for continuing a temporary employment arrangement include:

- Time limited project work
- Back filling or job sharing of roles
- Managing of Unsatisfactory Performance
- Non-completion of merit-based selection processes
- Currency and competency status not updated.

Where business cases were not sufficient to justify the decision to retain temporary status the decision has been challenged and further conversions have been made following reconsideration.

The redrafted temporary to permanent conversion policy outlines a review of temporary employment to be undertaken regionally on a quarterly basis from now on. Other outcomes from the new agreement will begin rolling out now certification has been completed. Key are programming changes and gender employment inequity measures.

A copy of the Certified Agreement can be found on the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission website. ●



We are waiting for more details and discussions about how this will unravel.

Teachers and support staff returned to work to find additional challenges; classrooms not ready, improvement projects incomplete, IT failures, reductions in Foundation Skills and Student Support.

have gone.

Our EA implementation has some mixed results. We have a simplified Working Contribution form which better captures work arrangements and flexibility. But the processes around casual and sessional teaching have become very complicated and need attention.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ANGELA DEAN

Recent reports on VET funding in South Australia shows that the Marshall Government's \$347.2 million spend in 2018 was significantly smaller in real terms than the average spend of \$441 million over the last decade and the peak of \$573 million in 2013.

Despite the cuts in previous years, the Liberal Government is driving further cost cutting measures of at least \$15 million for this financial year as part of a 2019/2020 \$38 million State Budget cut. The current budget restriction measures include but are not limited to reductions to goods and services budget, a staffing freeze on all contractual staff including HPIs (Hourly Paid Instructors). Funding of travel and accommodation has ceased, unless directly relating to delivery. Classes are to be merged where possible and any class with less than 16 students registered must provide the Chief Executive written justification for approval.

In addition, TAFE SA has indicated further cuts as a part of their Educational Business Unit Review. In this review, TAFE SA proposes to restructure five business units into three and further reduce staff:

- Business Unit Directors reduced from five to three (SAES classified)
- EMs reduced from 37 to 25 Plus moving from TAFE Act classification to PS Act as MAS3s
- Principal Lecturers reduced from 41 to 28
- Business Operations Managers five to three (PS Act classified).

The AEU (SA) lodged a dispute on Monday 10 February with the TAFE SA Chief Executive, regarding the lack of consultation following the Educational Business Units Review. The AEU (SA) sought the following information:

- A rationale for the decision.
- Detailed proposals, including a budget breakdown for the consideration of AEU members
- Preservation of the status quo to allow for the development of a full understanding of the implications
- A negotiated timeframe
- A risk assessment
- A workload assessment
- The provision of clear information to AEU members.
- Documentation revealing any impact of the \$15 million plus budget cuts.

Until TAFE SA responds to the matters raised by the AEU(SA) in writing, the review has been placed on hold.

There has also finally been a response to our initial Enterprise Bargaining claim in May 2019, with the government tabling their initial proposals. Overall our members are focused on ensuring we do not lose any of the current employment conditions. However, given the extreme cost cutting measures currently being inflicted on TAFE SA, staff remain concerned that any offer from the government will fail to address workload issues or professional development needs. ●



TASMANIA

SIMON BAILEY

SINCE MY last article members have voted to accept the latest agreement. Eighty percent of eligible members voted and 99% voted yes to accept the proposed agreement.

The agreement has now been registered by the Tasmanian Industrial Commission with the implementation of new clauses to be put into practice for 2020. The first 2.3% pay rise comes in March this year. It was great to see members participating and strongly supporting the various improvements to conditions, workload wins, professional development improvements, new teachers starting on a higher band and paid maternity/partner leave increased to name just a few highlights.

There is also no loss of conditions, the correctional facility allowance paid to members working in prisons will be backdated to 1 July 2019 and there is a new PD clause which requires TasTAFE to allow teaching staff a minimum of 10 days professional development and/or return to industry with part time teachers allocated PD days on a pro rata basis.

Members should ensure that their managers are allowing for this to happen.

A new year and yet another restructure for teaching teams. TasTAFE CEO Jenny Dodd has decided that teams will move back to having state-wide managers. This announcement comes with no warning or consultation with the AEU members. After being reminded of the consultation clause the AEU and members have been provided updates on what is being planned.

Currently we are witnessing an explosion of online and fly in and out private RTOs in Tasmania offering everything from full Cert III trade qualifications as well as Cert IV qualifications via RPL with some qualifications being linked to the licencing of plumbers and refrigeration mechanics. I believe that in the long run this issue will be way bigger than VET FEE Help ever was as we will have people with qualifications who do not have the underpinning skills and knowledge to perform their job as well as huge profits being made once again by dodgy private RTOs.

Last year I spoke about the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania (TICIT) plans to split the Tourism and Hospitality School, known

as Drysdale School of Hospitality, from TasTAFE — giving full control over to industry. Gladly, through the AEU running an active media campaign and lobbying of the TasTAFE Board and State Government, this will not be happening. However, the government did announce they would provide 1 million dollars of tax payers' money to the TICIT for the establishment of an Industry Training Organisation. TICIT CEO Luke Martin has been very vocal in blaming TasTAFE for the sector not being able to attract and retain employees. We need to keep campaigning to protect the public TAFE system from the privatisations agenda of State and Federal Governments. ●

VICTORIA

ELAINE GILLESPIE

WHILE THE majority of TAFEs in Victoria have undertaken workplans as intended — with the recognition that assessment is part of teaching, requiring supervision and observation — AEU VIC is still pursuing a number of cases related to workload and workplans through the Fair Work Commission.

We are in our second year of Free TAFE which has been very successful in dramatically increasing enrolments. While Free TAFE is a great initiative, there have been several unforeseen consequences for staff and students, including teacher shortages, lack of placements and resources and excessively large class sizes particularly for health and community services courses.

This has added to workload pressures, with many teachers forced to teach Excess Teaching Duties Hours (ETDH), in some cases exceeding the cap of 150 hours. ETDH is

not compulsory — teachers can reasonably refuse, and employers need to consider each individual teachers' circumstances as per the agreement. It is a tragic outcome when excessive workloads lead to experienced teachers leaving the system.

This explosion of workplace demands has been taking its toll on teachers' health and wellbeing with a significant increase in personal leave, teachers leaving and going back to work industry and teachers showing signs of physical exhaustion and the harder to identify mental exhaustion.

This has resulted in the AEU approaching Worksafe Victoria to carrying out an investigation into TAFE institutes with a focus on workload as a factor in influencing workplace stress, workplan enquires and how issues are raised in relation to workload OH&S hazards.

In contrast to other courses, Free TAFE has seen a decline in the number of students doing foundation studies. Foundation studies are vital in the preparation and success of many students — but given they currently attract fees, students are electing to enter a free course instead, resulting in a reduction of course completion rates.

While many TAFEs have recognised this link, the AEU is very concerned that low student participation is leading some TAFEs to assess the viability of foundation studies courses.

Former Federal Labor Minister Jenny Macklin will be heading up a review into Victoria's post-secondary education and training system, with a focus on equipping students for the jobs of the future. Consultations have already begun and an interim report, with broad recommendations for reform, was due at the

end of February. A public submissions process review will soon be launched.

We will be urging all members to contribute to the review. The terms of reference are wide-ranging, with some of the main issues being Free TAFE and completion rates; micro-credentialing; apprenticeships and industry engagement. ●

WA

GARY HEDGER

IT SEEMS like a very long time since we developed our log of claims for our replacement agreement which expired on 15 December 2019.

The union received an offer from the Department on 12 December 2019, a day before most lecturers left for annual leave. The Department requested a written response to their offer by 10 January 2020. Most lecturers returned from leave on the 23 January.

Attached to the offer was the new salary rates (which stuck hard and fast to the \$1000 per annum), the proposed amendments to conditions and drafting amendments to the general agreement.

The TAFE committee met and rejected the offer. Negotiations are still being undertaken and at time

of writing we have not received a second offer from the department despite having several negotiation meetings with them since 16 January 2020.

While this is happening our new student enrolment/management system (SMS) has caused utter chaos across the system. Nothing has improved and if anything with the updates it has become harder as a lecturer or student to negotiate your way through the morass. Everything has become "not my job" when trying to work out who is supposed to be in a lecturer's class, what room and what day. Students are also confused as they are being sent SMS messages to their phones which conflict with the information that is provided by the class lecturer, or the timetable provide by admin staff when they enrolled. When trying to work your way through the disaster and bringing complaints about what is happening on the ground the standard reply from middle to senior management is that it is all caused by a lack of training or operator error by lecturing staff. ●



19 AUGUST 2020

CELEBRATE NATIONAL TAFE DAY!

