



OUR PLAN FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Labor has always been the party of TAFE and a Shorten Labor Government would continue this commitment to our vocational education system.

Bill Shorten and Sharon Bird have announced Labor's plan to back TAFE into the future by developing a comprehensive National Priority Plan. This plan will define the unique role of TAFE as our public provider and will deliver on this by working with the states and territories to provide ongoing guaranteed TAFE funding.

Read more detail about our announcement below.

Background

Over the last year the media has been full of stories documenting the serious issues in communities across our country with the closures of TAFEs, reductions in staffing, ever increasing course costs and unscrupulous private providers and brokers preying on vulnerable people – this must not be allowed to continue. TAFE must be backed by governments as it is critical to our future.

Labor has always been the party of TAFE. Gough Whitlam instituted the Kangan Report into TAFE which resulted in additional Commonwealth investment for TAFE infrastructure, quality improvements, staff development and equity programs.

The Hawke and Keating Governments strengthened TAFE through establishing a framework for an ongoing dialogue between industry and the training sector which has been a contributor in our two decades of uninterrupted growth.

The last Labor Government increased Commonwealth annual funding for VET by 25 per cent in real terms with over \$19 billion invested over five years as well as investing in TAFE campus infrastructure and technology upgrades.

Our Plan

On National TAFE Day, Labor Leader Bill Shorten and Shadow Minister for Vocational Education Sharon Bird announced Labor's plan to back TAFE into the future by developing a comprehensive National Priority Plan that defines the unique role of TAFE as our public provider and delivers on this by working with the states and territories to provide ongoing guaranteed TAFE funding.

TAFE must remain an essential part of Australia's skills and training sector as it plays a vital role in servicing our regions, industries in transition and disadvantaged groups.

As the Australian economy changes, the jobs of the future will change. Our trades will involve more technology-based skills and workers will need training in these skills to be more effective in the workplace and to remain competitive in the employment market. New trades and professions will emerge and require quality training programs and upskilling courses.

It is therefore absolutely critical that we invest in supporting our national asset – our public TAFE sector.

There are challenges in the way the vocational educational sector is funded which has led to the decline of the TAFE sector nationally. Over the last year it has become clear that there has been a failure in the market and we have seen the proliferation of opportunistic and sub-standard training providers costing the taxpayers and students millions of dollars.

This needs to stop.

Vocational students need to have access to good quality training but we need a better system in place to ensure TAFE's viability and strength into the future. The fundamentals of an effective market are clearly missing and no amount of regulation, as important as it is, will change this. Labor believes the market must find stability through a predominant public provider, complemented by a quality private sector.

Under Labor's plan for TAFE, a Shorten Labor Government will work with Premiers and Chief Ministers on a comprehensive National Priority Plan that defines the unique role of TAFE and places it squarely as the public provider within the VET sector – as the cornerstone of our economy's need to train and retrain its workforce and to deliver on improving the participation, productivity, innovation and growth efforts required for the nation.

We will work with the states and territories to rebalance the contestable and non-contestable funding model to ensure it delivers the outcomes that are intended. Labor believes there is a place for contestable funding but we must get the balance

right.

The Turnbull Government has been silent on TAFE and now it appears they are considering abandoning the VET sector completely to the States. This would seriously undermine the national effort required to support growth and jobs through nationally coordinated skills development.

In comparison, Labor is firmly committed to a strong TAFE sector.

We understand how critically important TAFE is to so many students, communities, industries and businesses. It is a national asset and we must work across all levels of government to ensure its future.

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