

**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
SHADOW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
SHADOW MINISTER FOR WOMEN**

**SENATOR THE HON DOUG CAMERON
SHADOW MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS
SHADOW MINISTER FOR SKILLS, TAFE AND APPRENTICESHIPS
SENATOR FOR NEW SOUTH WALES**

GOVERNMENT'S VET REVIEW TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

The Government's announcement last night that it will conduct a review into Australia's flailing vocational education and training (VET) system is a panicked response to a crisis of the Liberals' own making.

Australia's VET system is failing to deliver outcomes for students and employers because the Liberals have ripped more than \$3 billion from training and apprenticeships.

There are 140,000 fewer apprentices since the Liberals took office and their flagship apprenticeship policy didn't outlay a cent for more than a year.

Labor announced in February we will conduct national inquiry into the entire post-secondary education system which has been damaged by funding cuts, privatisation, competition policy, poor regulation, and unhealthy competition.

Scott Morrison's announcement to the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's annual dinner in Canberra last night does not correspond with his ministers' recent claims that Australia's VET system is better than the German model, the global benchmark.

A recent report tabled in the South Australian Parliament shows Australia's VET system is underfunded, fragmented, devalued, and has no effective governance.

The report, by retired senior public servant Terry Moran, rightly points out the Liberals' funding arrangements are chaotic and that there is no national strategy.

Added to this:

- student enrolments in TAFE have plummeted by 24.5 per cent;
- dodgy private training providers continue to go bust;
- thousands of students have debts for courses they have not done;
- employers are reporting growing skill shortages; and
- \$24 million has been expended on the Australian Apprenticeship Management System that has now been abandoned.

The Liberals' VET review is just about buying them time before the next election. Everyone knows that Liberal Party reviews are ideologically driven exercises that result in cuts. Given this Government's track record we would also expect poorer flexibility, attacks on trade certificates, more TAFE closures, and even greater share of funding going to the private sector.

One of the first decisions of the newly elected Liberal Government in South Australia was to close seven TAFE campuses.

The Liberals mismanagement of the VET system has seen Australia fall to the bottom of OECD international leader charts when it comes to our capacity to engage in global value chains.

If elected, federal Labor will provide \$100 million to the Building TAFE for the Future Fund to commence a program of revitalising campuses across Australia.

A Shorten Labor Government will also waive upfront fees for 100,000 students to attend TAFE and conduct a once in a generation national inquiry into the post-secondary education system within the first 100 days of being elected.

Labor is committed to ensuring at least two thirds of all government funding for vocational education will go to TAFE. The balance will go to not-for-profit community providers and only the best private providers with demonstrable links to specific industry requirements.

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Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.

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