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New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

NSW TAFE

17 October 2017

I stand again today in support of TAFE, its students, its future and my TAFE teacher colleagues. A speech given at a recent Teachers Federation conference deserves to be on the public record in Hansard. As defenders of TAFE we have but one job ahead of us and that is to save TAFE. It is beyond comprehension that anyone who has watched the gutting of TAFE over the past five and a half years could defend the policies and decisions of both State and Federal governments—that is, unless you are the Assistant Minister for Skills. Recently the Minister was reported as stating, "TAFE is doing better than ever under a Liberal-Nationals budget." Yes, I know, you just cannot make this stuff up.

Let us entertain the Minister's delusion for a moment. If the Minister believes doing "better than ever" means sacking over 6,000 teachers and support staff; closing, selling and leasing TAFE colleges and replacing them with shopfronts; cutting courses and slashing face-to-face delivery hours; jacking up course fees by thousands of dollars; and cutting tens of millions from the TAFE budget then he is correct and TAFE is doing "better than ever". The Minister and the Government have achieved "deliverology"—yes, that is the new term. There has been talk about rough times ahead for TAFE and TAFE has suffered over the years.

However, nothing can compare and nothing comes close to the level of government bastardry directed at TAFE by the Federal and State governments. For example, yesterday the Government announced that the Outreach Program had been scrapped despite the fact that there will be 4,000 enrolments this year. Group 4 in One TAFE NSW was announced yesterday across the State, but there was no mention of Outreach in the documentation despite a significant positive response in the feedback process. I believe there will be a head teacher at the

TAFE NSW campuses at Nepean and Liverpool. Head teachers deliver 10 hours of face-to-face education, as opposed to special program coordinators who have been part of the Outreach Program for 40 years and who deliver six hours of teaching. As a result, three hardworking Outreach teachers who consistently overachieve are being replaced by one teacher. Those teachers received letters yesterday advising them that their positions were not "matched".

Apparently the Western Sydney region will have 19 new administration positions for TAFE services coordinators, who are described as concierges and who will replace Outreach officers. They are based at colleges and will attend community meetings. As has been pointed out, the services model may work well in a transactional environment, but it will not work well in an educational environment. If members want to know what an education market looks like and how well it is doing, they should look no further than the litany of cuts to TAFE and the conga line of private providers taking much and delivering little. Education does not belong in a marketplace. If you want a market, head down to Paddy's.

While the present situation is gloomy for TAFE, that does not mean the community has thrown in the towel. Indeed, we know that we can turn this around. However, it will take a significant and well-resourced campaign to win. We must put the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign on steroids. This fight can be won, and it will be won at the grassroots level, electorate by electorate, town by country town, and TAFE by TAFE. I am loathe to give the Assistant Minister for Skills further airtime, but he recently said that we should be talking up TAFE. Yes, we should, but we are tired of talk; we want action. Stop the cuts, restore TAFE funding and rebuild TAFE to its former glory. I pay respect today to the students who are battling on and those teachers whose morale is low but who keep up the fight. I acknowledge the TAFE Teachers Association, and I stand with it and its members in solidarity.