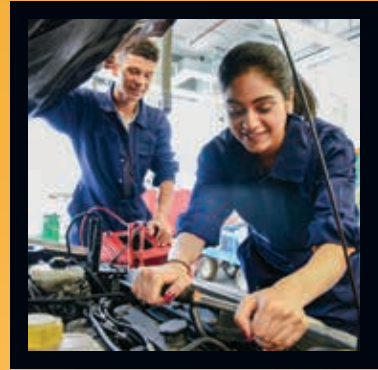


State of Our TAFE



Foreword

When the AEU launched the Rebuild With TAFE campaign in 2020, it was in direct response to a crisis. For over a decade, successive governments had cut funding, forced TAFE into unfair competition with private, for-profit providers, and undermined its essential role in delivering skills, opportunities and its social contract for communities. Campuses closed, courses disappeared, thousands of jobs were lost, and students were left with debts for substandard training.

Through collective campaigning, member voices, and community advocacy, we changed the conversation. We demanded secure jobs, sustainable funding, and guaranteed access to vocational education through TAFE. And together we achieved important wins.

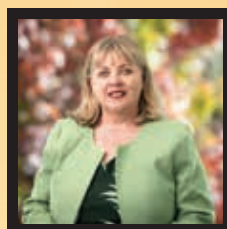
The introduction of Free TAFE in 2023 has transformed opportunities for thousands of Australians. There have been more than 725,000 enrolments in courses across care, early childhood education, construction, hospitality and nursing. In March 2025, Free TAFE was enshrined in law, cementing TAFE at the heart of public vocational education. The new National Skills Agreement, worth \$12.6 billion over five years, provides a national framework that recognises TAFE's central role in building a future made in Australia.

But as this report makes clear, more still needs to be done to finish rebuilding TAFE. Almost two-thirds of TAFE staff surveyed have considered leaving their jobs in the past year, and nearly half do not expect to be working in TAFE in five years' time. Excessive workloads, insecure employment, and uncompetitive pay are driving skilled teachers out of the sector at the very time Australia needs them most.

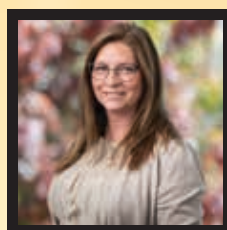
If governments are serious about rebuilding TAFE, they must invest not just in policies and frameworks, but in the teachers and the staff that are at the heart of TAFE, and in the campuses which students across the country attend to get a high-quality vocational education.

Without urgent action to address workload, respect, and pay, retention issues will continue to grow more severe, and TAFE staff will be lost to burnout. TAFE capital infrastructure needs significant investment so that students can learn, and teachers can teach in safe, modern and well-equipped facilities.

TAFE is Australia's trusted public provider of vocational education. It delivers quality education, transforms lives, and strengthens communities. This report sets out a clear agenda for governments to secure TAFE's future and fully realise the objectives of the National Skills Agreement by matching its investment in TAFE students with equally ambitious investments in the TAFE workforce and TAFE campuses.



Correna Haythorpe
AEU Federal President



Elaine Gillespie
AEU Federal TAFE President



Overview

The 2025 State of Our TAFE Survey reflects the true voice of the TAFE teaching workforce. 1,696 AEU members working in TAFE across the country responded to the survey and shared their stories. Their voices paint a picture of a workforce that faces an intensifying workload, with more administrative and compliance demands, and less time to focus on teaching. Their stories are of teachers who want to deliver for their students, but are continually asked to do more with fewer resources.

Prior to 2022, successive governments in Australia enacted policies that starved TAFE institutions of funding, resources and skills. While the past three years have seen a renewed confidence in the future of the sector with the launch of federal Free TAFE, teachers are still often being asked to meet this demand using substandard resources and a lack of funding.

Across the world in countries with advanced manufacturing economies like Japan, Germany, and France, public technical colleges are seen as institutions that operate as a social good, not as budgetary burdens for governments. Vocational education should be free for students because it is an investment in Australia's future. That's why Free TAFE is so important in returning dividends for the country's economy overall by creating more skilled, productive workers in the sectors that Australia needs most.

In this year's survey, TAFE teachers have made it clear that they cannot deliver on the full potential of this program without more support. Teachers describe an increasingly overwhelming workload, with working hours increasing yet classroom time shrinking, and no increase in pastoral care and learning supports for the new cohort of students enrolling under Free TAFE.

It is only through TAFE that vocational education can be embedded as a social good in Australia. TAFE, as a public institution, should operate with the aim of providing a high-quality education for all students and ensuring better skills development for the Australian economy. Governments must fund TAFE so it can operate like the public good that it is by investing in capital works nationwide to rebuild TAFE campuses, funding additional ongoing support for students with additional needs studying at TAFE, and addressing workload intensification and lack of institutional support which is driving high turnover among the TAFE workforce.

Australians have tremendous pride in their public institutions – Medicare, public schools, the NDIS, are all cherished as points of pride and seen as core to the idea of 'a fair go'. TAFE teachers expect the same for TAFE and are calling on governments to rebuild the TAFE workforce, fund ongoing support for students with additional needs and invest in TAFE campuses so that TAFE can be embedded permanently – as the premier provider of vocational education in Australia and around the world.

Executive summary

FREE TAFE

- **68% of teachers** say there has been a change to the number of students presenting with additional needs since Free TAFE began.
- **54% of teachers** say no additional learning and support services have been allocated to meet those needs.

TURNOVER

- **88% of respondents** knew a colleague that had left TAFE in the past 12 months.
- **64% of respondents** considered leaving their job at TAFE in the past 12 months.
- **45% of respondents** do not expect to be working at TAFE in the next 5 years.

RETENTION

- **Reduced administrative duties (62.4%), better treatment from their employer (59.5%) and improved pay levels (51.3%)** were the top 3 incentives that would encourage respondents to stay in the sector.

CONTACT HOURS

- **56% of respondents** reported hours being shaved off the delivery of courses and being allocated less time in direct contact with students in the past two years.
- **68% believed** the reduction in allocated contact time would have a significant impact on the ability of students to complete their studies.

STUDENT SUPPORT

- **Mental health issues (78%), literacy and numeracy issues (82%) and digital skills issues (70%)** were additional needs that were much more prevalent among the Free TAFE cohort.
- In the past two years, **58% of respondents** noticed declining student wellbeing, **59% declining** student engagement, **59% higher** student expectations of teacher availability.

FUNDING

- **48% of respondents** reported fewer courses on offer than two years ago.
- **Only 7% of teachers** reported their department budget increasing in the past two years.
- **Equipment (45%), student support, (42%), and IT equipment (41%)** were the top 3 areas identified as in need of extra funding.

The investment that TAFE needs

TAFE is the heart of Australia's vocational education system, but decades of underfunding have left its workforce and infrastructure stretched to breaking point.

There has been a historic investment in TAFE through the National Skills Agreement – a 5-year joint agreement between the Commonwealth and states and territories to strengthen the VET sector with TAFE at the centre. However, there is more work to be done.

Funding fluctuations in the sector create insecurity, drive workforce instability, and limit the ability of TAFE to respond to emerging industry needs.

Strategic investment in staffing, secure employment, and professional learning will enable teachers to deliver high-quality training, while increased capital investment will renew campuses and facilities that are currently outdated and inadequate for VET provision.

Furthermore, targeted funding for wraparound student services will ensure that TAFE can properly support students with literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and digital skills needs. Without this commitment from governments, the system cannot meet its social and economic mission.

Properly resourced, TAFE will continue to provide pathways into employment, help address Australia's skills shortages, and elevate vocational learning as a respected, public good.

The call is clear: sustained investment is not an optional extra but an urgent necessity if TAFE is to fulfil its role in building Australia's future workforce.

The AEU is calling for Governments to:



Rebuild the TAFE teaching workforce through a ring-fenced workforce renewal and retention strategy that tackles precarious and casual employment, reduces unsustainable workloads, and guarantees high-quality professional development.



Fund ongoing support for students with additional needs, ensuring priority equity cohorts have access to the foundation skills, mental health support, and digital literacy training they need to thrive.



Deliver a significant capital works and equipment program so that every campus can accommodate the growth in enrolments, with state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities that match the Commonwealth's course funding commitment.

Free TAFE

The introduction of Free TAFE has been transformative in removing financial barriers to vocational education. By guaranteeing 100,000 fee-free places annually, the Commonwealth Government has made vocational education more accessible, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

For many, course fees have long been a deterrent to pursuing further study, especially amidst cost-of-living pressures and for those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Free TAFE has provided funding relief and opened opportunities for sustainable and meaningful employment for both TAFE teachers and for students.

Importantly, the policy has attracted a more diverse student cohort, including people with disability, Aboriginal students, Torres Strait Islander students and those from low-income households. This diversity enriches learning and directly addresses skills shortages in priority sectors.

However, increased enrolments also highlight the need for additional wraparound supports, such as mental health services, literacy and numeracy programs, digital literacy support, and English language assistance. TAFE workers have observed an increase in students with complex needs since the implementation of Free TAFE, however, there has been little support from governments to assist the workforce with the additional workload they now face through supporting these students.

Free TAFE alone cannot resolve structural inequities unless it is matched with these complementary services and stable workforce funding.

Governments must commit to additional funding, and the states and territories must be held accountable for allocation decisions, ensuring that places are equitably distributed and secure jobs for teachers are protected.

Ultimately, Free TAFE is more than a fee policy, it is a gateway to productivity, equity, and workforce renewal, proving that when costs are removed, participation soars.

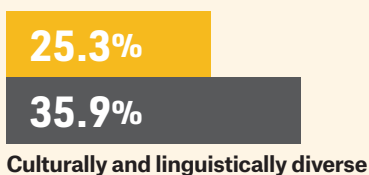
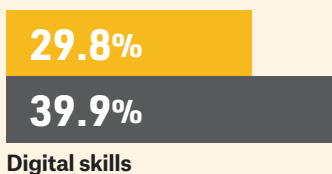
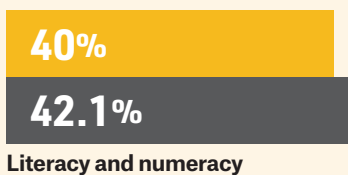
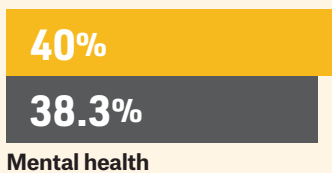
“We get students who would never have been game to throw their hat in the ring without it. It’s quite confronting facing a study loan and especially as many of our students are parents and to put that additional financial burden on their family is a huge thing for them. To have that one impediment removed has made a big difference and I’ve seen the demographic change in the classroom.”

**VANNA, LEARNING SKILLS TEACHER,
VICTORIA**

While TAFE teachers have shared that the program has led to more diverse student cohorts and increased confidence in the future of the sector, they also made clear that the program has created additional demands which must be answered for the full potential of Free TAFE to be unlocked.

The increase in these cohorts reflects the success of the Free TAFE program. With the financial barriers to an education removed, students who previously would not consider studying a vocational education are now enrolling. Other barriers remain for many of these students. Teachers increasingly face the need to help students overcome these barriers so they may complete their education.

Are these additional needs more or less prevalent among student in the Free TAFE cohort?



■ Much more prevalent
 ■ More prevalent

Free TAFE promised students access to a quality vocational education without cost and gave TAFE teachers confidence in the future of the sector. To keep these promises, governments must commit to funding comprehensive wrap around support services for students and expanded administrative support.

“Although some support is available, it’s not really enough for this group. Despite the limited support, our students are having success and making improvements in their lives, going on to jobs and other courses. This is exactly what the free courses are supposed to do. And the classes add greatly to my job satisfaction because the students actually seem to appreciate what you are doing!”

JO, TAFE TEACHER AND LECTURER, WESTERN AUSTRALIA





The working week: more work but less time for teaching

TAFE teachers describe a profession where passion for student success collides with mounting pressures that leave less time for teaching itself. Systemic underfunding increased administrative demands, and growing student support needs have combined to create unsustainable workloads.

Teachers are expected to deliver high-quality vocational education while also navigating compliance requirements, digital learning systems, and extensive reporting obligations.

The result is that many feel they are doing “more work in less time,” with direct teaching hours squeezed by paperwork and bureaucratic processes.

This erosion of teaching time impacts not only teachers’ wellbeing but also the quality of learning that students receive.

The AEU has asserted publicly and politically that reducing workload is central to workforce retention and the delivery of quality vocational education. Investment in staffing and support services is critical to the need to relieve teachers of administrative burdens, enabling them to focus on their core role: teaching and mentoring students.

The National VET Workforce Blueprint provides a pathway to address shortages and ensure sustainability, but it requires urgent government action in consultation with the profession. Without decisive change, teacher burnout and attrition will continue, undermining the strength of Australia’s vocational education system.

“Teaching, class preparation and marking will easily fill 37.5 hours per week. Any other activities such as meetings or administrative work either detracts from proper class preparation, delays marking – or more likely – requires unpaid out-of-hours work to catch up with routine activities.”

**DAVID, TAFE TEACHER,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

TAFE teachers have detailed how their escalating workloads, with increasing administrative and compliance pressures, is taking time away from teaching. This workload has detrimental consequences for students, for teachers, and for the long-term health of the workforce.

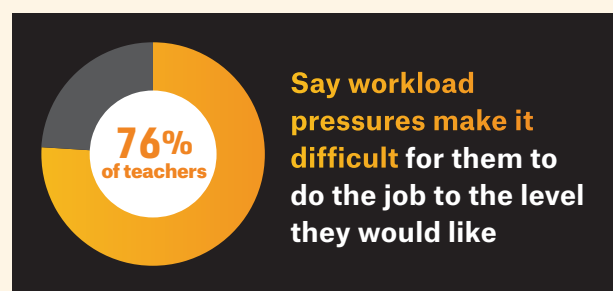
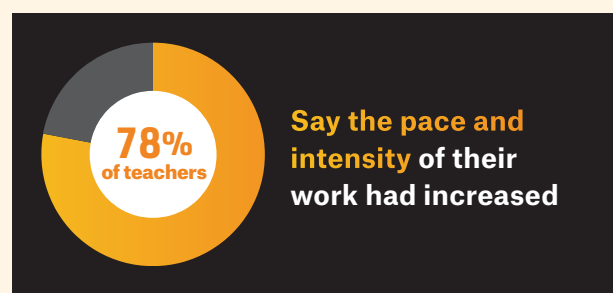
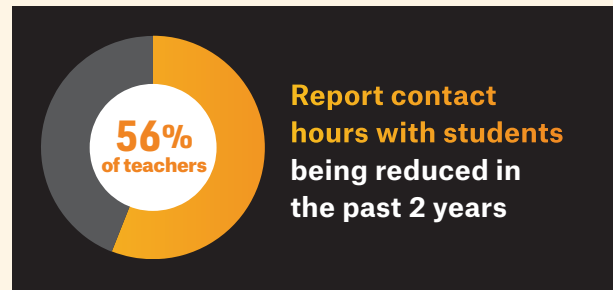
With more time taken for administrative tasks, compliance and assessment, TAFE teachers have lost time that could have been spent improving the quality of education for their students and developing their own skillsets as an education professional.

Teachers are already working beyond their contracted hours to accommodate the workload demands. Of the full-time teachers surveyed, the average contracted working hours was 35 hours per week, however the reported real hours worked stood at 40 hours per week.

Despite this increasingly cluttered working week, teachers have shared that in many cases, fewer hours are being allocated to teaching in the classroom. These working conditions exacerbate the retention issue in the sector by forcing teachers away from the classroom teaching which attracted them to the job to begin with.

“The pace of delivery and assessments for the instructor is not realistic. Quite a few of us have to work through breaks or work back unpaid on assessment days just to get the work finished on schedule.”

**ANONYMOUS, TAFE ASSESSOR,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



Retention and workforce stability: what teachers say would keep them

Australia is facing unprecedented teacher shortages in TAFE, threatening the sector's ability to deliver on national skills priorities.

TAFE teachers consistently identify clear solutions: secure employment, manageable workloads, fair remuneration, and opportunities for professional growth.

Many are forced into insecure or casualised roles, leaving them unable to plan for the future or commit long-term to the profession. Fluctuating funding allocations worsen this instability, as staffing levels shift with enrolments and government decisions.

Teachers also report that the growing complexity of their work, alongside insufficient resourcing for student support, fuels attrition.

To keep skilled teachers in TAFE, governments must implement robust retention strategies that prioritise workforce security. This includes investment in professional learning and recognition of teachers' expertise as central to Australia's productivity.

Teachers are clear that they want to stay in the profession, but conditions must allow them to thrive. By addressing workload, pay, and job security, governments can build a stable workforce that ensures students receive consistent, high-quality vocational education.

The consequences of this increasing workload has led to nearly two-thirds of teachers considering leaving their job in the past 12 months.

Teachers have overwhelmingly identified retention as a significant issue in the workforce, and the high turnover this leads to only exacerbates an already stretched workload.

The overwhelming majority of respondents – 88.7% – knew a teacher who had left their role in the past 12 months. While retirements continue to impact the aging workforce, teachers also highlight the treatment by direct and upper management at TAFE as being a significant negative for teachers.

What are the reasons colleagues have left?

38.7%

Go back to work in industry for better pay

59.6%

Excessive overall workload

25.4%

Retirement

18.1%

Early retirement

47.1%

Lack of support from immediate manager

65.3%

Lack of support from TAFE, including upper management

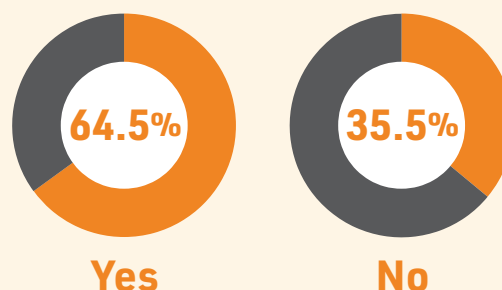
The impacts of over a decade of deliberate undermining and marketisation by the previous government still persist. Policy settings mean that institutions frequently must cut teacher contact hours due to budgetary pressures, denying students the education they deserve. TAFE must be funded appropriately so that the only concern of TAFE leadership and management is the education of students, not the budget sheet of the institution.

These factors, as well as the excessive overall workload, and the lack of support teachers receive are all driving the retention crisis among the TAFE workforce. Governments must listen to TAFE teachers to resolve this crisis, and fund staff and services that would allow teachers to spend more time in the classroom instead of spending time on administrative tasks, compliance, and assessment.

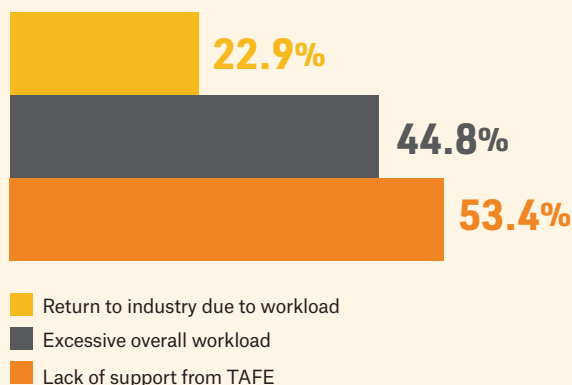
The investment we need:

- Cut administrative and compliance workloads for TAFE staff.
- Provide more time for TAFE educators to engage in professional and vocational development.
- Empower and fund Jobs and Skills Australia to begin collecting annual data on the current TAFE workforce and shortages, rather than relying on old, unreliable data.
- Engage with TAFE educators and staff to ensure that the physical and mental health and wellbeing of staff is a priority by developing a strategy to reduce psychosocial hazards and occupational violence faced by staff.

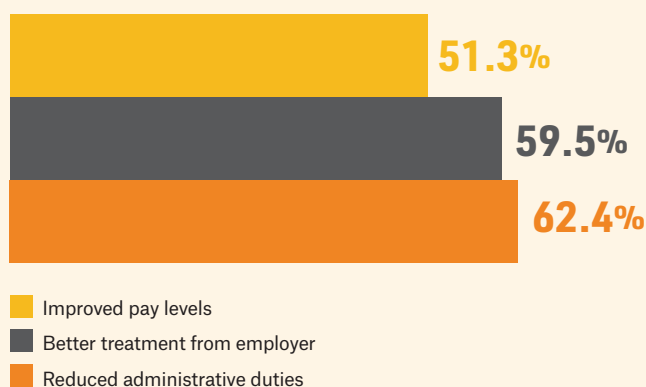
Have you considered leaving your job in the past 12 months?



What are the reasons that would inform your decision to leave TAFE teaching?



What would encourage you to stay in the sector?





Tools, spaces and capacity to meet local demand

Years of neglect have left many TAFE campuses with outdated facilities and inadequate infrastructure, limiting their ability to meet growing community demand.

Modern vocational education requires contemporary workshops, digital labs, and classrooms that mirror industry practice, yet too often TAFE teachers and students are forced to work with ageing equipment and under-resourced spaces.

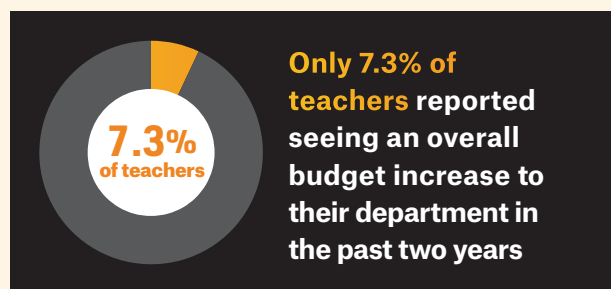
Capital investment is urgently needed to rebuild and expand infrastructure so that TAFE can deliver high-quality vocational education in every community. This is not just about bricks and mortar, it is about ensuring students have access to the tools and spaces they will encounter in the workplace.

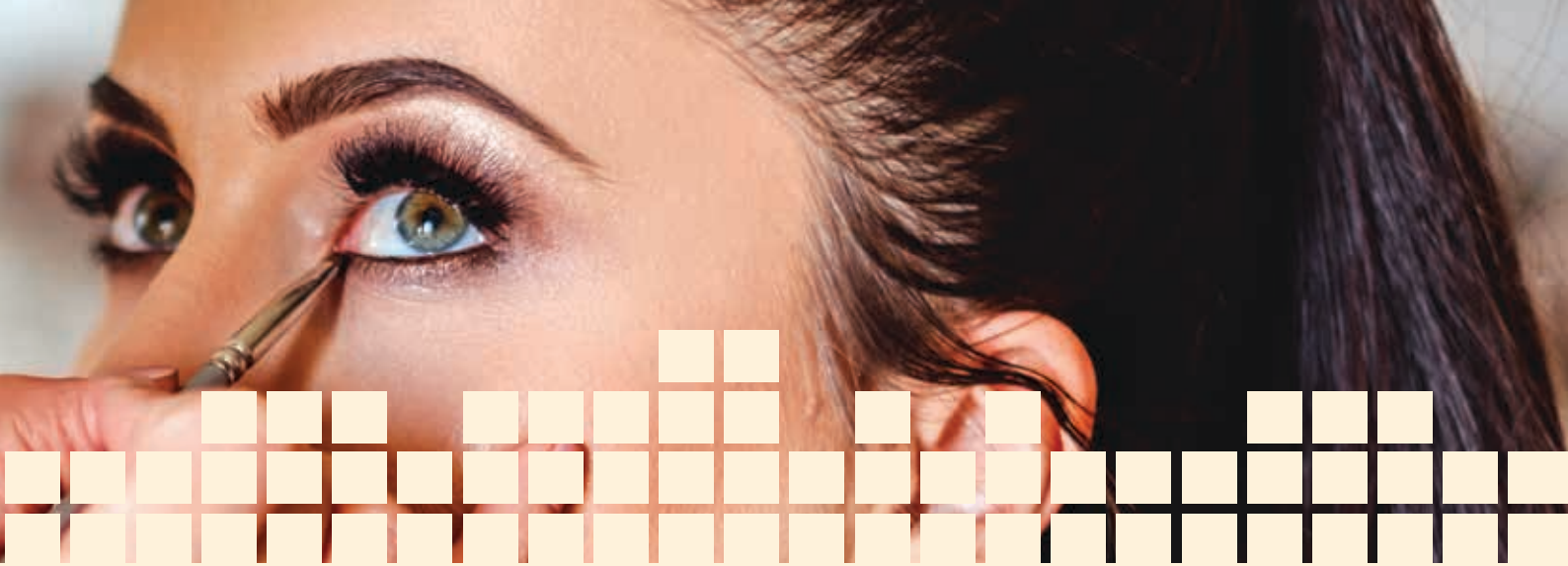
Rebuilding infrastructure will also allow TAFE to better respond to local demand, tailoring programs to the industries and skills most needed in each region. Without this renewal, TAFE risks falling behind industry standards and losing its status as the pre-eminent provider of vocational training.

Governments must treat capital investment as a core part of education funding, not an optional extra, and commit to long-term plans to restore TAFE's physical capacity. Only then can TAFE truly meet its social and economic mandate.

“Class sizes and number of classes have increased. We do not have the infrastructure to support this. I have made requests and submissions for additional workspace, increased classrooms, and additional computers to support students, but they have all been rejected.”

ANONYMOUS, BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION LECTURER, NEW SOUTH WALES

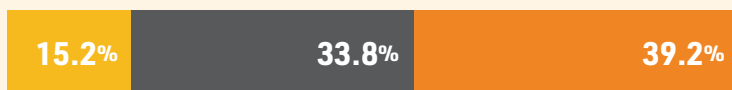




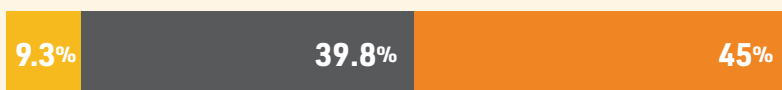
The investment we need:

- Deliver a national capital works program to modernise TAFE workshops, labs and classrooms so that facilities meet industry standards in every community.
- Fund modern teaching tools, machinery and digital equipment as recurrent expenditure rather than one off grants, so departments can plan upgrades and replacements with certainty.
- Establish minimum infrastructure and equipment benchmarks for all publicly funded TAFE courses, with funding tied to meeting and maintaining those standards.
- Provide dedicated funding for campus expansion and renewal.

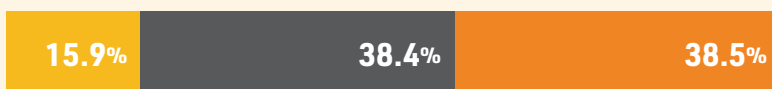
Does your institution have adequate capacity to meet the expectations of students and industry in these areas?



Internal and external building structures



Equipment



Classrooms

■ Adequate ■ Requires some upgrading and investment ■ Requires significant additional investment to bring up to standard



Student support

TAFE plays a vital role in supporting students with the greatest needs, including those experiencing disability, socioeconomic disadvantage, or other barriers to education. These students often require more than just access to courses, they need wraparound services that address wellbeing, literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, and English language skills.

Data from NCVER and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations shows that TAFE educates a more diverse student cohort than the wider VET sector, with more students with additional and complex needs attending:

- **8% of students at TAFE** identified as having a disability compared to 3% at private RTOs
- **6% of students at TAFE** identified as Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islander people compared to 3% at private RTOs
- **Women make up close to 60% of the Free TAFE student cohort**, whereas this figure is closer to 50% in the overall body of VET students
- **TAFE program completers are more likely** to represent the bottom two quintiles for socio-economic disadvantage when compared to students of private VET Providers.

Teachers frequently report that without adequate resourcing, they shoulder the burden of providing additional assistance, contributing to rising workloads and burnout.

Investment in comprehensive student support services is therefore essential to achieving equity and successful outcomes. This includes mental health programs, tutoring, cultural and linguistic services, and career guidance.

Such supports not only improve completion rates but also reduce pressures on teachers, allowing them to focus on teaching.

TAFE has long been the institution that welcomes and supports those excluded elsewhere, but without targeted funding, this mission is undermined. To truly serve its diverse student base, governments must legislate dedicated funding for wraparound services that guarantee no student is left behind.



“More students are presenting with complex needs like ADHD, OCD, and anxiety, but with no training or support, this puts added pressure on even the most capable trainers—leading to heightened stress, unsupported concerns, and declining classroom quality and outcomes.”

SHAYNE, TAFE TEACHER, VICTORIA

“I have noticed an increase in students with mental/emotional issues. I do my best to try to help them, but I am not qualified. I feel sort of frustrated by being unable to assist students with mental/emotional issues and also frustrated because I do not give enough attention to the rest of the students who may have learning difficulties or would like more revision, exercises, etc.”

ANONYMOUS, TAFE TEACHER, QLD

The investment we need:

- Fund permanent, on campus, multidisciplinary student support teams on every TAFE campus to guarantee counsellors, disability support staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support roles at every TAFE.
- Reduce student to support staff ratios so teachers are not expected to carry the full burden of complex case management.
- Require governments to report publicly on student support funding and outcomes in TAFE, including for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants and refugees, students with disability and students in rural and regional communities.

Foundation skills improvement

Vocational education success cannot be achieved without appropriate literacy, numeracy, and foundational skills.

TAFE teachers are increasingly required to deliver this crucial support across all disciplines, in addition to the required core teaching. Without targeted investment, many students struggle to engage fully with their studies.

Programs such as the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) scheme have been vital in addressing disadvantage, but their reach is limited by short-term contracts and inconsistent funding.

Teachers report that demand for foundation skills support far outstrips available resources, forcing students to fall through the cracks. Guaranteeing TAFE as the preferred provider of foundation skills programs such as SEE would strengthen outcomes by ensuring stability, quality, and pathways into vocational training.

Investment in these programs is not only about education, it is about social equity, enabling students to gain confidence, participate in their communities, and secure sustainable employment.

“[The workload] does not serve the student well. Students that were already doing well generally continue to be fine. Struggling students struggle more and often drop out. Adds significantly to lecturer stress. We have more chunks of teaching to get our head around. Can’t help but reduce quality.”

JO, TAFE TEACHER, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

“TAFE always has community service obligations that mean a higher percentage of students requiring support compared to many other RTOs. As a past Foundation Skills teacher [...] I believe that Free TAFE will require greater support services than I currently see being offered.”

PETER, TAFE TEACHER, WA

The investment we need:

- Prioritise TAFE as the preferred public provider of the Skills for Education and Employment program and other foundation skills programs, with longer term contracts that support secure jobs for specialist teachers and stable programs for students.
- Provide targeted equity funding for community based and culturally responsive foundation skills programs.
- Fund additional foundation skills teachers and timetabled support across the curriculum.

Digital literacy & inclusion for TAFE students

Digital literacy is now a prerequisite for education and employment, yet a significant digital divide continues to limit opportunities for many Australians.

We know over half a million Australians lack internet access, with even more facing unreliable connections or limited access to devices.

For TAFE students, many from low-income households, rural communities, or priority groups, this exclusion poses a direct barrier to participation.

Teachers report that they increasingly spend time supporting students with basic digital skills, diverting attention from their core teaching responsibilities.

To close this gap, governments must guarantee that every TAFE student has access to devices, stable internet, and dedicated digital literacy programs.

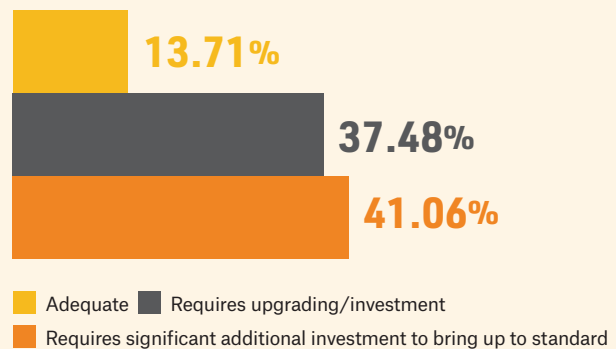
Free TAFE has increased participation, but without parallel investment in digital supports, inequity persists.

“We have 18 computers to support 152 students all learning on the TAFE Digital Learning centre. Students and parents have complained but all requests for more equipment have been rejected.”

**ANONYMOUS, TAFE LECTURER,
NEW SOUTH WALES**



Does your institution have enough capacity to meet the needs of industry and the local community?



The investment we need:

- Ensure every TAFE student has access to an appropriate device and stable internet for study through funded device loan schemes, on campus access and targeted support for low income students and students in regional and remote areas.
- Expand wraparound digital support so students can build the basic digital skills needed for modern education and work, and to reduce workloads for teachers who currently shoulder this burden.



Paid student workplace learning

Unpaid mandatory placements remain one of the biggest barriers to completing vocational qualifications.

TAFE students in nursing, community services, early childhood, and other courses are required to undertake hundreds of hours of unpaid work, often while juggling cost-of-living pressures. For many, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, this creates “placement poverty” that forces them to drop out.

The AEU welcomes the Commonwealth Practicum Payment (CPP) for Diploma of Nursing students as a vital step forward but argues that support must extend across all disciplines.

Paid placements recognise the essential contribution students make while on the job and ensure financial hardship does not block access to essential learning.

Paid workplace learning is a matter of equity, retention, and addressing critical workforce shortages in sectors that depend on vocational education.

“I have nursing students who are sharing accommodation in a caravan park so they can complete their regional placements. This slows or stops so many from being able to complete their degree.”

CLAIRE, TAFE TEACHER, VICTORIA

The investment we need:

- Extend the Commonwealth Practicum Payment to all TAFE students undertaking mandatory placements so that placement poverty no longer drives attrition and deepens workforce shortages.
- Fund dedicated placement co-ordination roles in TAFE so students are more readily able to access high quality learning experiences and industry partners that provide fair, well supervised placements.

Conclusion

The past three years have been transformative for TAFE, with the National Skills Agreements and Free TAFE returning TAFE to the heart of the VET sector, yet the survey tells a story of a workforce that is under pressure and struggling with increased workload.

The National Skills Agreements aimed to “Transform the national VET system, ensuring it provides high quality, responsive and accessible education and training to boost productivity.” The survey results make it clear that current policy and funding settings limit the ability of TAFE teachers and staff to guarantee every student the high quality, responsive and accessible education they are entitled to.

These objectives are achievable, but only by listening to the voices of the TAFE teaching profession and by investing in the TAFE workforce and TAFE campuses. The National Skills Agreement does not currently allow for an increase in standard support services in response to Fee Free TAFE, and investment in capital infrastructure has largely been limited to specific Centres of Excellence initiatives since the agreements began.

Investing in TAFE pays dividends for the economy. The annual costs of operating the TAFE system are modest by any measure when compared to its direct and indirect benefits. The estimated combined costs of the TAFE system including government funding for training and administration, employer and student assistance, loans and income support payments, student fees, and employer apprenticeship and traineeship training costs total \$5.7 billion per year – approximately 0.3% of Australia’s GDP – yet the annual total economic benefits of Australia’s historic investment in the TAFE and the current TAFE trained workforce were quantified in 2020 at \$92.5 billion annually, approximately 4.5% of Australia’s annual GDP.

Commonwealth, state and territory governments must match their investments in TAFE students with an equally ambitious investment in the TAFE workforce and TAFE campuses.

To ensure the long-term future of the TAFE workforce and to guarantee every student access to a high quality, responsive, and accessible vocational education, the following investments should be made:



Rebuild the TAFE teaching workforce through a ring-fenced workforce renewal and retention strategy that tackles precarious and casual employment, reduces unsustainable workloads, and guarantees high-quality professional development.



Fund ongoing support for students with additional needs, ensuring priority equity cohorts have access to the foundation skills, mental health support, and digital literacy training they need to thrive.



Deliver a significant capital works and equipment program so that every campus can accommodate the growth in enrolments, with state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities that match the Commonwealth’s course funding commitment.



rebuildwithtafe.org.au

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