



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



02 4751 3298 | bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au | 132 Macquarie Rd Springwood NSW 2777

New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

Status of TAFE in NSW

30 May 2017

I speak on behalf of the teachers and educators in my electorate who are doing an awesome job. As a teacher, I know that many people employed by the New South Wales Government in our schools and TAFEs feel that they are unable to speak out publicly against the failings, incompetence and ideological agenda of Liberal governments.

Thanks to an out-of-touch Federal Government, the new funding model undermines the integrity and the intention of Gonski needs-based funding.

Let us look at the TAFE system. Apprenticeships and trade courses have been cut across the board. As such, 864 face-to-face hours have been cut to 720 hours. Effectively that means that six months is cut off electrical trades courses across south-west Sydney where there are skills shortages.

Australia is facing a skills shortage and we have to entice workers from overseas to relocate to Australia, but this Liberal Government cuts trade training and critical skills courses.

It beggars belief.

Students who wanted a quality public education and a qualification that would set them up for a rewarding career are angry. As the quality of the courses is degraded, the costs go up. The cost to repeat a unit of study if a student fails on their first attempt is sometimes more than the whole course cost in the first place. The only explanation for this is to discourage students who are struggling from ever making an effort again, which is a terrible attitude towards education.

In the meantime, this Government and the Federal Liberals allow dodgy private training providers to rip people off. Those shonks should be run out of town. They are rip-off merchants.

Let us look at what has happened recently with Careers Australia. Master Electricians Australia recommended those crooks as a preferred training provider, but they have gone belly-up and 15,000 students had their classes cancelled while 1,000 teachers were stood down immediately without pay.

Adam Curlis from the New South Wales Teachers Federation had this to say:

Careers Australia sent \$65 million of your tax money overseas only 18 months before closing its doors. We'll never get it back.

All of these for-profit private education providers with their noses in the trough are being subsidised by the taxpayer but they are going belly-up one after the other, and we have to wonder how it keeps happening. Where is the money going? Why do they keep going bust?

The whole thing stinks.

But a fish rots from the head, and the fault for all this ultimately lies at the feet of the Minister for Skills, and he should be held accountable for the mess he has created.

What might this mean for our construction industry some years down the track? We already have a skills shortage but the plumbers, carpenters and electricians of tomorrow—who are not trained properly today in these dodgy private colleges—will be unable to meet the demands of industry, and the skills shortage will make that worse.

A central pillar of populist right-wing rhetoric—be it from Donald Trump or from local political nut jobs in the Pauline Hanson One Nation Party—and their whole political argument is that foreigners are taking "Aussie" jobs.

The reason we rely on a skilled migration program during a skills shortage is because we have governments such as the O'Farrell-Baird-Berejiklian circus in New South Wales, and the former Baillieu-Napthine disaster in Victoria out there gutting our TAFEs and encouraging shonky private operators to pick up the slack.

I will give the right-wing lunatics on the fringe of Australian politics a tip: The best way to protect Australian jobs is to give young people an excellent education in a public TAFE, set them up for a productive and rewarding career and get rid of the criminal element in the private, so-called "education" sector, who repeatedly rip-off taxpayers and leave students in the lurch.

TAFE teachers know what it takes to deliver quality public education and they should be supported to do so. They are at their wits' end with this Government.

On the one hand, they are devoted to their vocation as teachers; but, on the other hand, they are being pushed to the brink by funding and course cuts. They are being stretched to the absolute limit and having to watch as this Government, their employer, destroys TAFE and puts the future careers of their students at risk. Those who fight back are hounded.

Today I pay tribute to my teaching colleagues in both the TAFE and the school sectors. They are doing it tougher than they ever have before. Many feel undervalued and too many are anxious. They are stressed and exhausted, and they deserve to be treated with a bit of dignity and respect for the excellent work they do.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (19:51): It is fair to say that over the years both sides of politics have supported a private education regime. I agree with the member for the Blue Mountains that the bar certainly needs to be raised for private education facilities, not just in New South Wales but also across the country.

Let us put politics aside; both sides have supported the industry over the years—the Rudd-Gillard governments, the current Government and even the Howard Government before that.

I agree the bar needs to be raised. There are questionable facilities out there.

Ms Trish Doyle: You are too kind.

Mr MARK COURE: Probably I am, and I have seen some quite extraordinary things. A review of our private education facilities must be conducted across the country, not State by State.