

Sa in re-studying  
course material and  
incurring further



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SA Labor Destroying TAFE In December 2017, student enrollments were suspended in 14 TAFE courses following a scathing audit by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). TAFE had a 100% fail rate in 16 courses scrutinised by ASQA, including hairdressing, plumbing, cookery and aged care. Years of attacks by South Australian Labor, in government for almost 16 years, have caused the current crisis. TAFE students, already burdened with high fees, have been left without the necessary skills they require.

Aged care students, for example, did not complete CPR training and were taught outdated information on dementia. The Australian Medical Association labelled half of TAFE graduates 'unemployable'. For working class students, this disaster may result in re-studying course material and incurring further fees as they are forced to attend private institutions at their own cost.

Recently graduated high school students face increased uncertainty about their futures in a state already marred by Australia's highest youth unemployment rate. As with the failures of the privatised electricity network, Labor was warned of crisis conditions for years. The capacity of TAFE to deliver quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses has been eroded by funding cuts. In 2014-15, state governments cut \$1 billion from VET courses. Particularly rapacious, SA Labor enforced the largest job cuts nationally, sacking 700 full-time staff since corporatising TAFE in 2012. Labor has slashed funding by \$100 million since 2014. Presiding over internal restructuring, former TAFE boss Robin Murt received a \$48,000 bonus in 2015-16.

13 campuses have closed and the future of TAFE at Tea Tree Gully remains uncertain. In one positive development, the Australian Education Union (AEU) has commenced a campaign for increased funding - 'TAFE: Too Good to Lose'. However, with a state election approaching in March, unions remain reluctant to attack Labor.

Liberals such as Education Minister Simon Birmingham, themselves responsible for appalling attacks on education, have cynically condemned the crisis, merely mourning the muddied 'reputation' of TAFE. Birmingham claimed that the cause of the scandal lies in Labor failing to hand out 'lots of funding to private providers'! But it's far more than the 'TAFE brand' that's been undermined. Labor's 16-year onslaught on working class students and public education in South Australia have been laid bare. For students, 'independent' reviews are not required to reveal the desperately needed cure. As Howard Spreadbury, state AEU president says, the review 'will only show they should have invested more from the start'. Immediate compensation for students, large-scale reinvestment and the return of TAFE to public hands are urgently required.

We should fight for quality, free education and start by unweaving the fabric of corporatisation.