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Calls for greater investment in technical training

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by Brett Henebery | 20 Jun 2017



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The head of TAFE NSW has urged the Federal Government to boost funding of technical training to address the country's skills shortage.

The calls come as the training provider struggles with a 51% drop in enrolments across all diplomas in the first six months of this year alone – a problem TAFE NSW managing director, Jon Black, blamed on recent changes to the VET scheme.

Also responsible for the fall in enrolments, according to Black, is the Federal Government's support of universities offering courses such as sub-bachelor level diplomas.

"We are concerned that students are finding it difficult to apply through the arduous process for these loans for critical skilled areas like construction and early childhood," he told ABC News.

However, Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham, insists changes to the VET scheme are essential.

"Australians rightly expect that taxpayer funding for student loans will go to courses that will help students get a job and ultimately earn enough money to repay what was lent to them," Birmingham said in a statement.

"Unfortunately under VET FEE-HELP far too many students were failing to complete studies yet were ending up with ballooning debt that will take them far too long to repay, if they ever do."

In addition to providing additional funding to technical training, Black said the "social mentality" needs to change, pointing to the trend of schools encouraging students to go to university instead of TAFE.

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"We can effectively skill those people and give them a pathway if they wish to transition to university later," Black said.

A report released in May revealed that TAFE graduates not only have higher starting wages than university graduates, but also find work more quickly, on average.

The report, titled: 'Perceptions Are Not Reality: myths, realities & the critical role of vocational education & training in Australia', was released by the Skilling Australia Foundation (SAF) today.

SAF CEO, Nicholas Wyman called on Australia to raise the status of skilled education, address youth unemployment and disengagement and to ensure people graduate from our educational institutions with real-world workplace skills.

Nicholas Wyman, SAF CEO, said the report was a call to action for Australia's vocational training industry.

"No two people are the same, nor will they travel the same path. We all have different learning styles, interests and talents," Wyman said in a statement.

"With skills-based career development, young Australians can pursue an individual passion while gaining the knowledge and experience to build a rewarding career."

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