

TAFE enrolments fall again as fees rise



The State School Teachers' Union has accused the State Government of undermining WA's TAFE system, with new figures showing enrolments have dropped again.

The figures show enrolments in 2015 decreased by 5,658, or 4 per cent, compared to 2014. This is on top of a 9 per cent drop in enrolments the previous year.

"Around 13,000 fewer students are currently enrolled in TAFE compared to two years ago," said SSTUWA vice president Samantha Schofield.

"It is no coincidence that the freefall in TAFE enrolments corresponds with the State Government increasing course fees by more than 600 per cent over two years in some courses.

"These latest figures show that TAFE is becoming increasingly unaffordable for many people and we are very concerned about the implications for future students and for the future of the economy.

"The state budget showed that fees will increase again by 4 per cent next year, above CPI, putting TAFE further out of reach for many of the people who most need it."

The figures showed that people under the age of 19 were most affected, with the biggest drop in enrolments in this age group.

Miss Schofield said it was likely that the excessive fee increases had been a contributing factor.

"Enrolments of under 19's decreased by 3,656, or 8.1 percent, between 2014 and 2015, which is very concerning considering the unemployment rate for this age group is much higher than the general unemployment rate," she said.

"We need to ensure that there is a broad range of educational pathways for young people in WA to assist them in being able to contribute meaningfully to society."

Miss Schofield said it was particularly concerning to see that general industry course enrolments dropped by 14,394 (23.8 per cent) and apprenticeships dropped by 3,206 (7.8 per cent).

"General industry courses offer students a wide range of courses that develop students' broad range of skills and

knowledge.

“While enrolments in the government’s ‘priority courses’ have increased, we believe that TAFE should not be limited to focusing on these courses, especially when our economy is diversifying and other industries are emerging.

“It would be folly for government to focus so heavily on what are considered priority industries and ignoring general courses that have the potential to grow into emerging markets and industries.”

Budget papers show TAFE funding has already been cut by \$110 million over the past three years and is forecast to be cut by a further \$50 million next year.

Authorised by Mary Franklyn, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.

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