

Tuesday, 17 October 2023

Unions welcome Albanese Government's landmark National Skills Agreement

The ACTU welcomes the Albanese Government's announcement of a National Skills Agreement with State and Territory Governments to invest billions in new funding for vocational education and training.

The landmark five-year agreement will pave the way for total Commonwealth, State and Territory Government investment in skills and training to exceed over \$30 billion.

Importantly, the agreement prioritises expanding TAFE capacity and supporting working people to gain the skills they require for emerging industries, including clean energy and the care sector.

The National Skills Agreement comes after a decade of federal underfunding and neglect of the VET sector by the former Coalition Government, which contributed to a collapse in apprentices and increasing numbers of working people being locked out of employment opportunities. This was devastating for working people and has led to the record skills shortage that Australia is currently experiencing.

The new nationally coordinated strategy will result in greater collaboration between TAFEs, universities, Jobs and Skills Councils, and industry.

Vocational education is crucial to achieving social cohesion and inclusion. The ACTU is encouraged by the National Skills Agreement's focus on economic inclusion for women, mature age Australians, young people, people from CALD backgrounds, First Nations people, people with a disability, and regional workers.

The ACTU also welcomes the \$414 million the Albanese Government has committed to delivering 300,000 fee-free TAFE places from 2024, which will assist students with cost-of-living challenges and enable more Australians to gain the VET qualifications they need for secure, well-paid work.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"This National Skills Agreement is a gamechanger for millions of working people and their kids. It will unlock record investment and support Australians to gain the skills they need for the jobs of the future.

"The announcement by the Albanese Government will make an incredible difference to working people and the next generation coming through. The country needs, and young people deserve, a world-class VET sector, with TAFE at its heart to provide job opportunities across our cities, suburbs, and regions.

"When the Liberals were in power, they cut TAFE and vocational education to the bone. It's reassuring to see a federal government show leadership and invest in the skills and training of working people.

“The five-year term of the agreement, the partnership approach between governments, and the inclusion of industry experts at the planning table restores stability and confidence that the quality and capacity of the VET sector will lift and provide greater opportunities for working Australians.”

ENDS

Media Contact: Cameron Warasta 0447 159 467