

Axed TAFE courses a telling sign for future workers:

Imagine a state government launching a TAFE “You Can Make It Here” campaign – timed to tap into the end of the school year and grab the attention of those students considering further study options for 2026.

Picture this campaign also advocating how those potential learners could build successful and rewarding careers by taking advantage of hundreds of fee-free, or low-fee courses, across a broad range of sectors and industries.

This is exactly what the Western Australian government did this week.

Jobs and Skills Minister Felix Ellis cuts critical learnings, narrowing the industry fields Tasmanians have to consider, writes **Meg Webb**

Further, the WA TAFE You can Make it Here campaign demonstrates exactly what could be made by using a predominantly TAFE-trained creative and production crew to deliver the campaign across print, digital and social media platforms, television and cinema.

What a stark contrast to Tasmania’s Scrooge-like Jobs and Skills Minister Felix Ellis, who chose

the same end of school period to hike TasTAFE fees on selected courses by about 5400 per cent, axe 12 courses and cut 26 jobs.

This was Mr Ellis telling the 500-odd Tasmanians currently enrolled in the courses facing the chop next year that, no, they cannot make it here.

Which is an unacceptable outrage.

During the controversial 2021 TasTAFE restructure legislative



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debate, I called on the government to guarantee the range of all free, subsidised and full-fee foundation skill courses would be maintained, if not increased, during and beyond the flagged five-year transition period.

Instead, as was feared, as the transition period closes the minister

chooses to “redirect” subsidies.

The redirection of subsidies will result in students being slugged a fee hike of \$18, \$315 and \$21,260 respectively for the Laboratory Technician certificate IV and diploma courses before both are expected to be cut by the end of 2026.

In contrast WA offers a similar laboratory certificate IV as a low-fee course with an annual cap of \$400 for those aged 15-24, or concession holders, or \$1200 for others.

It is nonsensical for the minister to claim the cuts are due to the government wanting TasTAFE to address skills gaps when TasTAFE

‘you can’t make it here’, you will have to disappear

offers the state’s only lab technician course and diploma.

By cutting the Laboratory Technology courses the minister is ironically ensuring a future statewide drought in laboratory skills impacting education, science, agriculture, health, pathology, viticulture and mining industries, to mention a few.

Make no mistake about it – if we lose the course, we lose the teachers and we will lose the current specialist lab infrastructure and facilities.

Nine arts and design courses are also to be cut by being priced out of reach and out of existence.

This is despite the Coordinator-

General website stating, “Creativity is fundamental to our Tasmanian way of life” and acknowledging the multimillion contribution the creative industries makes to the Tasmanian Gross State Product, with more than 9000 Tasmanians directly employed in those industries plus those indirectly employed in related sectors such as tourism and retail.

Mr Ellis’s cuts also fly in the face of the government’s Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy: 2020 and Beyond, and the Implementation Plan 2023 which commits to working with education providers to highlight skill

development opportunities and build careers in the cultural and creative industries.

But not on Mr Ellis’s watch apparently.

Out of interest again, WA offers more than 150 arts and creative industry courses, many of which are low or no fee.

Raising fees by more than 5000 per cent for a few selected courses is arguably discriminatory.

Not only do we lose teachers and facilities, equitable access and choice is ripped away from many school leavers, regional and rural Tasmanians, and others seeking skill

diversification.

It demands the question: upon what justifiable and informed basis was this decision made?

What impact assessment was made on current and projected enrolments and teaching staff?

Where is the gender lens data, detailing whether these cuts will disproportionately impact any gender over others across current and future student and teaching cohorts?

The minister must come clean whether his intention is to try to drive Tasmanians into the fields he values and away from where their actual interests, skills and passion lie?

An underhand tactic which would be denounced as social-engineering in other contexts.

Why can’t TasTAFE make it here, minister?

Reverse this damaging, discriminatory and illogical decision, invest in strengthening equitable career pathways for Tasmanians across all sectors, and declare TasTAFE open, affordable and accessible.

Tasmanians should be able to learn here – they should be encouraged to make it here.

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