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## Media Release

# Public “in the dark” about State Government changes to Victoria’s TAFE system

A new poll reveals that only 20 per cent of the Victorian public are aware of the State Government’s changes to the TAFE system.

The AEU poll of 1000 Victorians also shows that once informed, 71 per cent oppose the changes.

AEU Victorian Branch President Mary Bluett said despite a \$16 million State Government advertising campaign, the public were in the dark about major changes to the TAFE system that will have dramatic impacts.

“These changes will see fees triple for many government supported places, and the low income concession rate abolished, creating a barrier for those wishing to study at TAFE,” Ms Bluett said.

“As an example, a government supported Diploma of Community and Welfare Studies will rise from \$877 to \$2,500 by 2012. And for those on concession, their fees will increase from \$55 to \$2500.

“Further, those who already have a degree or diploma will be forced to pay the full-cost of further training, which could be over \$10,000.

“Rather than providing the funding that TAFE needs, the Government is shifting the cost of TAFE education to those who can least afford it,” Ms Bluett said.

“93 per cent of the public agree that TAFE fees need to be kept low to ensure all Australians have access to training and education.

“A further 88 per cent also agree that funding for TAFE needs to be increased in the global economic crisis to ensure people who lose their jobs can access training and education.

“TAFE is an opportunity that many people will no longer be able to afford.

“Vocations such as IT, business, building and construction, engineering and conservation and land management will be hard hit by fee increases.

“With rising unemployment, you’d think that the State Government would make it easier for students to get the training they need at TAFE,” Ms Bluett said.

The AEU has launched a new ‘TAFE4ALL’ website and two television advertisements will air statewide in regional Victoria from today.

The AEU will also visit a series of secondary schools and TAFE’s across the state to continue to educate the community on the impacts of the changes.

**Survey results also include:**

- 91 per cent of the public agree that increased funding for TAFE's is essential to address Australia's skills shortage
- 92 per cent of the public agree that TAFE's help to reduce unemployment because they allow people to get new skills and change careers or return to the workforce
- 68 per cent of the public had not heard anything about the State Government's recent introduction of changes to the TAFE system
- 77 per cent of the public oppose increasing fees for TAFE diplomas and advanced diplomas from \$950 to \$2,500 over the next few years
- 62 per cent of the public oppose abolishing the current annual concession rate of \$55 for low income students
- 70 per cent of the public oppose making students who already have a degree or diploma pay the full cost of TAFE training, which could be over \$10,000
- 65 per cent of the public agree with the AEU that the State Government is simply shifting the cost of education to those who can least afford it and this will reduce access to TAFE courses for those who most need them
- 66 per cent of the public believe that the Government's changes to the TAFE system will decrease demand for TAFE courses
- 80 per cent of the public agree that increasing TAFE student fees will limit the access to skills training and only make the skills crisis worse
- 77 per cent of the public agree that the State Government can increase TAFE funding without increasing fees