MEDIA RELEASE

Ryan Park MP
Shadow Minister for Education

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BAIRD COPIES ABBOTT AND REMOVES CAP ON TAFE FEES UNDER COVER OF FEDERAL BUDGET – COST OF QUALIFICATION SET TO SKYROCKET

The NSW Labor Opposition has accused Premier Mike Baird of copying Tony Abbott and putting TAFE out of reach of ordinary Australians after quietly approving massive fee increases for 2015.

It has been revealed that the cost of a TAFE Certificate or Diploma qualification in NSW is about to soar by as much as $3000.

The cap on the cost of an apprenticeship qualification – for example, to become a plumber or electrician – is increasing from $506 to $2000, up by almost four times.

Examples of fee increases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Fee Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma of Counselling</td>
<td>$3028</td>
<td>$4930</td>
<td>$1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III in Applied Fashion Design</td>
<td>$838</td>
<td>$3190</td>
<td>$2352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III in Concreting</td>
<td>$838</td>
<td>$3550</td>
<td>$2712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II in Agriculture</td>
<td>$534</td>
<td>$2600</td>
<td>$2066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II in Hospitality</td>
<td>$534</td>
<td>$1040</td>
<td>$506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source:

The 2015 TAFE fee increases follow a 9.5 per cent increase in fees last year.

They were published on a NSW Government website yesterday under cover of a horror federal budget – in which the Abbott Government approved massive fee increases for university courses and cut $25 billion from NSW hospitals and schools.

“Mike Baird – in underhand fashion – has used the cover of the federal budget to double, treble, or even quadruple the cost of a TAFE qualification in NSW,” Shadow Education Minister Ryan Park said today.

“The Premier of NSW has deceitfully masked his own bad news under cover of Tony Abbott’s bad news.

“A TAFE degree is a passport into the workforce and these fee increases are outrageous and unconscionable. They shift the burden onto those who can least afford it.

“Young people who leave school early will be forced to fork out a fortune – just to fulfill their ambition to learn a trade.

“These massive fee increases will cripple the hopes of older, retrenched workers across NSW seeking to retrain – and mothers eager to upgrade their skills after exiting the workforce to have children.
“Whether it is Tony Abbott letting university fees off the leash – or Mike Baird doing the same with TAFE fees – the Liberal Party is creating a lost generation of Australians unable to afford their dream of a better education.”

The Baird Liberal Government has already cut $800 million from the NSW TAFE system. It has sacked 800 teachers, doubled student-teacher ratios and shortened the daily timetable for eight hours to seven.

Major courses have been downgraded or eliminated including:

- Carpentry and metal fabrication courses from South West Sydney TAFE;
- Plumbing courses from Western Sydney TAFE;
- Tourism, hospitality, welding, boilermaking and IT courses cut in the Hunter and Central Coast; and
- The HSC syllabus phased out in the Hunter and the Riverina.

The Government now plans to copy reforms from Victoria that would place TAFE in unwinnable competition to provide vocational education against lower cost private providers. This threatens to decimate the viability of regional TAFE and force further fee increases.

“It is a crime against current and future generations to do what the Baird Government has done to TAFE,” Mr Park said.

“The Liberal Government is dismantling our world-class vocational education system and it is just a tragedy.”

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