

## Scone TAFE campus sell-off

Back at the end of January TAFE announced the Scone campus was being put on the open market. The CPSU NSW wrote to TAFE demanding it put a hold on its plans to divest of the Scone campus until such time it furnished the union all documentation demonstrating what consultation it had undertaken with the local community about how or whether the divestment would meet the needs of the local economy.

Disappointingly, but unsurprisingly, TAFE confirmed in its 19 March reply letter that effectively no consultation was undertaken with the affected community at all. This failure to even attempt to speak with the local community about the needs of their economy, and about the selling off of their campus from under their noses is nothing short of contemptuous.

### Scone community forum

In response to wide interest amongst the local Upper Hunter community, the CPSU NSW, Unions NSW and the NSW Teachers Federation, held a well-attended forum at Scone RSL.

The forum was a chance to hear directly from the local Upper Hunter community including local farmers, former and current teachers, business owners, the Country Women's Association, young people and students in relation to the sale of the Scone campus to Racing NSW, and to listen and understand what their vocational educational needs are into the future.

In essence, the unions undertook the grassroots-level consultation that TAFE and the NSW Government failed to undertake.

A representative from NSW Minister Geoff Lee's office was invited but did a no show at the last minute – once again showing TAFE and the NSW Government's contempt for the people of the Upper Hunter.

### Meeting resolution

It was clear from the forum that the local community is only too aware of the disastrous implications the sell-off will have for the Upper Hunter region, particularly in terms of training locals for local jobs.

The resolution from the meeting:

*The Scone community calls on TAFE NSW and the NSW Government engage with and consult local leaders of the Upper Hunter on the region's vocational needs and thereafter redirect all monies from the sale of the Scone campus into building a new practical training campus in Scone that will address said needs.*

### TAFE's role in the sale

Steffen Faurby told The Sydney Morning Herald on 31 March 2021 [HERE](#) that in 2019 TAFE had formed a view that the Scone site was "surplus to its needs".



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The CPSU NSW disagrees.

The CPSU NSW believes TAFE has a very clear and obvious responsibility to undertake a deep and exhaustive consultative process with the affected community of Scone. It needs to understand its local economic needs, to determine how TAFE may play a part in providing quality vocational education to facilitate and strengthen the local economy. This must include advocating for greater government investment in quality Technical and Further Education in the Upper Hunter.

NSW Government and TAFE need to realise education cannot be measured in dollars, it needs to be measured in the value it brings to the community, and the enrichment it brings to people's lives; you can't put a dollar amount on a quality public education; it is a vital component of country towns.

### **Invitation to TAFE and the Minister to a further Scone consultation meeting**

The joint unions are in the process of organising a series of vocational education community forums in the Upper Hunter.

Mr Steffen Faurby and the Minister Geoff Lee or his representative will be invited.

The CPSU NSW hopes they will take up the offer and come and engage with the Upper Hunter community they serve.

We will keep members updated.

