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TAFE cap will leave students indebted

JESSICA MARSZALEK

THE Coalition will attempt to highlight how TAFE students will be out of pocket thousands of dollars under Labor's changes to the vocational education loans scheme in a new attack today.

The attack will target Labor in its heartland policy areas of education and training, claiming Bill Shorten's plans to cap TAFE loans at \$8000 will see some students having to fork out as much as \$22,000 in upfront fees.

Vocational Education Minister Scott Ryan said it was unfair an education policy would see all university loans covered, but many vocational education students left out of pocket. The Coalition will today, on National TAFE Day, release a list of courses that exceed Mr Shorten's \$8000 loan cap.

Labor announced its plans for the cap in May as a key savings measure, saying the cap would crack down on dodgy private trainers who have been ripping off taxpayers by pocketing VET-FEE HELP payments from loans that will never be repaid.

The Labor cap scheme applies to diplomas and advanced diplomas at TAFEs that currently qualify for VET-FEE HELP, as well as through private registered training organisations. And it means a student doing a one-year Diploma of Maritime Operations at Hunter TAFE, Newcastle, will be \$21,000 worse

off, according to the analysis.

Someone studying an on-line Diploma of Business Administration through Illawarra Institute, a Diploma of Conservation and Land Management at the Northern Sydney Institute or Diploma of Water Operations at South Western Sydney Institute would be between \$14,800 and \$8500 out of pocket.

"There are hundreds more examples across Australia affecting thousands of future students," Mr Ryan said. "Why should there be no upfront fee for university for potentially thousands of vocational diplomas? These potentially massive upfront fees can hit school leavers, people seeking improvement opportunities and those seeking retraining."