



## *Australian Education Union - Federal Office*

Ground Floor, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria, 3006

Phone : +61 (0)3 9693 1800 Fax : +61 (0)3 9693 1805

Email : [aeu@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:aeu@aeufederal.org.au) Website : [www.aeufederal.org.au](http://www.aeufederal.org.au)

---

May 9, 2003

### **THE BUDGET SHOULD COMMIT TO EDUCATION FOR ALL**

Public Education is looking for commitment from the federal government in Tuesday's budget.

AEU Federal President Pat Byrne says public schools, preschools and TAFE are being ignored by the Commonwealth in favour of the private sector "We want a system for all Australians, not just those who can afford fees as in universities. We don't want a two-tier system which favours the rich."

"Public Education is the system of choice for some 70% of Australian families, yet receives just a third of federal schools funding under the State Grants Act. Since 1996, the Howard government has presided over systematic cuts to public education resources, with large increases going to favoured private schools."

"The Australian Education Union fears the government wants to create a two-tiered education system, where the lion's share of funding is directed to the private sector, and public education is reduced to a residual system."

"We denounce such an approach as discriminatory and damaging to our growth as a nation, and note that it is particularly harmful to Indigenous students."

"There's no excuse for ongoing neglect of public education. The AEU believes it is reasonable to expect a constructive program for ongoing investment, kicked off with a significant budget increase this year to signal the government's genuine commitment" Ms Byrne said.

This budget should set a direction for the future with these priorities:

- A fairer system of resourcing for schools. Research shows that public schools are now operating on resources well below the average of non-government schools. A new funding model is required based on educational needs.
  - A commitment guaranteeing all children at least one year of high quality free preschool education, with an Equity Program to address areas of special need.
  - Funding to address unmet demand for vocational education. Not only must all young people be guaranteed comprehensive education and training opportunities in schools, TAFE and employment programs, but the federal government must not impose a HECS style fee on TAFE, as it would be a major disincentive to learning.
  - Target programs for disadvantaged and special needs students.
  - Special programs for Indigenous students which recognise their specific cultural and community needs.
-

- A review of the allocation of IESP (Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program) funds to remove the current inequity which sees 30% of funds going to private schools, despite enrolling just 12% of indigenous students.
- Lifelong learning opportunities, which allow older people to re-enter the education and training systems.

“These elements must form the foundation for reinvestment and revitalisation of public education.”

“Every child deserves access to free, secular, quality education, regardless of their wealth, social status, religion, or cultural background. Public Education is the system that achieves this, and as such, it deserves a great deal more respect than it’s currently receiving from this government” Ms Byrne said.

**For further information, please contact:**

**Pat Byrne**

AEU Federal President

08 9325 5311 – Office

0411 693 244 – Mobile