



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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TEACHERS SLAM HISTORIC BETRAYAL OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Public educators are scathing of the federal government's budget. Private school education is being favoured to such an extent that it is now the largest education allocation to any sector for the first time in history.

AEU Federal President Pat Byrne said, "The budget makes funding increases under the controversial State Grants Act formula. This means that two thirds of Federal schools expenditure is directed to private schools which account for just 30% of enrolments."

"This year, despite some increases for universities, Commonwealth funds to private schools exceeded those to Higher Education." However, Ms Byrne said it was not just elite schools which were being unduly favoured. "The facts are on record. Federal parliamentary research endorsed by all political parties has found that on average public schools are operating on resources below the average resources available in private schools."

"Treasurer Peter Costello and Education Minister Brendan Nelson have failed students and their parents. They've abandoned the 70% of students who choose public education as their right, disregarded TAFE, and discriminated against the 88% of Indigenous students who attend public schools."

"Under this government, public investment in public education in Australia remains at the bottom end of OECD countries as a proportion of GDP."

"Ironically, Peter Costello has claimed that the budget reforms higher education to widen student choice. In reality, the two-tier system the university reforms create means future students come from a school environment which is increasingly unfair due to Coalition policies."

Specific failings of this budget, and areas of concern include:

- Failure to adopt a new, fairer model of school funding based on student needs, despite Senate research showing that public schools are operating on resources below the average of non-government schools.
- Ignoring the needs of TAFE. No additional growth funds and no certainty that young people will be guaranteed access to vocational education and training. Still no funding to address unmet demand. This undermines the nation's skills base and entrenches unemployment.
- A failure to improve inadequate equity programs in areas of special need and no attention at all to the critical early years of schooling and pre-school.
- A callous disregard of the special needs of Indigenous students, and continuing inequity in IESIP (Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program) with 30% of funds going to private schools, even though they enrol just 12% of Indigenous students.

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