



## **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)

Media Release

Media Release

Media Release

### **MEDIA RELEASE** **September 27 2004**

#### **AEU welcomes ALP's national focus on early childhood**

The Australian Education Union has welcomed the Australian Labor Party's commitment to support preschool education within a coordinated national approach to early education and development.

AEU Federal President Ms Pat Byrne said that she was pleased that at last a major party had decided to develop a coherent national vision for early childhood. She explained that Labor's Head Start policy promised \$252 million to state based preschool education systems and planned to ensure that all programs achieve a national standard.

"The independent Walker inquiry into preschool education revealed the significant inequities in access and provision of preschool education across Australia. The ALP's proposal to strike agreements with the states and territories to ensure that the new funding is used to deliver agreed priorities is a sensible measure to ensure greater equity of access to quality preschool education for all", Ms Byrne said.

"The policy indicates that the additional funding could be used to reduce fees and increase quality in those states which have been substantially under-funding preschool education. States such as NSW and Victoria will be encouraged to lift their game in order to access these funds", she said.

Ms Byrne explained that the policy indicates that states operating at the national standard will be able to use the funding for other early childhood purposes. "The Walker report indicated that across Australia, children with special needs do not get access to adequate resources and support. We will be making access to special needs resources a priority in our discussions with state and federal governments."

Ms Byrne welcomed the commitment to increase funding and expand the number of Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services to provide an additional 400 places for Indigenous Children. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely to miss out on a preschool education and we must ensure that their right to access services of the highest quality is addressed," she said.

Ms Byrne said that the proposed children's resource centres would need further discussion. "The AEU's view is that public schools will be the ideal location for many of these centres, offering families a community hub at which to access a range of services" she said.

Ms Byrne welcomed the proposal to have a coordinated national approach to early childhood issues. "It is high time that all governments and stakeholders were given the opportunity to plan a coordinated national vision for early childhood education and care in the best interests of Australian children."

**For further information, please contact:**

**Pat Byrne**  
AEU Federal President  
0411 693 244

**Meaghan Telford**  
Media  
0409 510 879