



## **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)

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### **AEU LAUNCHES \$2.9 BILLION PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN**

The Australian Education Union (AEU) today launched a national campaign to ensure all students in public schools have the opportunity to get a high quality education.

The campaign, Public Education – Australia’s Future, includes a claim for an additional \$2.9 billion a year in recurrent funding, a figure which has been determined from the work of the Ministerial Council of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Schools Resourcing Taskforce. It represents the extent to which the public school system is presently underfunded.

AEU Federal President Ms Pat Byrne said the additional money would give every public school across the country enough funding to ensure students could meet established national goals in literacy, numeracy and skill development.

“After ten years of neglect and undermining of the public system the Federal Government needs to take responsibility for a significant injection of funds.

“Nearly 70 per cent of students attend public schools and yet the Federal Government has cut the percentage of money it spends on public education from 43 per cent of the total schools’ education budget to 35 per cent in a decade.

“The \$11 billion budget surplus provides an opportunity for the Howard Government and the Minister for Education, Julie Bishop to show leadership by committing to this much needed funding,” Ms Byrne said.

“At the moment too much depends on where you live and where you go to school,” she said.

“This campaign is about making sure that wherever a family sends their child to a public school they can be sure that school can provide them with a high quality education. That means enough teachers, the right equipment and a high quality learning environment.

“The quality of education cannot be separated from the quantity of funding,” Ms Byrne said.

The campaign will be launched in Melbourne today, and will include concerned teachers, parents and community members lobbying their Federal Member of Parliament for a commitment to the \$2.9 billion.

**For further information, please contact:**

Pat Byrne  
AEU Federal President  
0411 693 244 – Mobile

Kelly Lofberg  
Media  
0423 375 833 – Mobile

## AEU Public Education Campaign Fact Sheet

### Campaign

- The AEU wants at least an additional \$2.9 billion a year spent on public education by the Federal Government.
- The \$2.9 billion figure has been identified in research commissioned by the Federal, State and Territory education ministers to try and determine the minimum cost of getting all students in public schools in Australia to meet the National Goals in Schooling (covering literacy, numeracy and skills outcomes). It is a minimum figure in that it does not take into account capital costs or specific costs associated with special education or with assuring quality teaching for all students. *(See note below)*
- The additional \$2.9 billion would be distributed to schools according to a National Resource Standard which takes into account geographical differences in schools as well as differences in student costs..
- Currently only 5 per cent of public schools in Australia are funded at or above the National Resources Standard.
- The National Resources Standard is a national funding mechanism which would ensure fairness and equity for all public school students and their families.

### Current Federal Funding

- 70 per cent of students attend public schools and yet the Federal Government has cut the percentage of money it spends on public education from 43 per cent of the total schools' education budget to 35 per cent in a decade.
- The percentage of funding devoted to public schools is forecast by the Federal Government to continue to **decline every year until 2009-10**.

### What Australians Want

- A recent AEU national poll of 400 people conducted by Essential Research found 66 per cent of people believe the Federal Government is not providing enough funds for public schools and 67 per cent believe public schools should be the main educational priority for the Federal Government.
- **90 per cent of respondents said extra money spent on education should go to public schools.**
- The number one priority for spending the money is reducing class sizes. 73 per cent of people said they wanted more teachers employed to reduce class sizes. 45 per cent said they wanted special classes for students with behavioural and learning problems.

*Note: The original work of the Ministerial Council calculated the degree of underfunding to be at least \$2.4billion in 2003 figures. The \$2.9billion figure reflects calculations in today's terms.*