



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 Website : www.aeufederal.org.au

17 May 2007

NATIONAL POLL SHOWS VOTERS WANT PUBLIC SCHOOLS PUT FIRST

A new national poll of voters in marginal seats shows that there is overwhelming opposition to the Federal Government's education funding policies. In a poll of 400 people in marginal coalition seats, 67% of respondents agreed that the Federal Government had under-funded public schools over the last 11 years, and 78% believed that any increase in federal education funding should go to public schools.

The poll was taken in the seats of McMillan, Bass, Solomon, Stirling, Makin, Moreton, Dobell and Eden Monaro between May 9 – 16. Australian Education Union Federal President Pat Byrne said that the poll results re-enforced that voters want a Federal Government that gives priority to public schools.

"An overwhelming majority of voters (79%) agree with the Australian Education Union that we need a Federal Government that will put public schools first," said Ms Byrne.

"The Howard Government has reduced the share of federal funding going to public schools until it is now only 35%, disadvantaging thousands of Australian students.

"This poll shows that voters recognise the Federal Government's policies have skewed funding away from public schools with 62% stating that the Government had favoured private schools.

"The poll also shows that voters do not buy the Howard Government's rhetoric on what is really needed in schools with a majority favouring reducing class sizes over curriculum change and teaching standards.

"The Government's budget measures have also fallen flat with 80% agreeing with the union that the \$457 million allocated to pay for tuition vouchers should have been given directly to schools so they can employ more specialist teachers and give more individual attention to students who need it.

"The AEU is campaigning for an additional \$2.9 billion annually to ensure every public school is able to provide a high quality education for their students.

"The poll shows there is overwhelming support for this funding which would give every student in Australia the opportunity to reach his or her potential.

"The AEU will continue campaigning until the federal election to ensure that voters remember John Howard's record on public school funding when they get to the ballot box."

For further information, please contact:

Pat Byrne
AEU Federal President
0411 693 244

Erin Farley
Media
0409 510 879

Summary of Australian Education Union National poll results:

- 79% agree that what we need is a Federal Government that will put public schools first.
- 53% agree that the Federal Government's lack of funding for public education shows they don't care much about the educational opportunities of children in public schools.
- 41% rated the Howard Government as poor or very poor at giving priority to funding schools in most need
- 69% agree with the AEU that the top priority should be investing more in schools so we can reduce class sizes and ensure every child gets the opportunity to have a high quality education, over the Government's focus on curriculum and standards.
- Research conducted for Australia's education ministers found that to ensure every public school was able to provide a high quality education for their students an additional investment of \$2.9 billion per year is required. The Australian Education Union believes that money should come from the Federal Government's budget surplus. When asked if agree or disagree with the education union, 72% overall and 76% of swinging voters agree with the union.
- When asked to choose two of the most important areas to spend increased federal funding to public schools 71% chose more teachers to reduce class sizes, 39% chose special classes for students with behaviour and learning problems, 28% chose improving discipline in schools, 22% chose new classrooms and buildings, 9% chose more welfare officers in schools, 9% chose new Prep. to Year 12 Schools with community facilities located at the school, and 4% chose better sporting facilities.
- When asked who they agreed with, 74% of respondents agreed with the Australian Education Union which says that the Federal Government should be making public schools its top priority and helping the states by investing more federal funds in public education rather than the Federal Government which says it has increased the share of funding to private schools to ensure parents have a choice in where to send their children and it is mainly up to the states to fund public schools.

For an extended summary of poll results, please call Erin Farley on 0409 510 879.