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### **COAG must lift overall public schools funding to ensure high quality education for all**

In the lead up to this Saturday's COAG meeting, the Australian Education Union is warning targeted programs for teacher quality and disadvantaged schools alone will not deliver a high quality education for all students.

AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos said an increase in general funding and investment in buildings and facilities was crucial for public schools.

"Public schools are under-funded by at least \$2.9 billion annually.

"That means they do not have adequate funding to guarantee low class sizes, individual attention for those who need it or upgrade buildings and facilities.

"While welcome, the Government's announcements on teacher quality funding and a disadvantaged schools program will not give public schools the funding they need to lift overall student performance.

"Legislation currently before the Senate continues Howard Government school funding policies and guarantees over-funding for private schools of at least \$2.7 billion.

"Public schools cannot be expected to bear the brunt of the world financial crisis.

"At the very least the Rudd Government should restore general annual funding for public schools to the pre-Howard Government levels.

"Saturday's COAG meeting is the Prime Minister's opportunity to redress the imbalances caused by the Howard Government's funding formula and the chronic under-funding of public schools.

"There will be no Education Revolution without a significant investment in public school funding."

**Please see next page for a short background briefing on COAG.**

## **Media briefing: Key questions for COAG and schools funding**

### **1) Will the Government increase annual recurrent funding for public schools?**

Both private and public schools receive a federal funding level based on the Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC), which is a calculation of average state and territory expenditure on education.

At a minimum, private schools receive between 13.7% and 70% of AGSRC theoretically based on the socio-economic status of the area in which students live (not the income of their parents). Federal Government public school funding is currently capped at only 8.9% of AGSRC for Primary schools and 10% of AGSRC for Secondary schools. These funding arrangements favour private schools.

In addition, over 50% of private schools are receiving even more funding than they are entitled to under this flawed system. For example one private school will receive \$23 million more than it is entitled to under these arrangements. The Rudd Government has committed to continuing the flawed funding arrangements and the over-funding of private schools with the Schools Assistance Bill which is currently before the Senate. The cost of private school overfunding for taxpayers is \$2.7 billion.

At the very least, the Rudd Government should commit to restoring public school funding to pre-Howard Government levels by investing \$1.5 billion annually.

Even this level of additional investment would still fall short of the level of funding of government schools needed to enable students to achieve the National Goals of Schooling.

A taskforce of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) identified that government schools are underfunded by at least \$2.9 billion per annum. This figure does not include specific costs associated with special education, quality teaching nor the absolutely necessary need for additional capital investment.

### **2) How much will the disadvantaged schools program deliver?**

In his press club address in August this year, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced the Federal Government would fund a disadvantaged schools program, which would provide an average of \$500,000 for needy schools.

So far the Government is yet to provide any detail on:

- Which schools will be eligible and under what conditions?
- How many schools will be eligible?
- What will the total amount of funding available be and over what period of time?

For example, if the Federal Government were to announce \$500 million annually for such a program, only around one in ten public schools would receive any funding based on the Prime Minister's previous statements.

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