



28 January 2009

New poll: Commonwealth funding of public schools is insufficient

A new poll released today shows almost two thirds of people believe the Rudd Government is not investing enough in public schools.

AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos said that only 15 per cent of people surveyed said the Government was spending enough on public schools compared to 65 per cent who said it wasn't spending enough.

The release of the results of the nationwide poll of 1000 people, conducted from January 8-12, comes as the AEU begins a new round of television advertising across the country calling for more funding for public schools.

Mr Gavrielatos said 80 per cent of people polled agreed that with the worsening economic situation it is critically important that more money is invested in public schools to ensure all children can get a high-quality education.

"The Rudd Government has made a start in repairing the damage of 11 years of Federal Government under-funding of public schools but there is a long way to go," Mr Gavrielatos said.

"Now is the time to invest in lowering class sizes, increasing one on one attention for students and rebuilding schools across the country.

"Lifting the overall level of educational achievement in this country should be the Government's top priority and the only way to achieve this is through greater investment in public schools," Mr Gavrielatos said.

The poll, conducted by Essential Media Communications between January 8 and 12, also found:

- 78 per cent of people agreed that public schools are doing a fantastic job but are under-resourced.
- Parents with children at public schools nominated more individual attention for students as the most pressing change they wanted to see at their child's school.
- Only 3 per cent of people supported the Rudd Government's current policy of funding private schools more than public schools.
- 77 per cent of people agreed there will be no education revolution unless the Federal Government invests substantially more in public education.

Mr Gavrielatos said the recently released report of senior academic, Professor Jim McMorrow showed that public schools needed an additional \$1.4 billion a year just to match the share of Commonwealth funding they received when the Howard Government came to office.

A separate report by education economist, Adam Rorris found that Australia spends \$1000 less per student on average on public school buildings and equipment than the United States and the UK.

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AEU National Poll January 2009

**Results based on 1,001 interviews.
Conducted January 8-12, 2009**

Q. In education, which one of these do you think should be the top priority for the Rudd Government? And which should be second priority? And third?

	Top priority	Second priority	Third priority	Total
Investing more in our public schools to lower class sizes, rebuild facilities and deliver more individual attention to students	32%	20%	14%	66%
Investing more in TAFE to tackle the skills crisis	8%	11%	12%	31%
Giving computers to all students in years 9-12	1%	3%	6%	10%
Increasing national literacy and numeracy standards	21%	18%	15%	54%
Investing more in teachers to ensure we can recruit and retain the best people for schools	11%	17%	16%	44%
Funding all schools to improve vocational training facilities	4%	6%	9%	19%
Publishing more information about school performance for parents	1%	1%	2%	4%
Providing access to schools and teachers for all indigenous students	1%	1%	4%	6%
Introducing a national school curriculum	14%	13%	10%	37%
Ensuring all schools have access to rich and rigorous curriculum	4%	7%	10%	21%
Don't know	2%	1%	1%	2%

Q. Do you think the Rudd Labor Government is investing too much, enough or not enough in the nation's public schools?

Investing too much	1%
Investing enough	15%
Investing not enough	65%
Don't know	19%

Q. When it comes to funding schools do you think the Federal Government should be:

Providing equal funding to public and private schools	23%
Providing more funding to private schools than public schools	3%
Providing more funding to public schools than private schools	70%
Don't Know	4%

Q. (Public school parents only) What would you personally believe is the most pressing change that you would like to see at your child's school? And which would be second?

(Based on 211 interviews)

	Most pressing change	Second most pressing change	Total
Smaller class sizes	20%	21%	41%
Upgraded buildings and facilities	10%	12%	22%
More computers	1%	7%	8%
Greater one on one attention for students who are struggling	35%	20%	55%
More focus on teaching basic skills	19%	23%	42%
The production of reports for parents which compare the school's performance with those of similar schools across the country	2%	7%	9%
The introduction of performance pay for teachers	6%	7%	13%
More power for the principal to hire and fire teachers and determine budget priorities	4%	4%	8%
Don't know	3%		3%

Q. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
There will be no education revolution unless the Rudd Government invests substantially more in public education	26%	51%	7%	2%	12%
The Rudd Government should make investing in public schools their top priority	23%	43%	18%	5%	10%
With the worsening economic situation and rising unemployment it's critically important to invest more in public schools so all children can get a high quality education.	31%	49%	9%	2%	8%
Our public schools are doing a fantastic job but they are under-resourced	28%	50%	10%	3%	9%