

# Australian Education Union



**Submission**

**to the**

**House of Representatives Standing Committee  
On Industry, Science and Innovation**

**Inquiry into Research Training and Research Workforce  
Issues in Australian Universities**

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The Education Union has a membership of 170,000 educators who work in public schools, colleges, early childhood centres and TAFEs in all states and territories of Australia.

A sufficient number of trained scientists, science researchers, science educators, as well as an overall scientifically educated workforce is reliant upon achieving the foundations of a knowledge and love of science learning and research during the primary and secondary school years.

A rich, rewarding curriculum is essential to create inquisitive minds and equip students with the knowledge and skills required to be successful in the 21st century, including scientific literacy and research. The school curriculum encapsulates what a society believes its future citizens should know and be able to do, and a fundamental grounding in science at the school level is vital to providing talented young people, irrespective of their backgrounds, the opportunities and encouragement to undertake careers in science.

Public education provides the educational foundation of scientific knowledge, research, learning and attitudes for the majority of young people. Public schools must accordingly be resourced to achieve equity and excellence in education, ameliorating rather than exacerbating the effect of social background on educational achievement. Governments must provide a curriculum guarantee to ensure all students, no matter where they live or what their socio economic background is, with the chance to pursue the widest range of opportunities in life, including science education.

The guarantee of a rigorous, rich and rewarding curriculum for all students can only be made possible with a highly qualified, well paid teaching service and good teaching conditions. Governments need to ensure there is a qualified teacher in every classroom across the nation, no matter where it is located. There is accordingly a need to attract and retain qualified teachers. Competitive salaries and improved conditions are needed to attract and retain teachers. Governments, state/territory and federal must work together to improve teachers' salaries and conditions to ensure that a high quality science education is provided by a high quality teaching workforce.

High quality teaching and learning also requires high quality infrastructure, including buildings, science facilities and equipment. A recent independent report commissioned by the AEU found that between 2002 and 2005, public schools, on average, missed out by about \$1.2 million each when compared with private school capital investment.<sup>1</sup> This shortfall is being felt right across the country. Every Australian child deserves to be taught in a school with quality learning environments and modern equipment. While state and territory governments have a role to play, the Federal Government must now take the lead in addressing the neglect of Australian public schools. The Federal Government must establish a new benchmark for school buildings, facilities and equipment and make sure every school has the resources they need to meet it. The Government's \$20 billion Building Australia Fund should be used for this purpose.

The provision of quality teaching and learning environments befitting a 21st century education in an economically advanced nation like Australia is an absolute necessity.

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<sup>1</sup> Rorris, Adam. *Rebuilding Public Schools. 2020 Investment Targets.*  
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/Rebpucschls.pdf>