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Spotlight on obligations

The current financial turmoil has made the AEU's For Our Future campaign all the more important.

The global financial crisis is a very timely lesson for the prophets of neoliberalism. It also reminds us of the importance of our campaign against the marketisation and commodification of education as we continue to hold governments responsible for the provision of high quality public education for the common good.

Under the guise of 'choice', successive governments have pursued policies which promote the funding of private schools at the expense of public education. As a result of these policies, according to the most recently released OECD report, *Education at a Glance*, Australia is now ranked second last against other OECD countries when it comes to direct public expenditure on public institutions.

Against this backdrop, the AEU is continuing its campaign to convince

for non-government schools for the 2009-12 quadrennium.

The bill will continue the Howard government's discredited funding arrangements favouring private schools for another four years. It will maintain and extend privilege for private schools in the form of a further \$2.7 billion over and above what they would be entitled to were the funding formula applied properly.

Government schools must wait until 17 November (six weeks from the time the private schools funding bill was introduced into parliament) for the final details of their funding for the next four years. At that time we will learn whether the Rudd government announces initiatives aimed at ameliorating the Howard government's discriminatory funding regime. The information will be contained in a new National Education Agreement

supported by national TV advertising, web-based information (www.forourfuture.org.au), the distribution of tens of thousands of leaflets, and countless local campaign launches and activities. The intention is to put the spotlight on the federal government and the desperate need for additional funding to redress the chronic underfunding of our schools. In the Rudd government's own words, it has a "prime obligation to adequately and properly fund government schools".

By the time you read this, we should know whether the federal government has increased general recurrent and capital funding for public schools. We also expect to know the extent to which further funding may be delivered through the government's National Partnership agreements aimed at addressing disadvantage and quality teaching.

Whatever the outcome of the National Education Agreement, we must continue to build our campaign in the interests of public education. This is particularly important in the context of the Rudd government's announced review of school funding arrangements in 2010-11. This review will inform the next quadrennium funding period which begins in 2013. ●

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the federal government to fulfil its obligation to adequately and properly fund our public schools.

At the time of writing, the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 is being debated in federal parliament. It will provide the funding

which will emerge out of COAG negotiations between the federal and state/territory governments.

This is the context in which the AEU launched its For Our Future national campaign for public education on 12 October. It is

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