



AEU Parliamentary Brief

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SCHOOLS FUNDING POLICY

The Education Revolution?

The Rudd Government came to power promising an 'Education Revolution'. It offered the hope of addressing eleven years of underfunding and chronic and systematic neglect of public education and training by the Howard Government.

In its 2007 election platform, the ALP noted that:

“Labor will give priority for public schools through enhanced Commonwealth programs for schools”;

Kevin Rudd also declared that:

“the Commonwealth has a primary obligation to adequately and appropriately fund public schools.”

Total Schools Funding

Whilst government schools are underfunded by at least \$2.9 billion per annum, the private school sector will be given an

additional \$2.7 billion in overpayments over the next 4 years. Approximately 60% of private schools will continue to receive more funding than they are entitled to under the SES funding model.

An internal government review of the SES funding arrangements for non-government schools notes “there is no mechanism that would naturally unwind [the SES funding model’s] effect. Moving into the next funding quadrennium may provide an opportunity to address the funding maintained arrangements.”

The internal report goes on to say, “the consistency and equity of the SES funding arrangements is undermined by the fact that almost half the non government school sector is funded outside the ‘straight’ SES model.”

Despite these findings, the Rudd Government will maintain the Howard Government’s discredited and inequitable SES funding mechanisms until 2013.

THE 2008- 09 BUDGET

Forward Estimates and Schools Funding

The test for the first Rudd Government budget was how far it would go to repair the damage wrought by the Howard Government on public education.

The forward estimates in this year's budget provide an indication of the effect of the Rudd Government's commitment to continue the current schools funding arrangements.

Education Share of Total Budget

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	change 08-09 to 11-12
Total Ed Budget	6.64	6.42	6.53	6.43	6.43	-0.21%

Public/Private Share of Schools Funding 2007-08 – 2011-12

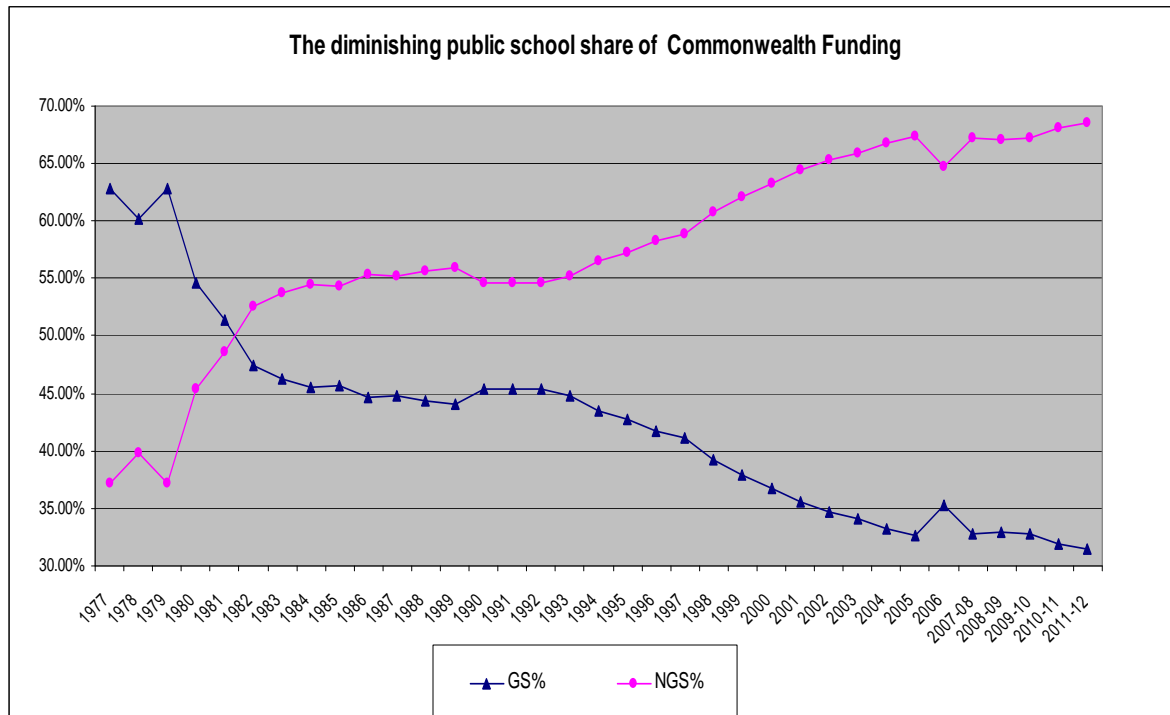
	Estimates		Projections		
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
Non-Govt Schools	6,392	6,406	6,812	7,265	7,723
Government Schools	3,126	3,138	3,324	3,397	3,546
Total	9,518	9,545	10,137	10,662	11,269
Private Share	67%	67%	67%	68%	68.5%
Public Share	33%	33%	33%	32%	31.5%

Greater Increases to Private Schools

- Funding to private schools will increase by 21% from 2007-08 to 2011-12, compared to 13% for government schools.
- Estimated funding to private schools will increase by \$1.3 billion, from \$6.4 billion to \$7.7 billion
- Estimated funding to public schools will increase by \$420 million, from \$3.1 billion to \$3.5 billion.

A Disappointing Budget

- In the AEU's view, the Budget did not deliver specific measures to repair the damage the Howard Government inflicted on public education and training.
- Funding election commitments is welcome, however, it is not enough to redress years of chronic and systematic neglect.
- Without additional targeted funding to public schools, the students who attend them will continue to be neglected.



The next 4 years....and beyond

Given the government's decision to keep the Howard Government's funding system for another four years there is an absolute need for additional targeted funding for public schools in each budget cycle to ameliorate the negative impact of this funding system on public education.

The Minister for Education has announced a review of the SES funding model in 2010 – 11.

REBUILDING PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2020

Australian children deserve learning environments conducive to effective teaching and learning in the 21st century. That means quality buildings, learning spaces, music, art and sport facilities and continuous maintenance to keep them to a high standard.

Whilst not letting state and territory governments off the hook, the fact remains that the greatest revenue raising capacity rests with the Commonwealth government.

The key responsibility to redress the Howard government's neglect of public schools now rests with the Rudd government.

The report *Rebuilding Public Schools 2020* (www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/Rebpuclschls.pdf) provides compelling evidence supporting our demand that governments must urgently redress the continuing under funding of public education infrastructure - its buildings, facilities and equipment.

The report findings show us that investment for buildings and facilities in public schools falls short by around \$2 billion annually, when compared to investment in private schools.

This means that over the period 2002 – 2005, on average, every public school across Australia missed out by about \$1.2 million each. Parents students and teachers can only imagine what more could have been achieved with that level of capital investment.

It conservatively recommends an additional \$22 billion over the next 12 years is needed in capital works investment in public schools to give every child access to high quality school buildings and facilities.

Rebuilding public schools across Australia will provide opportunities to create quality buildings and resources. These will be environmentally sustainable and open to the whole community.

The government's \$20 billion Building Australia Fund should be used for this purpose. When it comes to investment in infrastructure, investing in our public schools and students is the most important infrastructure investment a government can make.

The appalling state of our schools as a result of government neglect continues to overshadow and impact on the wonderful achievements of our public schools.

As highlighted in this report "*school facilities have significant impact on the performance of students and teachers.*"

In his landmark enquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW, Professor Tony Vinson notes that "*the quality of school buildings and their surroundings can ... be a potent symbol of the regard (or otherwise) in which public education is believed to be held by governments and the community.*"

In so many instances the fabric of the public schools is simply unworthy of what is being attempted within them and fails to honour our society's obligation to its children." (Vinson, 2002)

The AEU calls on the Rudd government, in partnership with all state and territory governments, to establish a national standard with respect to a high quality teaching and learning environment. Having established such a minimum standard, as a nation we could aspire to achieving the best for our students.

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