



**AEU RESPONSE TO REPORT –
REBUILDING PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2020 BY
ECONOMIST ADAM RORRIS**

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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 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 report *Rebuilding Public Schools 2020* 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 on more than \$1.2 million. 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 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.

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