ROGS 2023: No better time than now to invest in public education



The 2023 Report on Government Services released today by the Productivity Commission has highlighted the task that lies ahead for the Albanese Government to address the inequities in public education.

“From our preschools, through primary and secondary public education to TAFE, today’s ROGS data shows the sheer scale of the previous government’s neglect over the past decade,” said Australian Education Union Federal President Correna Haythorpe.

“The Coalition deliberately created a totally inequitable education funding system in which public school principals, teachers and education support staff, TAFE workers and early childhood teachers effectively work with their hands tied behind their backs to deliver the learning programs their students require.

“But there is no better time than this moment for governments to invest in public students, public education and through them, our nation’s future.”

On school funding, the data shows the overwhelming majority of school students, including the vast majority of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, are educated in public schools, but that almost no public school is fully and fairly funded to cater for their students.

- Between 2011-12 and 2020-21 total recurrent spending per student in government schools has increased by 16.2 per cent, at an average of 1.62 per cent per year.
- Private school per student government funding has increased by 27.4 per cent over the last decade at an average of 2.7 per cent per year.
- Government funding to private schools per student has increased at 1.7 times the rate of the public school per student increase.

In vocational education and training, ROGS shows:

- Combined Commonwealth and state/territory government funding to VET was $6.17 billion in 2021. This is a decline of $1.025 billion (14.25 per cent) from the 2012 amount of $7.2 billion.
- Every year over the last decade an average of $1.14 billion in government funding has been lost to the VET sector from the 2012 benchmark.
- Nationally, government payments to private non-TAFE providers amounted to $1.248 billion in 2021, an increase of $116.1 million (10.2 per cent) from 2020.
- Real terms government expenditure per hour of VET instruction was $20.21, down 6.6 per cent from 2020.
- Expenditure was $371 per person aged 15-64 years, down from a peak of $473 in 2012 (the year before the coalition formed government - this is a real reduction in funding per person of 21.6 per cent from 2012).

And, in early childhood education, the data shows:

- In 2021-22 the Commonwealth provided $472.5 million to states and territories in Universal Access National Partnership (UANP) funding for preschool the year before school.
- UANP funding has declined by $59.4 million (11.2 per cent) in real terms since the peak in 2012-13, whilst the number of children attending preschool has increased slightly from 288,369 to 291,168 since 2016 – this is an effective real terms cut in funding of over $200 per child.

“While we welcome Federal Labor’s investment in fee-free TAFE places, their efforts to tackle the national teacher shortage crisis by working collaboratively with the teaching profession and their recognition of the importance of the early years, the task ahead of the federal government to invest in public education and reverse the decade of neglect, is a significant one.

“In schools, the Albanese Government must fulfill their election commitment and establish a pathway to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) funding for every public school in the country.

“In vocational education, they must resolve the underlying contestable funding issue and guarantee ongoing TAFE funding that actually covers the cost of course delivery.

“And, last but certainly not least, in early childhood Labor must deliver fully funded preschool for all three-year-olds.

“Public education plays a crucial role in educating the vast majority of Australian students. It is high time that this system is fully funded to ensure that every student has access to high quality education and equal opportunity, irrespective of their circumstances or backgrounds,” Ms Haythorpe said.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026