National education and union news



Fully funded public schools more than pay for themselves

A new report published by The Australia Institute's Centre for Future Work reveals the economic payoff of fully funding public schools would be two to four times the annual cost.

The report says that funding public schools to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) requires an additional $6.6 billion per year but would deliver long term economic and fiscal benefits of between $17.8 billion and $24.7 billion a year.

The returns would come from a combination of factors: lifting Year 12 completion rates with the financial and social benefits that brings to individuals and the economy, along with higher direct employment levels and increased economic activity.

The additional costs to governments would be entirely offset by higher revenue and reduced social spending with the benefits increasing over time.

The report concludes that funding schools to 100 per cent of the SRS, which is the minimum level governments say they need, must be "seen as a long-run investment, that will drive improved economic, social and fiscal performance for all sectors of the economy - including government".

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said public schools should be fully funded by 2028.

"This research shows fully funding public schools will payoff for our kids and our country," she said.

"Fully funding public schools is the only way to ensure that every child has every opportunity to succeed.

"Right now, only 1.3 per cent of public schools are funded to the SRS and this must change when the Albanese Government

negotiates new school funding agreements with state and territory governments in the next 12 months."

The report also found Year 12 graduates earn $10,000 a year more than early school leavers, a 21 per cent wage premium that to leads to over $400,000 in additional lifetime income.

School graduates are more employable and productive in the modern economy along with being healthier and less likely to rely on income supports and other social programs.

It states that the primary motivation for fully funding public schools should be to enhance the life chances of students, reduce economic inequality and segregation and break the link between disadvantage and poor outcomes.

But governments must also consider the "significant and far-reaching benefits of stronger public education for economic activity, future productivity and earnings and the long-run health and wellbeing of our communities."

The report adds that "hard economic arguments for improving public school funding and meeting the minimal benchmarks for school resourcing established in the SRS, should cement the case for providing adequate resources to Australian public schools".

Ms Haythorpe said that as part of the new *For Every Child* campaign, the AEU released a national plan setting out the case for full funding and the top priorities for additional investment, including smaller class sizes, a permanent small group or individual tutoring program in every public school and additional support for students with a disability or behavioural issues.

SA educators take control of excessive workloads

During Term 3, the AEU South Australia Branch have encouraged public educators to stop doing tasks that did not directly relate to the teaching and learning of students.

"While we wait for the state government to put forward solutions to fix the escalating staffing crisis in public education, we're encouraging educators to take control of their workload," said AEU SA Branch President Andrew Gohl.

"Educators are papering over the cracks with their unpaid goodwill, and the government is taking advantage of it.

"Parents probably don't realise their child's teacher is working 50 hours to keep a broken system running, working late into the night and on weekends to fulfil data and admin requirements.

"If the government expects these tasks, they can provide adequate time and resources for them to be done. Until then, we're asking educators to stop doing them."

The AEU SA has been negotiating a new enterprise with the government for over six months. With research from the University of South Australia indicating half of teachers plan to leave the profession, the union is pursuing a bold platform focused on reducing workload and increasing student support.

"It is clear from negotiations that the department does not understand the crisis before them," said Mr Gohl.

"The minister says workload is the number one issue, but his department has no solutions.

"By the government's count, we've put forward over 20 constructive proposals based on extensive consultation and backed by academic research. All the minister needs to do is agree to them.

"Until then, educators will be taking back control and focusing on the job they came to do."

Strong public support for workplace changes

The ACTU has released polling by Essential Research showing very strong support for the federal government to act on wages, wage theft and closing loopholes to stop labour hire being used to drive down wages and conditions.

In a warning to the business lobby the polling has also found that the majority of Australians think big business have too much power.

The research was conducted in marginal seats in Queensland and Western Australia and found strong support for

government to act to help workers:

- Seventy per cent agree government should act to protect workers from wage theft.
- Sixty-five per cent agree government should act to increase minimum wage.
- Sixty per cent agree government should act to increase wages for workers in general.
- Fifty-six per cent agree government should close labour hire loopholes.

The research also found that Australians would be more likely to vote for the Labor government if they move on workplace legislation:

On issues of trust, unions are clearly more favourable that big business. Twice as many people believe big business has too much power compared to unions with a massive 59 per cent saying big business had too much power, while 30 per cent said unions had too much power.

“This research shows that the big money spent by the business lobby across TV, radio and print trying to discredit government plans to improve workers’ job security and wages is failing and a waste,” ACTU President Michele O’Neil said.

“Australians do not trust big business and will not accept being harangued by the business lobby about what is good for the nation.

“Perhaps the business lobby should pay attention and realise that attacking workers’ rights to secure jobs and better pay and a government that is trying to do something about these issues is against the wishes and interests of the Australian public.

“They need to rebuild their relationship with the Australian public, tackle wage theft and insecure work and behave in the national interest, not their own.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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