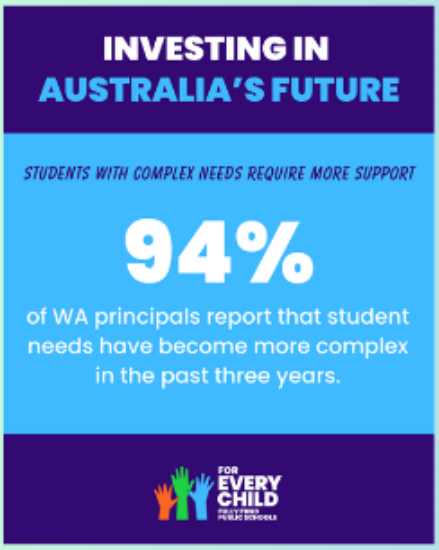
Targeted investment in WA public schools needed





The Australian Education Union (AEU) has released the *Investing in Australia's Future (2025)* report, alongside new WA specic ndings from the AEU State of Our Schools survey, revealing increasing student complexity, escalating workloads and critical shortages of counsellors and wellbeing staff across WA public schools.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the survey shows that while WA teachers and principals are deeply committed to their students, the system is at breaking point without urgent and targeted investment.

"Western Australian teachers are facing rising levels of student complexity without the support and resources they need," she said.

"The evidence is clear that smaller classes, more wellbeing and specialist staff and targeted tutoring programs are essential to meet every child's needs and to retain our experienced teachers."

SSTUWA President Matt Jarman said the ndings conrm what public school staff have been reporting for years, that classrooms are becoming more complex while resources fail to keep pace.

"Teachers are working longer hours, managing more complex classrooms and seeing growing numbers of students needing wellbeing support. This is all contributing to WA's teacher shortage crisis," he said.

"We need smaller class sizes, specialist support teaching staff and targeted literacy and numeracy programs to help address these issues."

Key ndings for Western Australia include:

- Student needs rising: 94 per cent of principals report that student needs have become more complex in the past three years, with 100 per cent citing increasing mental health and wellbeing issues as the key driver.
- Growing behavioural and learning challenges: 93 per cent of teachers say student behaviour has become more complex and 83 per cent report an increase in learning difficulties.
- Workloads escalating: 49 per cent of teachers say their working hours have increased in the last year and 86

per cent say they are spending too much time on administration.
- Severe counsellor shortages: Only 18 per cent of WA principals say their school has adequate counselling support. Over one-third (35 per cent) of students who need help wait more than a month to see a school counsellor and 15 per cent wait longer than six months.
- Tutoring makes a difference: 95 per cent of teachers say additional funding for small-group tutoring would improve literacy and numeracy outcomes – yet only 67 per cent report having literacy support programs and just 32 per cent have equivalent numeracy programs.

The AEU has outlined a suite of solutions for governments to act on these critical issues including:

- Permanent small group tutoring and smaller class sizes (to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
  average of 21), with more education support staff.
- 150 full-service schools in disadvantaged communities offering integrated health and family services.
- More Aboriginal teachers and Torres Strait Islander teachers and culturally responsive teaching practices.
- Two extra hours a week for planning and collaboration, more admin staff and a national early career guarantee.
- More school counsellors, social workers and system-wide support for evidence-based wellbeing programs.
- A permanent Commonwealth capital fund to ensure every public school has modern, inclusive and accessible facilities.

“Thanks to AEU members ongoing campaigning, governments have committed more than $20 billion to public schools nationally,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“This report makes clear that to lift outcomes for all students, we must use that investment to reduce class sizes, increase one-on-one support for students and cut the unsustainable workloads driving teacher shortages.”

You can read the report here.

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