



# NEW DECADE, NEW COMMITMENT, NEW INVESTMENT

**P**UBLIC education is the cornerstone of our common future. It is imperative that it should be of the highest quality, accessible and effective for all regardless of income, ethnicity, religion or gender.

It is not just the wealthy few who should have access to the necessary ongoing opportunities that quality education provides

but every student or learner.

Investment in public education is an investment in our collective future — that is why it must be the first priority of any government.

### Our charter

Formal education is designed to equip people with the knowledge and skills for success throughout their lives in the pursuit of the life and careers of their choice. It should instil a lifelong desire and capacity for learning.

**Access for all** is enhanced by universal preschool and by support for all students, including those with behavioural and emotional problems.

**Student performance** will be improved by a focus on literacy and numeracy; addressing the needs of students not meeting benchmark standards; uncrowding the curriculum; team teaching supported by time and resources; and developing partnerships with students' primary educators — their parents.

**Student engagement** will be improved by access to pastoral care and welfare support; stronger relationships with teachers through smaller class sizes and contact with fewer teachers in the middle years; seamless transition between early childhood, school and post-school;



and making parents an active part of the solution to problems such as behaviour and absenteeism.

**Meeting the needs** of older adolescents and adults requires ensuring the VCE caters for all students, not just those aspiring to university; better links between TAFE and Years 10–12; and taking steps to address the skills shortage. ♦

## THE NEXT DECADE MUST BE ONE OF FURTHER INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION:

- Invest in access and opportunity
- Invest in teachers and ES staff
- Invest in buildings and resources
- Reduce class sizes for upper primary and secondary.

## You get what you pay for

**V**ICTORIA spends less per government school student than any state or territory — \$1,151 below the Australian average. Over the five years to 2008, spending rose by just \$68.80 per student per year.

In **primary**, Victoria spends \$1,148 less per student than NSW; in secondary, it spends \$1,334 less.

In **preschools**, Victoria spends \$636 less per student than the national average, and less than half that spent in Tasmania.

Spending on **vocational education and training (VET)** per student hour is 10.86% below the national average.

As the Victorian Auditor-General's Office has reported, there is no room for complacency.

It identified the need for resources to address literacy and numeracy; and greater funding to support disadvantaged and low-achieving students.

Investment is urgently required. We must:

- Increase funding to at least the national average
- Increase equity funding as a share of school budgets
- Put early childhood on a more professional footing
- Do more for our vulnerable students
- Rethink our approach to TAFE
- Address teacher shortages
- Improve support for school amalgamations and rebuilding
- Shore up our secondary education system. ♦

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
2003-04	11 196	10 051	10 272	11 369	10 985	10 605	12 970	15 510	10 809
2004-05	11 395	10 034	10 854	12 754	11 206	10 843	13 070	15 924	11 156
2005-06	11 201	10 282	10 963	12 493	11 336	11 323	13 392	16 191	11 177
2006-07	11 156	10 158	11 334	13 564	11 211	11 285	13 463	15 661	11 302
2007-08	11 227	10 395	11 337	14 795	11 340	11 273	15 087	16 089	11 546

Source: Productivity Commission (2008) Report on Government Services

# Secondary education: a special case

FEW learners are more challenging than adolescents. Secondary education begins with the learning of new school practices and ends with the VCE. In Victorian government schools, the needs of secondary education are even more special.

## Increasing market share

Since 1998 there has been an increase of almost 40,000 students in Victorian secondary schools — 30,000 of those in non-government schools.

Growth in the government secondary sector over the decade has been around 4.5%; 17.7% in non-government; and 30% in independent. In 2008, 58.8% of secondary students were enrolled in government schools. By contrast, the population of primary students in government schools has been comparatively stable at around 70%.

The Howard Government's funding regime made private schooling more accessible. This huge public

investment has not been matched in the public sector.

We need to know why parents have made these choices and construct an action plan to shift the trend. The AEU calls on the government to:

- Conduct thorough research into parent choice and recommend avenues for enhancing confidence in public education
- Develop a 10-year action plan
- Accelerate buildings and grounds development, including special needs facilities
- Increase student investment to at least the national average by 2012, and significantly increase funding over the next four years
- Increase the range and quality of offerings and infrastructure
- Provide more teachers and reduce class sizes
- Expand student welfare and pastoral support, including specialist settings and programs to address behavioural problems

- Expand the number of teaching assistants
- Promote public secondary education
- Set targets for the percentage of students in the sector.

## And of immediate concern...

Greater equity funding is needed for schools with declining enrolments, an experienced staff profile and in low socio-economic areas.

These schools are actively engaged in the Government's school improvement agenda. But they are under considerable budgetary pressure to accommodate the costs of structural change.

The AEU is deeply concerned that the failure to provide these school communities with additional financial support undermines any attempt to improve student outcomes.

All new initiatives in secondary schools undergoing significant change must be fully funded. ♦

## PROTECT AND SUPPORT VULNERABLE STUDENTS

THE AEU endorses the Government's commitment to early intervention for disadvantaged children, but more needs to be done:

- Increased funding for early intervention programs
- Better linking of preschools and schools to community services.

Resources and funding for people with disabilities and special needs are inadequate. Around 15% of Victoria's government school students have additional needs, while only 3.25% are funded through the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD). Around 56% of these are enrolled in mainstream schools — 88% of schools have at least one PSD student.

The AEU supports:

- A review of funding for students with disabilities in all settings
- A review of special school facilities
- Improved PD and support for teachers working with disabled students
- A "baseroom" for special needs students in mainstream schools.

### Sustaining support with a new focus on numeracy

- Upper primary and lower secondary require greater investment in intervention programs

- The program for maths specialists in primary schools must be doubled and extended beyond 2010
- Numeracy intervention needs additional investment.

### A fair go for everyone

The AEU supports an integrated program to eradicate anti-social behaviour in schools, including:

- Early warning systems for parents
- Increasing student welfare
- Restoring and expanding special settings
- Pastoral care for every student
- Support for parents who are not coping.

### Keeping older adolescents engaged

With higher youth unemployment and a higher school leaving age, the burden of dealing with disengaged students falls heavily on government secondary school teachers.

- Develop and implement suitable programs for disengaged students with support and welfare agencies
- Expand VET in schools
- Provide additional resources to implement these measures
- Facilitate cooperation between schools and TAFE. ♦

## INVEST IN QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE

### Rebuilding our schools

THE AEU welcomes the Victorian Government's \$1.9 billion program to rebuild or modernise every government school by 2015. Federal *Building the Education Revolution* infrastructure funding has seen an additional \$2.6bn invested in 1,584 Victorian primary schools.

The AEU calls for:

- Bringing forward the completion of rebuilding/modernising to 2013
- A particular but not exclusive focus on secondary schools and major regeneration projects
- Funds for building maintenance
- Environmentally sustainable buildings.

### Placing schools at the centre of community life

Regeneration provides the chance to develop contemporary facilities for 21st century learning.

Education precincts can be embedded in larger community projects for easy access to services and to locate educational and training facilities together.

Education and training resources should be community facilities, strengthening community identity and local advocacy for

state education.

A model public school will have a preschool, primary and secondary school co-located on one site, with community sports ovals, swimming pool, gymnasium, theatre and library.

New buildings should be tailored to the needs of the community to support interaction, share resources and proximate location of services.

### Managing the changes

- Where possible rebuilding or modernisation should be completed as one project to minimise disruptions
- Provide support for teachers and ES staff adapting to new learning environments

Regarding the Ultranet, the Government must provide:

- Extensive, ongoing PD for staff to implement the Ultranet in the school and the classroom
- Increased funding for ICT hardware
- Guidelines for operation.

Regarding school mergers, the AEU calls on the government to:

- Provide improved and appropriate support for staff and schools undergoing mergers. ♦

# Invest in access and opportunity

**W**E NEED a public education system able to provide education for everyone. But this alone is not enough. We need a system dedicated to the educational and pastoral care of every student, which extends and engages their interests and leads to a meaningful working and community life.

Money spent on children's education saves vast amounts over time.

Two measures must be put in place immediately:

- Increase the equity component of the Student Resource Package by 5 percentage points in the next five state budgets
- Extend the primary welfare program and provide additional resources for student welfare. ♦

## GOING FORWARD WITH KOORIE EDUCATION

**T**HE AEU applauds the DEECD's recent work to advance Koorie education. The significant restructure of the support workforce seems likely to bear fruit, providing a previously undervalued and casualised workforce with better salaries, professional learning and ongoing employment.

That should not distract from the continuing educational disadvantage and the challenge to close the gap.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) states: "Active and informed citizens ... understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and ... reconciliation ...".

Inaccurate, out-of-date and racist curriculum material has angered Indigenous people. As a result, some teachers abandoned the material.

We must:

- Review and revise the curriculum to include material that meets the Melbourne Declaration's goal, including ACARA's national curriculum
- Provide professional learning opportunities for all educators to increase understanding of Indigenous culture
- Make Indigenous studies mandatory in teacher training
- Support schools to develop and sustain Koorie language programs.

The Melbourne Declaration advises that "... schools build on local cultural knowledge ... and work in partnership with local communities ... to promote high expectations for ... Indigenous students."

Schools should accept responsibility for this with support from government to:

- Develop partnerships with Koorie families and communities
- Increase the number of Koorie teachers. ♦

## IMPROVE, DON'T WORSEN ACCESS TO TAFE COURSES

**A**HIGH-QUALITY TAFE system is integral to our collective skill base and training pathways for young people.

If well resourced, it provides skills in traditional and new knowledge-based industries, and a second chance for those returning to the workforce.

But TAFE is in urgent need of financial support.

The student contact hourly rate fell from \$12.58 in 2004 to \$11.61 in 2009 — the lowest in Australia — and will fall further under the Government's Skills Reform policy.

The AEU remains vehemently opposed to major aspects of the policy, in particular:

- Higher enrolment fees and the abolition of concession entitlements
- Increased hourly enrolment rates
- Income-contingent loans
- Making public money fully contestable
- Increasing the number of private providers
- A model that moves funds to the private sector.

These steps do not suggest improvement of service or outcomes. HECS-style loans will further burden our most disadvantaged and

debt-averse students.

The AEU calls on the government to:

- Increase hourly funding to the national average within three years
- Improve the range of courses and increase regional funding
- Improve pathways between schools, TAFE and higher education
- Reduce casualisation
- Guarantee that no TAFE institute be financially worse off.

Seven steps for developing a first-class TAFE system for Victoria:

- A fully funded place for every diploma/advanced diploma and foundation studies student
- Full fee-paying places for international students in critical shortage programs
- Means-tested income and accommodation for students
- Abolish contestability for government funding
- Industry advisory bodies to include workforce and public training provider representatives
- Legislative/regulatory control to ensure a qualified, registered workforce. ♦

## CONTINUE REBUILDING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR

**T**HE creation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has opened up opportunities for children and for critical relationships between schools and preschools. The AEU welcomes the state and Commonwealth governments' partnership approach, and strategies to ensure preschool education by qualified teachers and assistants for all 4-year-olds.

An effective workforce strategy must be supported by reliable workforce data. It is crucial that the DEECD becomes the employer of early childhood teachers and assistants.

The Government needs to provide a broad suite of training and resources so staff can implement the Victorian Early Years and Development Framework.

The AEU endorses the work to smooth transitions into school. Greater resources for time release, networking, PD, transition statements and reciprocal visits are needed to make this policy sustainable. The Government should:

- Provide free and universal preschool education for all 4-year-olds and for 3-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Provide free access for children with additional needs and integration support
- Devise a long-term plan for ageing infrastructure
- Fund PD
- Become the employer of all teachers and assistants
- Recruit and train more teachers. ♦

## PROVIDING FOR ADULTS WITH FORMAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

**E**DUCATION for people with disabilities through Adult Training and Support Services is difficult and demanding work. There must be relevant training for dealing with challenging behaviours and managing complex situations to ensure safety and progressive independence.

Chronic underfunding of day services is well known. A review by the Department of Human Services of current terms and conditions has failed to produce one piece of research.

The AEU calls for:

- An immediate independent research group to examine comparable wages
- A new career structure to attract, retain and develop the disability workforce
- Full funding of wage increases awarded by Fair Work Australia. ♦



# Invest in teachers

A SCHOOL can be a school without a building but not without teachers. They, together with principals and support staff, are the heart of the enterprise.

- Ensure a qualified teacher for every class in preschool, school and TAFE.

Let's enable them to get on with their work. Remove routine administration and let them focus on teaching.

The welcome introduction of 300 secondary teacher assistants has been extremely effective. Their value in better contact with parents, monitoring attendance, data entry, preparation and other logistical tasks has been noted by all.

- Expand the teacher assistant program and extend into primary. ♦

## TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL CURRENCY AND GROWTH

ONE of the most effective ways to create improvement is to invest in teachers' skills and knowledge.

### Early childhood

PD has been considered an unnecessary luxury in the sector. This must change.

- Provide funding and time release for PD for teachers and assistants
- Increase funding for ICT provision and training.

### Schools

Currently, increasingly centralised PD provision is ineffective. We need to re-establish PD as a means to explore and resolve local issues — and provide adequate time and resources.

We need:

- A minimum of three additional pupil-free days per year
- Additional CRT release for PD
- Better PD and mentoring for school leaders
- More places in the professional leave program
- Professional leave for VET and VCAL teachers to engage with business and industry
- More PD around new government initiatives such as the Ultranet.

Rural teachers and CRTs have particular problems accessing PD. We recommend:

- Enhanced PD opportunities for casual teachers
- Support for rural staff to participate in PD
- Targeted training for staff working with students with medical conditions and minor disabilities.

We also need to increase funding for PD for ES staff.

### TAFE

The failure of TAFE institutes to commit to workforce planning has led to many of the current shortages.

Quality of provision and the renewal of the TAFE teaching workforce both rely on approved TAFE teaching qualifications. The government must provide funding so that every TAFE teacher is fully qualified.

- Shift funding and responsibility for TAFE PD, including delivery of teaching qualifications, to the TAFE Development Centre
- Expand the Release to Industry Program. ♦

## TEACHER SUPPLY

THIS major issue confronts every sector. We need to attract — and retain — increasing numbers of properly qualified teachers.

### Early childhood

Shortages, especially in rural Victoria, remain serious. A high and increasing proportion of teachers are approaching retirement, while increases in birth rates and government policies exacerbate the problem.

More than 60% of long day care centres — 660 services — do not run a program delivered by a qualified teacher; they will need to do so by 2014.

Problems include inappropriate employment structures, excessive workload, inadequate admin support, high levels of responsibility but poor access to PD and support.

### Schools

Although teacher numbers, particularly in primary, have increased, more than 10% of primary and 60% of secondary schools report difficulties in filling vacancies — vacancies where no suitable, qualified applicants were found.

The situation is already acute and likely to worsen in subjects including LOTE, maths, science and technology, and in some geographical locations — particularly remote and disadvantaged areas. Over the next few years the shortfall in secondary will be around 470 teachers per year.

The highest proportion of teachers aged over 50 is found in most technology subjects, LOTE (French), accounting and senior mathematics.

- Review secondary recruitment and retention strategies as a matter of urgency
- Fund scholarships in subjects where demand exceeds supply
- Encourage senior students in rural schools to consider teaching as a career.

Most importantly we should immediately:

- Provide the best salaries and conditions in Australia
- Increase full-time, ongoing employment by limiting the proportion of teachers on short-term contracts to 5% (10% in any one school).

The proportion of teachers on fixed contracts (at 19.4% in 2008) is now the highest since 1999. Nothing is more discouraging for new teachers than a contract with no job security.

- Recruitment activities, including the graduate recruitment scheme, should provide ongoing employment.

### TAFE

Casualisation remains a major problem, with many institutes insisting 50–60% of staff be casual despite recurring funding for their work. This is indicative of funding problems that can only be resolved by increased spending. ♦

## THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

THE quality of preschool teachers is key to the best outcomes for young children. Preschool teachers must be included in the VIT.

The AEU endorses the new minimum requirement of a Certificate III in children's services for all staff. But support for staff to attain this is essential.

- Fund enough Cert III courses, geographically accessible to all staff
- Fund time release, relief staff and other needs to allow staff to participate
- Fund PD for unqualified staff who are exempted by the grandparent clause. ♦