



INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE



**FOR
EVERY
CHILD**
FULLY FUND
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Contents.

Time for full funding	3	Better opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	16
The resources we need	4		
Investing in what works	5	Improving student wellbeing	18
The need for full funding	6	Every student with disability succeeds	20
Equitable resourcing is the key to equitable outcomes	8	Overcoming disadvantage	22
A profession under pressure	10	Resourcing regional and remote schools	24
More one-on-one support for students	12	The schools our children deserve	26
More time for principals and teachers	14	Endnotes	28
		How you can get involved in the campaign	31





Time for full funding

Every child has the right to learn and to be supported to reach their full potential.

This can only be achieved through the provision of well-resourced public schools in every community.

However, a decade after governments adopted a Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), 98% of public schools remain resourced below that standard.

Right now, public schools across the nation are not funded to educate one in 10 students. In the Northern Territory, where student needs are highest, there is no funding for one in five.

There is no agreement between governments to close this resourcing gap and bring every school to 100% of the SRS – the minimum funding required to meet the needs of all students.

This must change. Education has never been more closely linked to the life chances of Australia's children and the prosperity of our nation.

Closing the resources gap is an essential part of closing the achievement gaps between children from different backgrounds. Equity must sit alongside excellence as the twin ambitions for our nation's public schooling system.

Make no mistake, public school principals, teachers and education support personnel are doing an extraordinary job delivering a high-quality education for their students. It's a testament to their skills and expertise and their determination to make a difference in their students' lives every day.

But unsustainable workloads are impacting on the health and wellbeing of the teaching profession and contributing to rising attrition rates and a worsening teacher shortage across the nation.

Unless workloads are reduced and additional time is provided for teaching and learning, this has the potential to undermine the quality of education delivered across Australia.

Full funding is the only way to ensure every child has every opportunity to succeed.

That is why we are running the **For Every Child** campaign. We are calling for the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to sign new bilateral agreements in the next year that will see public schools in every state and territory resourced at a minimum of 100% of the SRS by 2028.

Our children and teachers are giving 100%. We need politicians to do the same.

Correna Haythorpe
Federal President
Australian Education Union



THE RESOURCES WE NEED

All schools properly resourced

For every child to reach their potential, all governments must commit to the full funding of public schools.

1

Full funding by 2028

The Albanese government must negotiate new bilateral school funding agreements with each state and territory government in the next 12 months that ensure that all public schools are resourced at a minimum of 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2028.

2

A fair share from the federal government

In each bilateral agreement the Albanese government must commit to the Commonwealth share of the SRS being a minimum of 25% by 2028, with special consideration being made for the Northern Territory's additional needs. This commitment must be legislated.

3

Spending must be on schooling

The new bilateral agreements must not allow states and territories to continue to count within their SRS share any costs that are unrelated to the provision of school education, such as capital depreciation, transport, regulatory authorities and early childhood education.

4

New and upgraded schools

The Albanese government must create a permanent capital works fund for public schools to provide the states and territories with funding for new and upgraded schools and facilities. The fund should be at least \$350 million annually and increase in line with enrolment growth and rising costs.

Investing in what works

 <p>Providing more one-on-one support for children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce class sizes. • Establish a permanent small group or individual tutoring program in every school. • Increase access to trained education support personnel, such as literacy and numeracy coaches, disability support, behaviour support, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. • Increase the number of trained education support staff in the classroom.
 <p>Giving principals and teachers time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut administration and compliance workloads. • Provide more time for teachers to plan lessons and collaborate with colleagues. • Increase system-wide support for teachers and principals to meet the needs of students with higher needs. • Ensure the wellbeing of principals and teachers is foremost in any workforce strategy and that all proposed policies and reforms are the subject of broad consultation with the teaching profession to minimise potential workload increases.
 <p>Improving opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and youth are given a significant voice in education policy and delivery. • Reinstate and provide funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Bodies. • Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, principals and education support personnel in the education workforce. • Ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote communities have access to public secondary school provision in their community. • Increase the number of specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language teachers in public schools to increase access to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. • Resource the provision of cultural competencies and responsive teaching practices for the teaching workforce and education support personnel.
 <p>Improving student wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase school counsellors to a minimum ratio of 1:500 students in primary schools and 1:250 in secondary schools. • Boost school wellbeing teams with qualified social workers, nurses and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers. • Provide greater guidance and system-wide support in implementing proven early intervention and wellbeing programs.
 <p>Helping every student with disability succeed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of qualified teachers and education support personnel, particularly those who have qualifications in working with students with disability. • Provide more time for teachers to consult with students and family/carers, develop and implement individual education plans and classroom adjustments to teaching and learning programs. • Give teachers time to collaborate with their colleagues, specialist teachers and allied health professionals and undertake professional learning. • Increase allied health support in schools to ensure rapid response to student needs. • Improve system-wide support and ongoing professional development to help principals, teachers and learning support teams.
 <p>Overcoming disadvantage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of qualified educational support personnel and specialist staff (speech pathologists, psychologists and counsellors) in all schools. • Provide additional parent liaison and qualified support officers for schools. • Provide additional wrap-around teaching and learning support and extra-curricular services.
 <p>Resourcing regional, rural and remote schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a curriculum guarantee to ensure that rural, regional and remote students can learn the same wide range of subjects as their peers in urban settings. • Provide paid practicums, accommodation and relocation costs for pre-service teachers to support rural and remote placements. • Provide greater support for early career teachers with full resourcing of mentoring, induction and ongoing professional learning. • Provide effective systemic support for regional, rural and remote schools to ensure that they are supported with frameworks for leadership, staffing, curriculum development, student wellbeing, early intervention and teaching and learning. • Deliver improved attraction and retention provisions via industrial agreements to attract and retain experienced teachers, including Initial Teacher Education bursaries, forgiveness of HELP debts, relocation and accommodation subsidies, access to high-quality professional development, leadership opportunities and country incentive programs.
 <p>The public schools our children deserve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A permanent Commonwealth capital fund of \$350 million a year indexed in line with rising costs and enrolments. • A commitment by all governments to invest in new and upgraded public schools and facilities. • Prioritise purpose-built learning spaces and school facilities including modified bathrooms and playgrounds that are accessible for all students with disability.

THE NEED FOR FULL FUNDING

The needs-based funding system agreed to by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments uses a resource standard to determine how much money a school or school system needs to meet the needs of its students. That resource standard is called the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

But a decade after it was agreed upon, governments have failed to deliver the full SRS to public schools, leaving 98% of public schools resourced below it, while 98% of private schools are resourced at or above it.

In fact, governments have attempted to recast the SRS as an aspirational target, rather than the minimum funding it was established as (see box opposite).

In 2017, the Morrison government changed the *Australian Education Act 2013* and capped the Commonwealth share of public school funding to 20% of SRS. At the same time, the Morrison government locked in an 80% Commonwealth share of the SRS for private schools.

In 2018, all jurisdictions signed bilateral school funding agreements with the Commonwealth through to 2023 that require states and territories to reach only 75% of the SRS over various timeframes between 2027 and 2032 (except the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory).

These timelines and the Commonwealth cap limited public school funding to a maximum of 95% of the SRS. These arrangements have now been extended by the Albanese government to 2024, further delaying the pathway to fair funding for public schools that the ALP promised before their election in 2022. **That means that, on average, every public school student will miss out on around \$2000 of the funding they need every year.**



Achieving greater equity in education is not only a social justice imperative, it is also a way to use resources more effectively, increase the supply of skills that fuel economic growth, and promote social cohesion.

Angel Gurria
Former OECD Secretary General

What is the SRS?

The Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) funding mechanism was proposed by the 2011 Gonski Review as a transparent standard for funding all schools based on the needs of their students. It was introduced by the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

It is a base funding amount per student, supplemented by additional needs-based loadings targeted to address disadvantage. Gonski designed the **SRS as the minimum required funding per student to give every child, regardless of background, the opportunity to achieve their potential.**

The SRS is not an aspirational standard of school funding, nor is it a desirable level of funding that would give schools an ideal pool of resources.

The SRS was designed as the minimum funding required so that schools can have at least 80% of their students achieving learning outcomes above the **national minimum standard** in NAPLAN for reading and numeracy.

In the Northern Territory, where student need is greatest, every public school student will miss out on an average of over \$6000 in funding this year.

In 2023, public school students across Australia will receive at least \$4.5 billion less than is required to meet the SRS minimum funding amount.

Costs unrelated to schooling

The Morrison government in 2018, through the signing of bilateral funding agreements, allowed state and territory governments to include in their SRS contributions costs unrelated to schooling. These include capital depreciation, the cost of running regulatory bodies, such as teacher registration authorities,

and in some cases school transport and early childhood education.

By allowing these costs to account for 4% of a state or territory's SRS share, the Morrison government permitted state and territory governments to **deprive their public schools of another \$2.1 billion a year in funding. All governments must work together to fix the funding shortfall.**

Achieving the full SRS as recommended by the Gonski Review, and as promised by the ALP, would require a total investment of \$6.6 billion per year:

- \$1.9 billion already committed by states to reach 75% of SRS
- \$2.6 billion to reach 100% of SRS, including abolishing the Commonwealth cap
- \$2.1 billion for the states and the Northern Territory to remove the 4% depreciation allowance.

Current Schooling Resource Standard % and additional investment required



Source: Calculated from bilateral funding agreements and Commonwealth resourcing and SRS values provided in Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment Question on Notice No. SQ20-000151.

EQUITABLE RESOURCING IS THE KEY TO EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) says that “success in education can be defined as a combination of high levels of achievement and high levels of equity” and that “equity in education is also a matter of design and, as such, should become a core objective of any strategy to improve an education system”.¹

To achieve educational equity requires governments to ensure that the needs-based funding they provide is sufficient for public schools to be able to meet the educational needs of each school and each student.

That is why it is so critical that public schools are funded to 100% of the SRS.

Public schools educate the vast majority of students from low socio-educational backgrounds, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the majority of students with disability and the majority of students from non-English speaking backgrounds.²

Teachers, principals and education support personnel in Australia’s public schools work tirelessly to deliver high-quality teaching and learning programs for their students and in particular to accommodate the complexity of students who experience compound disadvantage and require extra support in the classroom. But they do this work by stretching the inadequate resources that they have to deliver teaching and learning programs that will enable every student to reach their full potential.

Full funding will allow public schools to deliver the intensive support and assistance children with additional needs require to fulfil their potential.

The current inequity in the distribution of staffing and school resources

OECD data shows that Australia is equal fourth worst in the OECD when it comes to inequity in access to educational staff and material resources (including textbooks, learning aids, IT equipment and school infrastructure), and is by far the most inequitable in correlation to Australia’s wealthy comparator countries.³



No one is left behind because we should always look after the disadvantaged and the vulnerable. But also no one held back, because we should always support aspiration and opportunity. That is what my government will do.

The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister

The economic benefits of improved learning and greater equity in schools

Education economist Adam Rorris, who contributed to the development of the SRS as the minimum funding standard for schools, recreated the methodology of a major OECD study to quantify the economic benefits Australia could gain through improving equity in schools.⁴

In 2016 Rorris found that a sustained investment in Australian schools that leads to every student achieving universal basic skills specified for 15 year olds in the international PISA assessment over the course of 15 years, would provide the following economic benefits through increased growth and improved social outcomes:

- An average \$27.5 billion in additional economic benefits each year until 2095 – a total of \$2.2 trillion over an 80-year period.
- An economic benefit of 130% of current gross domestic product (GDP) by 2095.

- A GDP level in the year 2095 that will be 11% higher due to the reform.

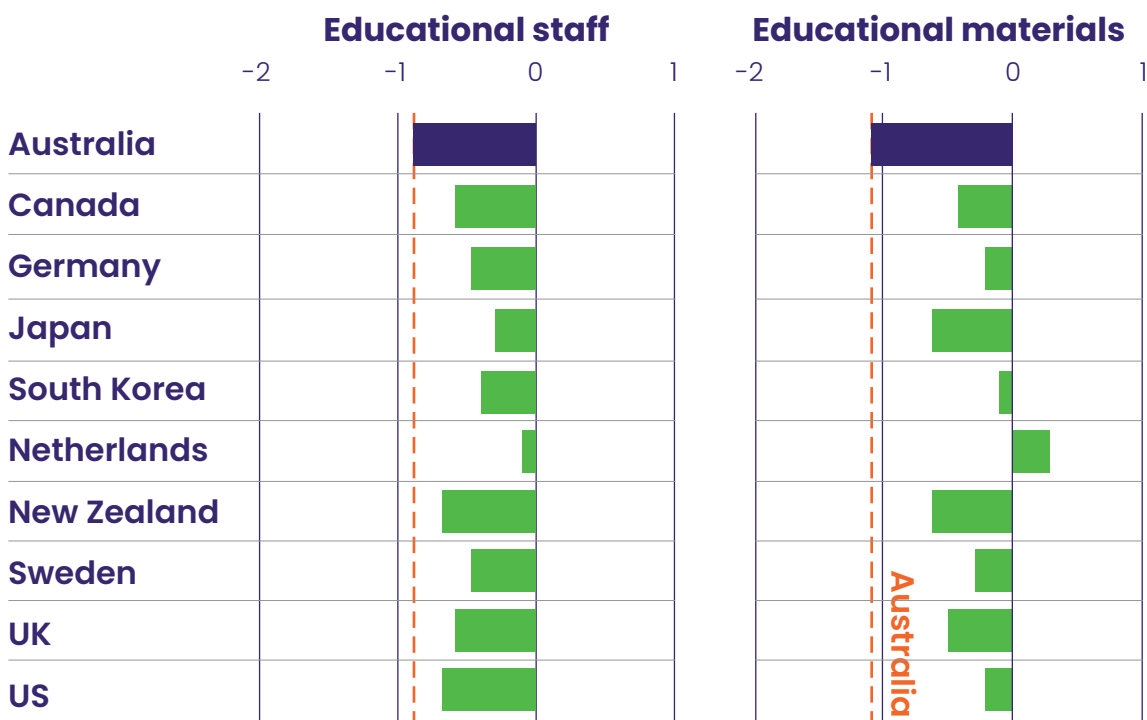
More ambitiously, Rorris found that if Australia improved its average PISA assessment score by 25 points (equivalent to just under one year of learning) the following benefits would accrue:

- An average \$65 billion in economic benefits each year until 2095 – a total of \$5.2 trillion over an 80-year period.
- An economic benefit that is 335% of current GDP.
- A GDP level in the year 2095 that will be 29% higher due to the reform.

Further, Rorris found that the direct “cost of failure” by not increasing funding to improve equity in Australian schools was huge:

- An additional \$60 billion in unemployment benefits paid by 2070.
- Lost income tax revenues in excess of \$12.2 billion by 2070 as a result of a greater number of people not being employed and therefore not paying income tax.

Relative access of disadvantaged schools to educational staff and materials





A PROFESSION UNDER PRESSURE

The pressure on principals and teachers has never been greater. The volume and complexity of their work has increased, along with the needs of their students.

Workloads are at unsustainable levels. Multiple studies of the last five years have consistently shown that teachers are working in excess of 50 hours per week. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) reported average working hours were 53 hours per week last year.⁵ The AEU's 2023 State of Our Schools survey found that teachers work 51.4 hours per week, with two-thirds saying that their hours have increased over the last year and 85% saying that excessive administration duties is the main reason for their unsustainable workloads.

Excessive workloads are leading to higher attrition rates of teachers and growing shortages. One in five teachers are now leaving the profession within the first three years.⁶

The 2023 State of Our Schools survey reveals the scale of the teacher shortage and the impact it is having in schools. It found that 90% of principals have experienced a shortage of teachers in the last year – more than triple the rate from the survey taken eight years ago.

As a result of these shortages, 58% of principals had unfilled teaching positions at the start of the 2023 school year, at an average of 3.1 vacant positions per school. By halfway through the year, 75% of principals still report vacant teaching posts at their school, at an average of 2.9 vacancies per school.

Across all subjects, AITSL's Australian Teacher Workforce Data shows one in four secondary teachers are currently teaching entirely outside of their area of expertise, and that up to a third of STEM teachers have no qualifications in the field.⁷

Without action, these shortages are only likely to worsen. A Monash University survey last year found that less than 30% of teachers were planning to stay until retirement, with one in five planning to leave in the next five years.⁸ In the 2023 State of Our Schools survey, only 19% of teachers said they would stay until retirement.

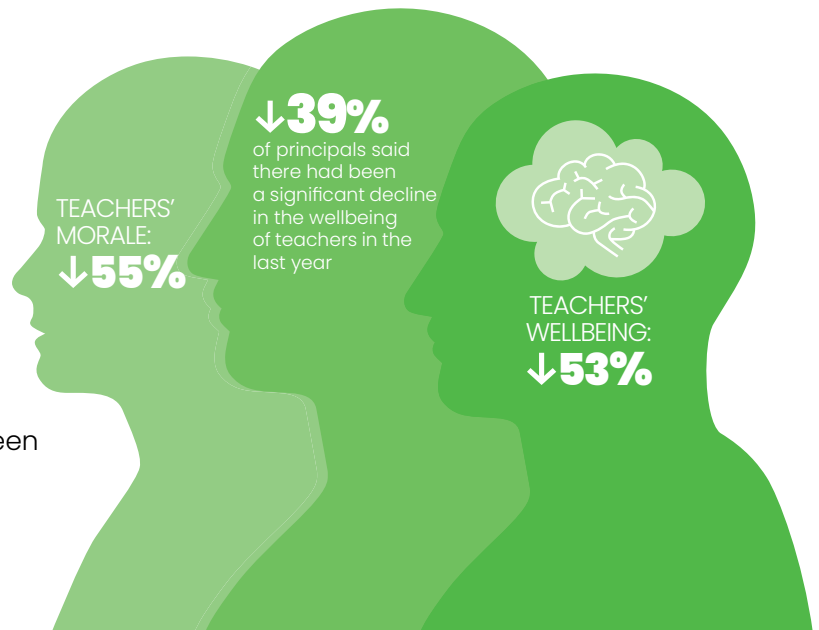
Student enrolments are also growing. The Department of Education estimates that an additional 254,000 students will be enrolled in Australian schools by 2029, with over 161,000 in public schools.⁹

Funding inequity has a profound impact on staff wellbeing and morale

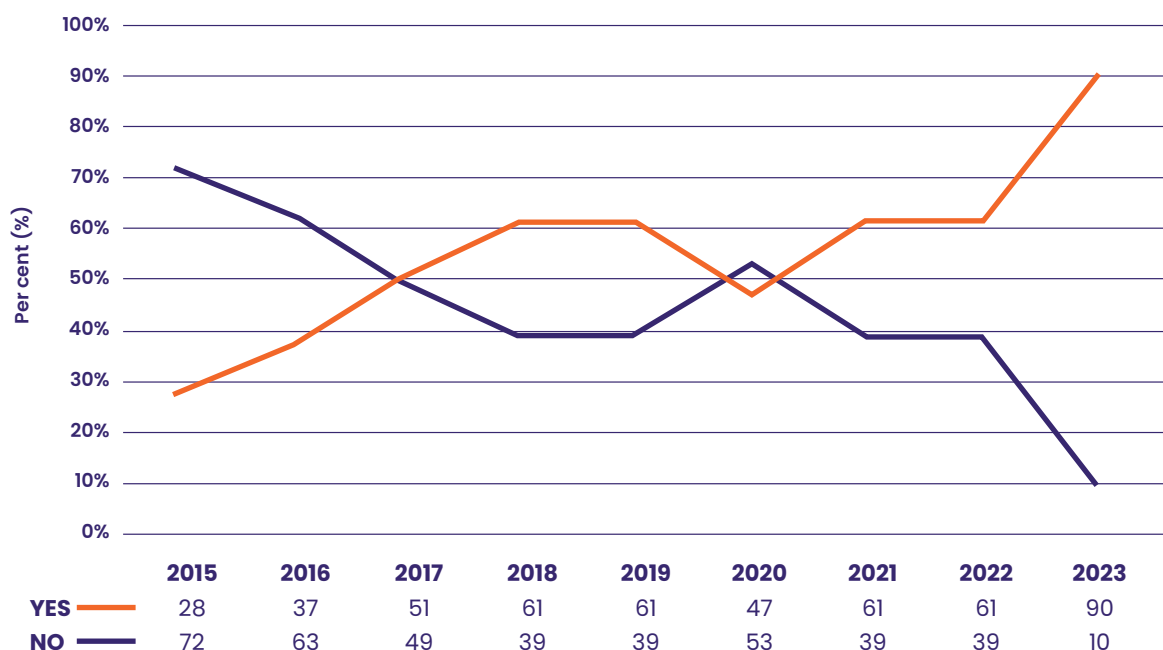
Chronic underfunding, teacher shortages and the unequal distribution of resources in schools are impacting on teachers' workloads, morale and wellbeing.

In the 2023 State of Our Schools survey, almost 40% of principals said there had been a significant decline in the wellbeing and morale of teachers in the last year.

A majority of teachers also reported significant declines in teacher wellbeing (53%) and morale (55%).



Principals – Has your school had teacher shortages in the last year?





MORE ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Quality teaching and learning depends on the right staffing levels with an appropriate mix of teaching, specialist and education support personnel to cater for the needs of every child.

This is more important than ever where the diversity of students in public schools and the complexity of their needs has increased significantly.

Public schools educate the vast majority of students from low socio-educational backgrounds and the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with a disability and those from non-English speaking backgrounds.¹⁰

Principals and teachers report that the investments that would make a real difference for teaching and learning are smaller class sizes, additional trained support staff in the classroom and intensive small group or one-on-one support programs for children at risk of falling behind in literacy and numeracy.

Increased access to qualified specialist staff would also make a real difference for students with additional needs. Teachers also need more time for lesson planning and professional collaboration with their colleagues.

These investments are supported in recent research. In a national survey this year, over 50% of parents and guardians said that access to small group and individual tutoring would assist their child.¹¹

The Productivity Commission also identified support staff and small group learning as two investments that would make a difference, pointing to research showing they improve outcomes.¹²

Small group tutoring has been a short-term response to the COVID-19 pandemic in some states, however these programs are most effective when they are integrated into a whole-school approach to high-quality teaching, a point emphasised in the 2023 consultation paper released by the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System.¹³



Research supports the common-sense notion that children learn more and teachers are more effective in smaller classes.

Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach
Northwestern University



Case study

Why class size matters – the research

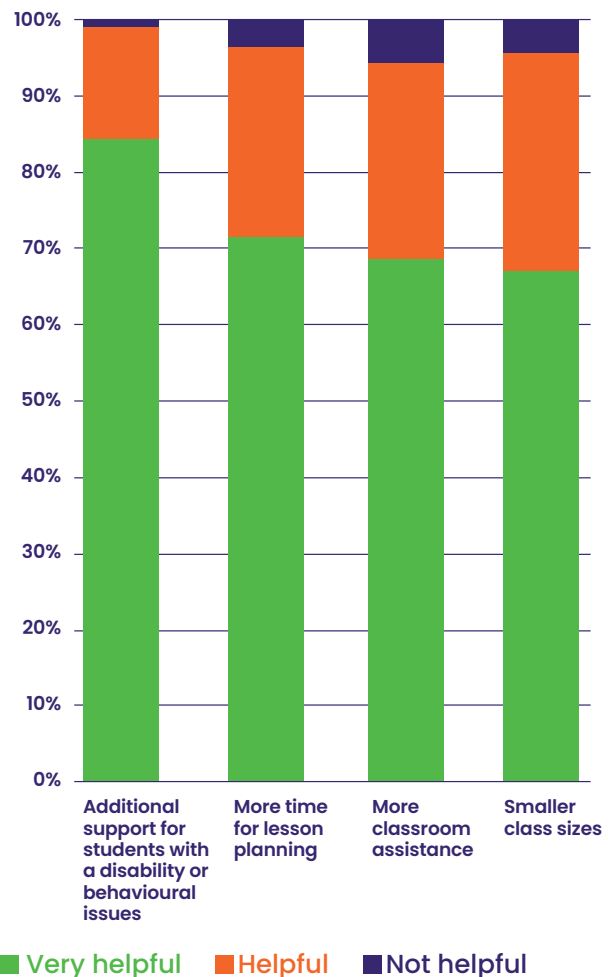
RESEARCH HAS repeatedly found that “all types of students benefit from being in small classes in early grades across all achievement tests” and is “an intervention that increases the achievement levels for all students while simultaneously reducing the achievement gap”.¹⁴

An Australian review of 112 studies spanning 1979–2014 found that “smaller class sizes in the first four years of school can have an important and lasting impact on student achievement, especially for children from culturally, linguistically and economically disenfranchised communities” and that benefits “arise from a mixture of increased time on task, greater opportunities for teachers to tailor their instruction to the students in their class and the positive impact on student engagement behaviours”.¹⁵

US research shows that “children in smaller classes achieve better outcomes, both academic and otherwise, and that class size reduction can be an effective strategy for closing racially or socioeconomically based achievement gaps”.¹⁶

What teachers need to improve outcomes

How helpful would each of the following be for you as a teacher in improving student outcomes?



Source: AEU State of our Schools survey 2023

The investment we need:

✓ **Reduce class sizes.**

✓ **Establish a permanent small group or individual tutoring program in every school.**

✓ **Increase access to qualified specialist staff in all schools such as literacy and numeracy coaches, disability support, behaviour support and Aboriginal**

and Torres Strait Islander teachers.

✓ **Increase the number of trained education support staff in the classroom.**



MORE TIME FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

Addressing the crippling workloads of teachers and school leaders is essential to the sustainability of school systems across Australia. Without urgent action to address excessive working hours and workload intensification it will continue to be difficult to attract graduates to a profession where they are underpaid, overworked, and have their professional autonomy continuously undermined. School systems will also struggle to retain the experienced teachers they have.

Teachers need more time to collaborate, plan and to prepare high-quality teaching and learning programs. They also need substantial reductions in their administrative burden including the systemic demands of data collection and compliance activities.

Over a decade ago, the Productivity Commission reported on the teaching workforce and recognised workload as one of the major issues for the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. The conclusions of their 2022 review of the National School Reform Agreement show that very little has changed, that Australian teachers' workloads are higher than their peers across the OECD and that many cite heavy workloads as a reason for wanting to leave the profession.¹⁷

The National Teacher Workforce Plan is a step in the right direction. However, urgent, sustained and serious action is required to

address the issues of attracting and retaining teachers to the profession. That requires properly resourcing public schools to fix intractable workloads so that teachers and school leaders have the time to do their jobs effectively.

The importance of cutting workloads

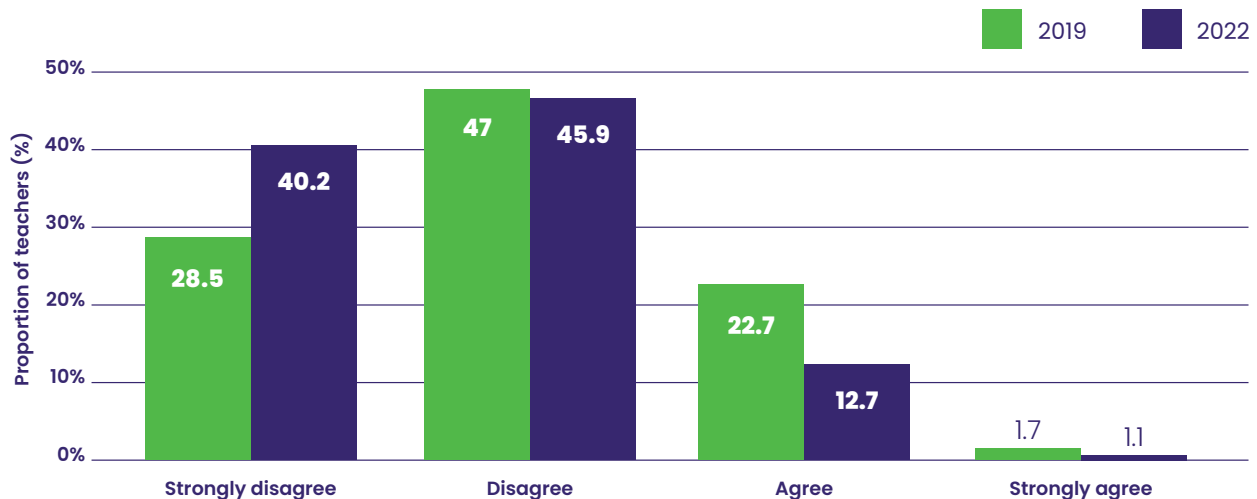


Freeing up teachers and school leaders so that they can focus on the things that matter should be a priority for the next school reform agreement.

Productivity Commission
Review of the National School Reform Agreement

Numbers that cut deep.

Are teachers' workloads manageable?



The chart above shows the findings from a nationwide survey of teachers conducted by Monash University in 2022, where only 14% of teachers agreed that their workloads were manageable and 86% disagreed. Meanwhile, 40% strongly disagreed with the proposition that their workloads were manageable, almost one and a half times the 28% who strongly disagreed in the 2019 survey.

Source: Australian Teachers' Perceptions of their Work in 2022, Monash University

Average hours worked per week in 2022



Source: AITSL Australian Teacher Workforce Data Dashboard

The investment we need:

✓ Cut administration and compliance workloads.

✓ Provide more time for teachers to plan lessons and collaborate with colleagues.

✓ Increase system-wide support for teachers and principals to meet the needs of students with higher needs.

✓ Ensure the wellbeing of principals and teachers is foremost in any workforce strategy and that all proposed policies and reforms are the subject of

consultation with the teaching profession to minimise potential workload increases.



BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students face significant and entrenched barriers to improving outcomes. The Commonwealth 2022 Closing the Gap Report shows that over the past 13 years there have only been marginal improvements to education outcomes for First Nations students, and the percentage who are developmentally on track when starting school has fallen from 35.2% in 2018 to 34.3% in 2021.¹⁸

School attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have declined from 83.5% in 2014 to 74.5% in 2022 – there is now a 12.9% attendance gap with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and this gap widens through the school pathway from nine percentage points in primary school to 17 percentage points by Year 10.^{19, 20}

Differences in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are acute. The targets to halve the gap in reading and numeracy for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 have not been met and the rates of Year 12 qualification for First Nations students are well behind target.²¹

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make up 8% of public school students – but only 2% of teachers are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Students must see themselves

in their teachers and this underrepresentation must be urgently addressed.

Australia had a comprehensive and effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching workforce strategy called the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Initiative (MATSI), but this was discontinued by the former Coalition government.²² A comprehensive teaching workforce strategy that builds on the outcomes of MATSI must be instituted as a priority.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' voice and participation in the development of policy and the delivery of education is fundamental, alongside an open, honest and explicit partnership with schools, communities and government.

Moving beyond platitudes to Close the Gap

After almost a decade of inaction under the Coalition, the federal government must commit to providing the resources necessary to properly address underrepresentation and educational inequity as a matter of urgency. The federal government must commit to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, principals, education support personnel, communities and policy experts to ensure high-quality public education for all communities.



Case study

Language and learning

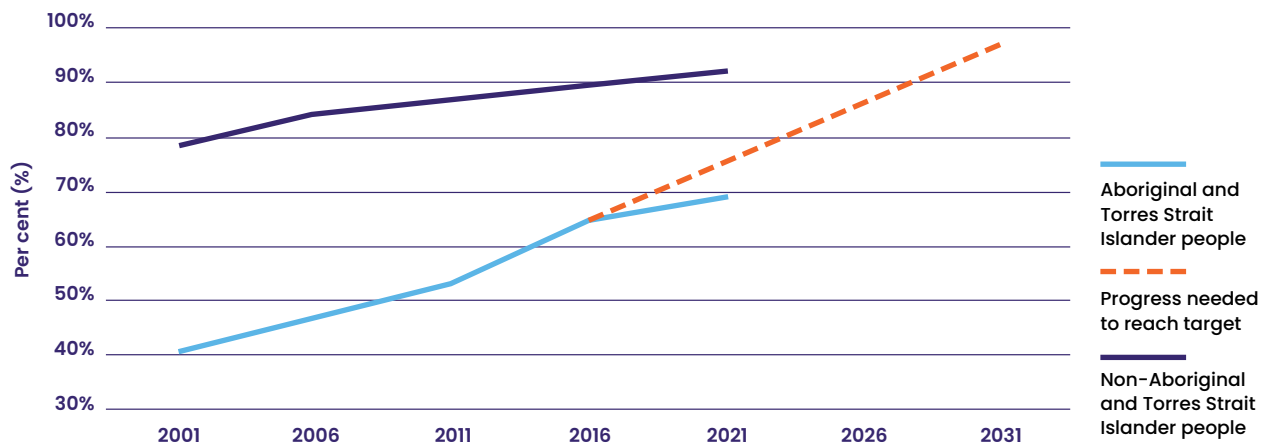
THE ARRERNTÉ Secondary Project at Alice Springs Language Centre in the Northern Territory is creating pathways for students to become Aboriginal language teachers. Its programs teach students the Arrernte language and other local dialects and support them to apply for language-based work.

Jannette McCormack, from the Arrernte language group and an educator who has spent more than 30 years teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Alice Springs public schools, heads the innovative program, which has helped students to become more engaged with school and increased attendance rates. It also offers opportunities for students to incorporate their own language in further study and employment.

“Our students want to learn their language because they can see that it will offer them jobs in the future. Then they want to share what they have learned with the younger ones.”

McCormack has supported five school-based trainees to become Arrernte educators and they now work in Alice Springs schools. She has also supported a Pertame student (Southern Arrernte) to begin working as an apprentice at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory. Some of the trainees are also completing formal teacher training while working in the school’s language program.

Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent at 20–24 years old



Source: Closing the Gap Dashboard

The investment we need:

✓ Ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote communities have access to public secondary schools in their community.

✓ Reinstate and provide funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education consultative bodies.

✓ Give voice to and increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, principals and education support personnel in the education workforce.

✓ Give voice to and increase access to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

✓ Resource the provision of cultural competencies and responsive teaching practices for the teaching workforce and education support personnel.



IMPROVING STUDENT WELLBEING

The wellbeing of students has a direct impact on their engagement in education and the results they achieve. This makes the provision of well-resourced teaching and learning programs critical.

The last few years have seen a significant increase in the number of students with wellbeing issues and poor mental health. Research released in 2021 found seven in 10 parents and carers of young people aged 15-18 reported worsening mental health conditions for their children due to COVID-19.²³

This year, over 70% of principals reported a decline in student wellbeing and engagement in the past 12 months, with 27% saying there has been a significant decline in wellbeing.²⁴

A 2022 survey of over 6000 Australian school students found that wellbeing declines across multiple domains as they progress through from the early primary years to Year 12.²⁵

The Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry found many schools have policies and support systems in place to achieve positive student mental health and wellbeing outcomes, but this is not the case everywhere.²⁶

Principals and teachers report they are left by the education system to navigate

through copious wellbeing policies and programs without the support, time and resources to choose and implement the most effective ones.

Teachers also report a lack of available support for students identified as at risk of poor mental health or show signs of poor wellbeing. There is a shortage of school counsellors, particularly in rural and remote areas, and not all schools in Australia are funded to have a qualified school counsellor on staff. Counsellors report crippling workloads, long waiting lists and a need to prioritise support based on the risk of harm rather than when concerns are first raised.²⁷



Improving the ability of the education system to support the wellbeing of children and young people is also very likely to reduce mental ill-health.

Productivity Commission, Mental Health Inquiry Report



Case study

Positive wellbeing

FIVE YEARS ago, almost every second student at Para Hills High School in Adelaide did not complete their schooling.

But in a remarkable turnaround, by last year almost all (97%) finished Year 12. What's made the difference is a relentless focus on creating positive wellbeing for "every teacher, every student, every minute of the day", says principal Alina Page.

Para Hills has worked hard to understand the school community's needs and find strategies to address them.

"For example, lots of students arrive with negative perceptions of schooling that often come from home. So, we do a lot of work to build connections with the families.

"Before the students arrive in Year 7, we've already had multiple connections with them, and their families have had a positive engagement with school," says Page.

Most of the students are from low socio-economic backgrounds and many suffer severe disadvantage that affects their ability to learn. But funding for extra care and support is "meagre", says Page.

With more funds, Page could offer small group tuition, an evidence-based approach proven to have the highest impact on disengaged learners, and work more closely with parents to help them engage with their children's education.

It's an investment that would benefit students, families and the country.

"Our goal is to raise aspirations and break the cycle of poverty," Page says.



Students with good social and emotional wellbeing are more engaged with learning and tend to have higher levels of academic achievement and attainment.

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

The investment we need:

✓ **Increase the number of school counsellors to a minimum of 1:500 students in primary schools and 1:250 in secondary schools.**

✓ **Boost school wellbeing teams with qualified social workers, allied health professionals and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers.**

✓ **Provide greater guidance and support in implementing proven early intervention and wellbeing programs.**



EVERY STUDENT WITH DISABILITY SUCCEEDS

Public schools are the primary educators of students with disability, whose numbers have increased by 29% since 2015 and who now make up almost one in four students.²⁸

The vast majority of these students are educated in mainstream schools, with teachers and principals committed to inclusive education.

The challenge is that the legal framework, policies and practices now in place to ensure students with disability can participate in education on an equal basis to their peers are not matched by adequate levels of needs-based funding.

Fewer than one in five principals say they receive enough funding to meet the needs of students with disability. Almost 90% say they are taking money from other areas of the school budget to compensate for this, with an average annual amount over \$120,000 redirected.²⁹

The failure of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to meet the full SRS means that public schools miss out on \$600 million in funding to educate students with disability each year.

The Commonwealth also provides no funding for the one-third of students with disability in public schools who are judged to have their needs met through differentiated teaching strategies.

At a state and territory level, there has been a withdrawal of the expert support provided by education departments that schools were traditionally able to rely on to implement individual and school-level strategies to meet the needs of students with disability.

This makes excellence in the education of students with disability a result of extraordinary efforts by teachers, principals and parents rather than a systemic response to our obligations as a nation to ensure students with disability are happy, safe, and can participate fully in their schooling.

Fully funding public schools is an essential step towards improving the educational outcomes and wellbeing of students with disability.



Many educators stated that they did not have sufficient funding to support their students and this view was particularly common in the schooling sector.

2020 Review of Disability Standards for Education



Case study

Leaps and bounds

THE BENEFITS of individual or small group tutoring are obvious to teachers at Sheidow Park School in Adelaide.

Children taking part in the special programs for literacy, numeracy and social skills progress “in leaps and bounds”, says principal Jennie-Marie Gorman.

But the school is battling to keep pace with the increasing complexity of children’s needs.

Gorman, who’s in her sixth year at the school, has seen “quite significant” change in students over that time.

Teachers are noticing that trauma, anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorder are now highly prevalent among children just starting school.

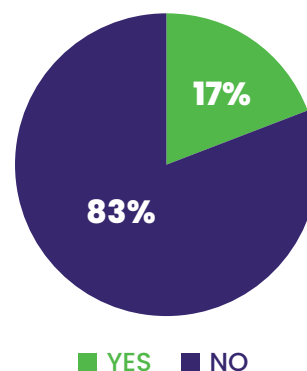
“Teachers are managing issues they’re not trained for, and the problem is that the funding hasn’t caught up.”

Only about 20% of the children with disability who need extra support meet the stringent criteria for additional needs funding.

“So we take money from other areas. For example, the exterior of the school needs to be painted – it’s been needed since before I arrived – but we would rather put the money into our programs,” says Gorman.

Even then, the funding doesn’t meet all of the children’s needs. Extra funding would allow the school to provide its programs to all children for as long as they need.

Do you have sufficient resources to meet the needs of students with disability?



Source: AEU State of our Schools survey 2023



We always offer support regardless of specific funding for disability. We had saved some funds to manage this, but it is not easy and we rely on support from the P&C.

Primary principal, New South Wales

The investment we need:

✓ **Increase the number of qualified teachers and education support personnel.**

✓ **More time for teachers to consult with students and family/**

carers, develop and implement individual education plans and classroom adjustments.

✓ **Give teachers time to collaborate with their colleagues, specialist**

teachers and allied health professionals and undertake professional learning.

✓ **Improve system-wide support and ongoing professional**

development to help principals, teachers and learning support teams.

✓ **Increase allied health support in schools to ensure rapid response to student needs.**



OVERCOMING DISADVANTAGE

Public schools educate more than 80% of children from families considered of low socio-educational advantage, more than 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and more than two-thirds of children with disability and those who come from language backgrounds other than English. Many of these children experience compound disadvantage, as they present across two or more of the categories of disadvantage outlined above.

Although each of these priority equity cohorts of students receive some additional funding through additional loadings, the failure to fund 100% of the base SRS means that the current loading amounts are inadequate.

From 2008 to 2022, the gap between high and low socio-economic status (SES) Year 3 students has widened substantially, and **low SES students are on average five years behind high SES students by Year 9.**³⁰

If governments are serious about turning around the decade-long decline in achievement for children in priority equity cohorts, a substantial and sustained increase in investment is required.



A system that delivered equity and excellence would be evident in a greater proportion of students achieving at the highest levels of academic performance, and the likelihood of being a high achiever not being predicted by the level of socio-economic advantage that a student has in their household, school or community.

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System



Case study

Extra support

ONE OF the most disengaged students at Colac Primary School in western Victoria has become one of its best performers in maths, thanks to an intensive program to help him pick up the skills he missed during the pandemic.

The student received the highest marks for Colac Primary in NAPLAN mathematics and has been invited into the Victorian High Ability Program along with five other maths students from the school.

Until last year, no student from the school had been offered a position in the program.

Most Colac Primary students are from low socio-economic backgrounds. Many of the children are developmentally vulnerable, particularly in language, and come to school with a high level of trauma. They need intensive support.

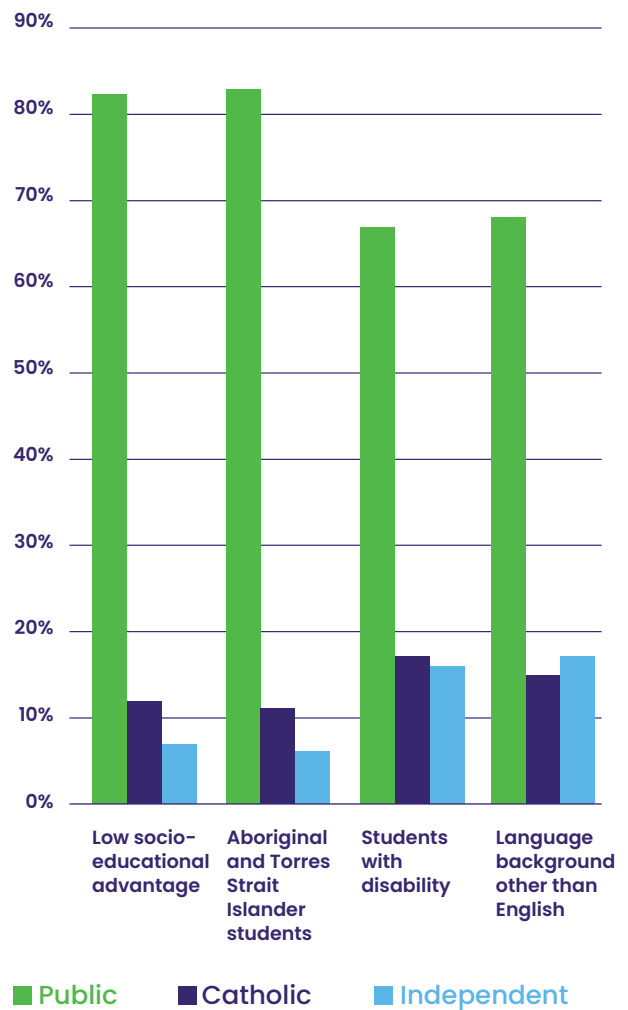
“Our funding has allowed staff to develop clear instructional models in reading, writing, inquiry and mathematics,” says principal Shelby Papadopoulos.

Nonetheless, finding the funds to give all the students the support they need is a struggle.

The school can afford to provide targeted interventions to students who are 12 months or more behind and any remaining funding goes to early years students six months or more behind.

“We can make the most difference in the early years. But it leaves our students in Years 3 to 6 identified as at-risk only if they’re 12 months or more behind because we don’t have the resources to give them the extra support.”

Distribution of students by characteristic and sector




Source: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

The investment we need:

✓ Increase the number of qualified educational support personnel and specialist staff (speech pathologists, psychologists and counsellors) in all schools.

✓ Additional parent liaison and qualified support officers.

✓ Additional wrap-around teaching and learning support and extra-curricular services.



RESOURCING REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS

Children living in regional, rural and remote communities are subject to significant resource gaps in comparison to their metropolitan peers. Teacher shortages are even more acute and, as a result, many schools struggle to offer a full range of subjects, thereby undermining the right of every student to access a broad, rich curriculum.

Public schools service more than 80% of students living in remote or very remote areas.³¹ Government reviews have found that on all measures, students living in regional, rural and remote areas “lagged behind urban students for decades” and that there is “a persistent relationship between location and educational outcomes when data for the various measures is aggregated”.³²

The severity of this inequity of resources and its impact on student learning results is shown in PISA 2018 results, which show that students in regional schools are nine months behind – and students at remote schools are 18 months behind – their city-based peers in both reading and maths.³³

Addressing entrenched achievement gaps for regional and remote students is resource-intensive and cannot be achieved where actions by federal, state and territory governments undermine and diminish

their responsibility for the provision of public education to all children and young people. To improve educational outcomes for students in rural, regional and remote communities, all governments must increase and stabilise support for children in rural, regional and remote public schools.

The Gonski Institute has estimated that closing the achievement gap between students in urban areas and those living in regional, rural and remote communities could add a potential \$56 billion to Australia’s GDP.³⁴



Much remains to be done to bridge the gap between the achievements and opportunities of Regional, Rural and Remote students and those most commonly associated with their urban counterparts.

Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education



Case study

Trauma-aware teaching

A TEACHING and learning approach that acknowledges trauma experienced by students has led to a big improvement in attendance for Arlparra School in the Utopia Homelands, 250 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs.

The school's five campuses cater for more than 200 students from early childhood to Year 12, but attendance has been low among senior students.

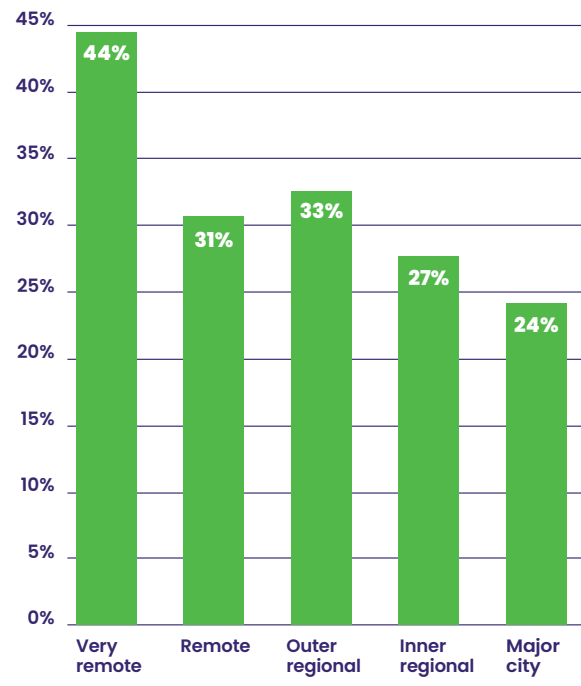
Principal Stephen Nimmo, the Northern Territory representative on the AEU Federal Principals' Committee, says five teachers at the school decided to undertake masters degrees in trauma-aware education and it is already showing positive results with attendance increasing.

"It's about being aware that almost all of the students have experienced some form of trauma: whether it's the fear and mistrust of schools by Aboriginal families because of the trauma caused by educational settings, or not eating enough, witnessing family violence or living in overcrowded conditions."

As enrolments grow, the pressure on the existing teaching workforce of 10 will increase and Nimmo says extra funding would help to employ more teachers to reduce class sizes and cover sick leave. "If a teacher gets COVID, they're out for a week but I don't have a back-up teacher."

He'd also like funding to employ more local people to reinstate a language centre and a rangers program that had been thriving before budget cuts.

My school is significantly under resourced



Source: AEU State of our Schools survey 2023



I don't want us to be a country where your chances in life depend on your postcode, your parents, or the colour of your skin.

The Hon. Jason Clare MP,
Federal Minister for Education

The investment we need:

✔ **Provide a curriculum guarantee to ensure that rural, regional and remote students can learn the same wide range of subjects as their peers in urban settings.**

✔ **Provide effective systemic support for regional, rural and remote schools.**

✔ **Provide paid practicums, accommodation and**

relocation costs for pre-service teachers to support rural and remote placements.

✔ **Improve attraction and retention provisions and incentives via industrial agreements.**

✔ **Provide greater support for early career teachers with full resourcing of mentoring, induction and ongoing professional learning.**

THE SCHOOLS OUR CHILDREN DESERVE

The public schools we need for the future are very different to the ones of the past.

Twenty-first century learning, with the focus on meeting the diverse needs of students and equipping them all with the knowledge, skills and capacities required in society and the future workforce, requires safe, high-quality teaching and learning environments.

Schools need a mix of flexible learning spaces and traditional classrooms in buildings designed to be energy efficient with good ventilation, acoustics and light. The capacity to fully utilise new technologies also needs to be reflected in the design and construction.

Research confirms the value of this investment in improving inclusion, student engagement, wellbeing and the academic results students achieve.³⁵

Public schools are increasingly hubs for the community. The onsite inclusion of early learning facilities, space for allied health professionals and adult and community education strengthens the connection between local communities and schools.

Rising enrolments

Increasing public school enrolments is another compelling reason for this investment. Student numbers increased by 160,000 students between 2015 and 2022 and the Commonwealth is projecting that will rise by a further 160,000 by 2029.^{36, 37}

In the AEU's 2023 State of Our Schools survey, four in 10 principals said they did not have enough classroom space to meet enrolment demands over the next three to five years.³⁸

The Commonwealth needs to take the lead on this nation-building investment. Prior to 2017, capital funding for public schools was provided by the Commonwealth as part of its grants to state and territory governments. The Turnbull government put an end to this capital funding in 2017.

The Albanese government restored some short-term capital funding for public schools in the October 2022 federal Budget. However, this only totals \$216 million and covers just one year – a fraction of the \$1.9 billion over a decade that private schools receive from the Commonwealth. Funding for new school public school infrastructure and its maintenance is only effective if provided on a consistent and long-term basis that allows schools to plan for the future.



Public schools are in urgent need of modernisation and can benefit from significant public investment, which will yield long-term economic benefits.

Education economist Adam Morris



Case study

Capital gains

STUDENTS AND teachers at Essendon Keilor College's Niddrie Campus are reaping the benefits of an investment in 21st century learning facilities.

Principal David Adamson says the \$12 million development has "absolutely" improved teaching and learning. "It's made a big difference because it's purpose-built," he says.

Adamson and his team worked closely with Haskell Architects to design a building specifically for teaching the middle years curriculum. "It's got flexible spaces that we can open up for larger groups of students, or we can close them off for use as normal classrooms. It was designed to cater for a range of teaching and learning techniques," says Adamson.

The focus on STEM is also evident, with various technology tricks and resources to keep the building relevant.

"We wanted to design a building that would be there in another 30 years and would be usable for new teaching practices in the next 10-20 years," Adamson says.

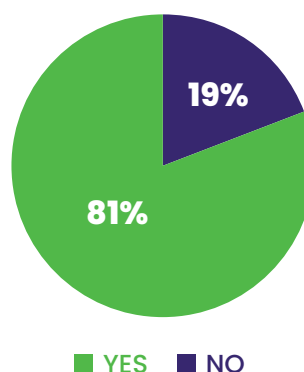


Student outcomes are strongly influenced by the design of learning spaces and the facilities in a school.

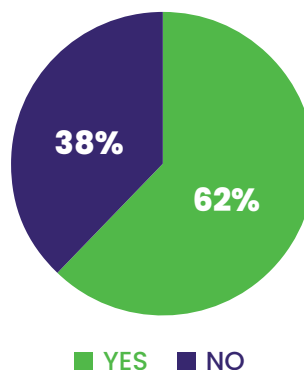
Review of Funding for Schooling, 2011

Principals on the classrooms they need

Does your school have adequate classrooms to meet current enrolment demand this year?



Do you believe you will have adequate classrooms to meet enrolment demands over the next five years?



Source: AEU State of our Schools survey 2023

The investment we need:

✓ **A permanent Commonwealth capital fund of \$350 million a year indexed in line with rising costs and enrolments.**

✓ **A commitment by all governments to invest in new, modernised and upgraded public schools.**

✓ **Prioritise purpose-built learning spaces and school facilities such as modified bathrooms and playgrounds that are accessible for all students with disability.**

Endnotes.

¹ OECD, *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, OECD Publishing, 2012

² Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, *School Profile 2022*, retrieved from <https://acara.edu.au/contact-us/acara-data-access>

³ Hunter, J., *Improving student learning in Australia: Submission to the Review of the National School Reform Agreement*, Grattan Institute, 2022, p.8

⁴ Rorris, A., *Australian Schooling – The Price of Failure and Reward for Success*, 2016, p.6

⁵ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Australian Teacher Workforce Data: Key Metrics Dashboard*, 2023

⁶ Expert Panel for the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System, Consultation paper, July 2023

⁷ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Australian Teacher Workforce Data: National Trends*, 2023

⁸ Longmuir, F., Gallo Cordoba, B., Phillips, M., Allen, K.A. & Moharami, M. *Australian Teachers' Perceptions of their Work in 2022*, Monash University, 2022, p. 24, retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.26180/21212891>

⁹ Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment, Questions on Notice, Budget Estimates 2022–2023, Outcome: Schools, Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Question No. SQ22–000248 Attachment B Projections for enrolments in schools

¹⁰ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, *School Profile 2022*, retrieved from <https://acara.edu.au/contact-us/acara-data-access>

¹¹ Department of Education, Initial consultation survey, Expert panel for the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System, May/June 2023

¹² Productivity Commission, Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report, December 2022

¹³ Department of Education, Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System, Consultation paper, July 2023

¹⁴ Konstantopoulos, S., & Chun, V. *What Are the Long-Term Effects of Small Classes on the Achievement Gap? Evidence from the Lasting Benefits*, 2009, American Journal of Education 116

¹⁵ Zyngier, D., *Class size and academic results, with a focus on children from culturally, linguistically and economically disenfranchised communities*, Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing Newsletter, IEEE 2014(1)

¹⁶ Baker, B., Farrie, D., Sciarra, D., Mind the Gap: 20 Years of Progress and Retrenchment in School Funding and Achievement Gaps, 2016, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ets2.12098>

¹⁷ Productivity Commission, Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report: Overview, 2022, p.13

¹⁸ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, *National Report on Schooling In Australia*, retrieved from <https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/student-attendance>

¹⁹ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, *National Report on Schooling In Australia*, retrieved from <https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/student-attendance>

²⁰ Australian Government, *Closing the Gap Report 2020*, p.36

²¹ Closing the Gap Dashboard, Productivity Commission, Target 5 – <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/socioeconomic/outcome-area5>

²² Johnson, P., Cherednichenko, B., Rose, M., *Evaluation of the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative Project Final Report*, University of South Australia, 2016

²³ Biddle, N., Edwards, B., Gray, M. & Sollis, S., *The impact of COVID-19 on child mental health and service barriers: The perspective of parents*, August 2021, Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods

²⁴ Australian Education Union, *State of Our Schools 2023*, Unpublished survey data

²⁵ Buckley Flack, C., Schoeffel, S., Walker, L., Bickerstaff, A., *Wellbeing for Learning: Evidence brief on Student wellbeing from a pilot in schools*, Pivot Professional Learning 2022

²⁶ Productivity Commission, 2020, Mental Health, Report no. 95, Canberra

²⁷ The Daily Telegraph, *Shortage of NSW school counsellors leaving many students without the help they require*, November 2022, retrieved from <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/shortage-of-nsw-school-counsellors-leaving-many-students-without-the-help-they-require/news-story/44d7e7b1f91975b47c5f946c5767dc13>

²⁸ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, *School Profile 2022*, retrieved from <https://acara.edu.au/contact-us/acara-data-access>

²⁹ Australian Education Union, *State of Our Schools 2023*, Unpublished survey data

³⁰ Chart extracted from the *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Discussion Paper*, p.15 Department of Education analysis of NAPLAN 2008–2022 (NAPLAN data accessible via ACARA, National Report on Schooling Data Portal)

³¹ Numbers and proportions of students in ABS remoteness categories by school sector, 2021 Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022

³² Halsey, J. *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education – Final Report*, 2018, p.8

³³ Thompson, S., De Bortoli L., Underwood C. & Schmid, M. PISA 2018: *Reporting Australia's Results. Volume I Student Performance: Data tables*, retrieved from <https://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/36/>

³⁴ Holden, R. & Zhang, J., *The Economic Impact of Improving Regional, Rural & Remote Education In Australia*, Gonski Institute for Education, University of New South Wales, 2018

³⁵ Barrett P., Davies F., Zhang Y., Barrett L., *The impact of classroom design on pupils' learning: Final results of a holistic, multi-level analysis*, Building and Environment (2015)

³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools Australia 2022*

³⁷ Parliament of Australia, Standing Committees on Education and Employment, Budget Estimates 2022–23 QON SQ22–000248

³⁸ Australian Education Union, *State of Our Schools 2023*, Unpublished survey data



Only when our society acknowledges and funds the costs of a first-class education system will our schools and teachers succeed in providing it.

Professor Susan Moore Johnson, Harvard University

Help ensure every
child achieves a
high-quality education.
Join the campaign to fully
fund public schools at
[ForEveryChild.au](https://foreverychild.au)



For more information,
resources and to get
involved visit:

ForEveryChild.au



Australian Education Union

120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria, Australia 3006

PO Box 1158 South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia 3205

Phone: +61 3 9693 1800

Email: aeu@aeufederal.org.au

Authorised by Kevin Bates, Federal Secretary,
Australian Education Union 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria, Australia 3006