

## **A Fair Society**

### **Education Policy**

1. Congress reaffirms education policy as endorsed by Congress in 2003.
2. Pivotal to the achievement of social inclusion and cohesion is education policy which aims to ameliorate social divides.
3. Public education, free, secular and universally accessible, is recognised as the foundation for a socially cohesive and prosperous Australia. The greatest benefit of public education is realised in the local, socially representative public school.
4. Governments have a prime obligation to adequately and properly fund government schools in order to provide high quality public schooling that is accessible to all children and young people. Public funding for schooling supports the right of families to choose non-government schooling and supports non-government schools on the basis of need, within the context of promoting a socially and culturally cohesive society and the effective use of public funds.
5. There must be increased public investment in education and distribution of public funds based on need and national resource standards. Better coordination between state, territory and the Commonwealth Government is crucial.
6. Congress welcomes the Federal Government's increased investment in school infrastructure. This will enable schools to undertake important upgrades and to develop modern learning environments. Public investment in early childhood education, schools, TAFE colleges and universities is not only an investment in education it is also a capital investment in which should be available for the use of local communities.
7. Congress calls upon the Government to adopt policies that promote lifelong learning and effective transitions between our early childhood education institutions, schools, TAFE colleges and universities, as well as

between education and work and non-work roles including familial and caring activities.

## **A new funding model**

8. The adoption of a new funding model is the top priority for enhancing the provision of quality education. Congress is committed to working with stakeholders and to lobbying and campaigning to ensure that the new funding model which will apply from 2013 is fairer and based upon the funding principles endorsed by State and Territory Labor ministers for education through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). These funding principles, adopted by ACTU Congress in 2003, are:
  - a) the total level of resources available for schooling is adequate so that achievement of the National Goals for Schooling is a realistic objective for all students;
  - b) public funding across different schools and sectors is distributed fairly and equitably through a consistent approach to assessing student needs and through having regard to the total level of resources available for students;
  - c) the total level of funding for government schooling is adequate to ensure access to high quality government schooling for all, and all governments' funding policies recognise this as a national priority;
  - d) resourcing for all students is adequate for meeting the National Goals, notwithstanding the school or school sector they attend; and
  - e) public funding for schooling supports the right of families to choose non-government schooling and supports non-government schools on the basis of need, within the context of promoting a socially and culturally cohesive society and the effective use of public funds.
9. Congress calls on the Government to ensure the process for developing the new funding model is transparent and involves consultation with all stakeholders, including education unions.

## **Quality teaching**

10. Congress calls upon the federal and state and territory governments to adopt the following national strategy to ensure the adequate supply of qualified teachers and skilled support staff for every school in Australia:

- a) attract the best entrants through improving teacher education courses, beginning salary rates and HECS remission;
  - b) increase support and mentoring opportunities for new teachers to reduce the number of young teachers leaving the profession;
  - c) provide adequate funding for salaries, employment conditions and job security; and
  - d) increase opportunities for professional training and development.
11. To ensure all children have access to quality education regardless of geographical location, affiliates will seek to include the following measures in awards and/or agreements to enhance the desirability of teacher postings to rural and remote areas:
- a) assistance with securing suitable housing;
  - b) ensuring teachers and support staff in rural and remote schools have access to professional development opportunities and ensuring the allocation of sufficient funds for these opportunities; and
  - c) remote area subsidies and allowances.
12. In addition, Congress calls on the Government to provide adequate income support to enable student teachers in urban areas to undertake the teacher practicum in rural or remote schools.
13. Congress urges the Government to take action to ensure Australia has sufficient numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and support staff, including by:
- a) establishing clear targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the teaching profession and support services;
  - b) ensuring there is mentoring, support and access to professional learning and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and support staff; and
  - c) providing scholarships to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enter the teaching profession and support services.
14. Congress calls on the Federal Government to work with the state and territory governments and the teaching profession to implement the following strategies to promote quality teaching in Australian schools:

- a) ensure all students in their final or penultimate year of a pre-service teacher education course have access to a fully-funded teacher practicum. Barriers to schools accepting students on teacher practicum must be identified and overcome;
- b) ensure new teachers receive adequate training, mentoring and support;
- c) provide all teachers with access to ongoing quality professional development opportunities; and
- d) provide adequate funding for payments of teacher supervision and mentoring of student teachers.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education**

- 15. Congress calls upon the Government to immediately fund the expansion of the education system to ensure that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has meaningful access to pre-school, primary, secondary and post-school education. This must be a national priority.
- 16. The ACTU resolves to adopt the following as priorities to promote Indigenous education in the next three years:
  - a) call upon governments to respond more effectively to the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education through the implementation of employment targets in all collective agreements and through the development and implementation of training plans, career pathways and transition to full employment;
  - b) secure adequate funding to meet the real needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support, such as tutorial assistance schemes and in class support to ensure the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is closed;
  - c) advocate for a comprehensive and accurate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective across curriculum areas and ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history pre and post contact, including the impact of colonisation on the First Peoples of Australia, in the development of the National Curriculum; and
  - d) lobby governments to ensure that all prospective teachers and teachers employed in education systems in Australia complete a comprehensive sequence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

studies as a minimum requirement for their employment, so as to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their communities.

17. Congress will also seek to ensure that efforts to 'close the gap' of the educational achievements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are supported by the development of a comprehensive and solid long term national action plan for Indigenous education, underpinned by a significant funding commitment and educational structures and models for the provision of education that take into account their needs and those of particular communities.

## Universities

18. Congress acknowledges that the Government has taken action to redress more than a decade of neglect and significantly raised Australia's investment, participation, and performance in higher education by providing additional funding of near \$6 billion over a four period commencing in 2010.
19. Congress welcomes the Labor Government's adoption of the following national targets by 2025:
  - a) 40 percent of 25-34 year olds will have attained at least a bachelor-level qualification; and
  - b) 20 percent of undergraduate enrolments in higher education will be students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
20. Congress calls upon the Government to adopt the following measures to help achieve these targets:
  - a) further improve student income support and reduce student debt;
  - b) require all institutions in receipt of government subsidies for teaching and learning to develop programmes aimed at improving the participation rates of students from disadvantaged backgrounds;
  - c) provide adequate funding for the provision of student support services and independent student representation and advocacy.
21. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are intrinsic to quality university teaching and research. Congress requests the Government protect these principles in legislation.

22. Congress calls upon the Federal Government to ensure all universities establish programs that address the impending staff crisis generated by an ageing academic workforce and an increased reliance on casual employees, should be specifically targeted at:
- a) Providing career opportunities to the thousands of highly qualified casual staff unable to obtain entry into the academic workforce; and
  - b) Attracting recent PhD graduates seeking to enter the full-time academic workforce for the first time.