

Fully funded public schools are an essential element of a fair and prosperous society.

The ACTU executive today supported the Australian Education Union (AEU) resolution on fully funding public schools.

The ACTU Executive is deeply concerned that only 1.3% of public schools are currently resourced at the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), which is the minimum level set by governments as required to meet the needs of all students. By contrast, 98% of private schools are funded at or above it.

Fully funding public schools is an essential first step in making Australia's schooling system stronger and fairer and ensuring every child can have their needs met. It is also essential to address critical teacher shortages which are driven by unsustainable workloads and uncompetitive salaries.

The ACTU Executive acknowledges the Prime Minister's commitment to work with State and Territory Governments to fund all schools at 100% of the SRS.

Given the historic under-investment of federal governments in public schools, and the Commonwealth's superior revenue-raising capacity, The ACTU believes the minimum federal share of the SRS in each agreement should be lifted from 20 to 25%.

This Commonwealth commitment should be legislated to guarantee the investment and prevent any future Coalition Government from arbitrarily cutting funding to public schools, as happened in 2017.

Clauses inserted into the current bilateral agreements by the Morrison Government which allow states and territories to artificially inflate their SRS contributions by 4% must be excluded from the new bilateral agreements.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Full funding of public schools is a nation-building investment that will not only improve the education of children across the country but deliver long-term social and economic benefits that far outweigh the cost.

"Full funding of public schools would be life-changing, it would mean more support for children who fall behind, it would give teachers more help inside the classroom to deal with the diverse needs of students. It would also make workloads more manageable which will go a long way in stopping good teachers leaving the profession and attract more people to become teachers.

Full funding of public schools is an important strategy to address the cost-of-living crisis. It would also mean more individual and smaller group tutoring for children who start school behind or fall behind.

"The opportunity to fix this exists now. The future funding of every public school will be determined by governments in new agreements this year. We call on the Federal Government to ensure that these agreements are signed this year.

ENDS

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