

AEU ACT Submission to ACT 2016-17 Budget Consultation

The Australian Education Union ACT Branch (AEUACT) makes submissions to xx items:

1. Improvements in energy efficiency & heating and cooling needs in ACT public schools
2. Increase in number of school psychologists in ACT public schools
3. Maintain recurrent funding of 'extra resources for sustainable reduction in teacher workload' commitment made in part settlement of the Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018
4. Payment of course fees for a mandatory certificate 3 in education and care or equivalent for all school assistants in ACT public schools
5. Older schools renovation

1. Energy efficiency & heating and cooling needs in ACT public schools

Given the results derived from the 2014 audit of provision of heating and cooling in ACT public Schools and the *Report on improvements in energy efficiency and heating and cooling needs in ACT public schools* tabled in the ACT Assembly in June 2015, it is clear there is much to do to make ACT public schools thermally comfortable for staff and students.

Additionally, the '*Procedures for managing extreme temperatures in ACT public schools*' negotiated and agreed between the AEUACT and the Education and Training Directorate as part of the settlement of the Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018 prescribes that no classroom is to have a temperature range in excess of 30 degrees Celcius in the summer and 17 degrees Celcius in the winter.

In order to improve the operating efficiency of building heating ventilation and air-conditioning assets upon which depend the thermal comfort of staff and students, the AEUACT would nominate the following for funding prioritising in this Budget:

- improving the thermal efficiency of the building fabric of all ACT public schools, especially that of older school stock;
- upgrading or replacing of all public school Building Management Systems;
- ensuring that heating and air-conditioning maintenance contractors provide at least half yearly reports to the Education and Training Directorate on the condition of all heating and cooling systems in ACT public schools;
- ensuring that all ACT public schools are equipped with proper insulation .

2. School psychologists in ACT public schools

Currently there are 52 FTE school psychologists employed in the ACT public school system. As part of the terms of settlement of the negotiations for the making of the Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018, the ACT Government agreed to engaged a further 4 FTE school psychologists for two years. With the increasing complexity of behaviours presenting in students with and without disabilities, it is clear that even the enhanced number is inadequate. Even the creation of the Network Student Engagement Teams, together with recent events, have done little more than demonstrate how great the need is for increased specialised support of classroom staff.

In order to provide the critical mass of support and expertise required to meeting the volume and spectrum of students with high and complex behavioural needs, AEUACT calls on the ACT Government to provide sufficient funding to ensure the deployment of at least 1 FTE school psychologist to every ACT public school.

AEUACT estimates this would add approximately 35 school psychologists to the current number at approximately \$4m per annum.

3. Teacher workload

As part of the terms of settlement of the negotiations for the making of the Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018, the ACT Government agreed to provide funding for 'extra resources for sustainable reduction in teacher workload'. This commitment involved the hiring of an additional school assistant at 0.75 FTE for every primary per school and an additional \$25,000 for high schools and colleges. This commitment came at a costing of approximately \$7m over two years but only for two years.

These additional resources are to be applied directly to alleviating teachers of tasks agreed to be not part of their core role (as defined in the Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018), and to support and assist them to improve their professional knowledge, practice and engagement through professional learning and professional learning communities in accordance with The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and as accredited by the ACT Teaching Quality Institute.

AEUACT calls on the ACT Government to commit recurrent funding of not less than \$3m per annum to guarantee that these extra resources for the sustainable reduction in teacher workload are maintained and that the commitment of \$0.5m per annum into the Teacher Professional Learning Fund is also maintained.

4. Mandatory certificate 3 for all school assistants

At present all school assistants employed in ACT public pre-schools are required to have at least the formal TaFE qualification of certificate 3 in education and care or equivalent. Unfortunately, no such minimum and mandatory requirement applies to the employment of school assistants anywhere else in the ACT public school system.

This means that teachers, upon whom there are increasing systemic demands to improve their professional learning, practice and qualifications are working with unqualified classroom staff whose capacity to assist and support the teacher in advancing the learning of students is limited, if not declining, but is certainly increasing the workload of teachers.

In order to facilitate the opportunity for school assistants to make the contribution they should both to teachers and students, the knowledge, expertise and engagement of school assistants must be enhanced and that can only be done through the acquisition of formal qualification which should also be mandatory. In that way, the teacher and school assistant can function as a team of educators.

AEUACT calls on the ACT Government to fund the course fees for a mandatory certificate 3 in education and care (or equivalent) for all school assistants in ACT public schools.

5. Older schools renovations

As part of ACT Labor's election commitments in 2012, the then Chief Minister Katy Gallagher wrote:

We have provided \$162 million worth of school capital works upgrades and new facilities through the school renewal program, to make sure students are getting the very best education wherever they live. This is on top of general capital works and maintenance worth \$13.2 million annually... But there is more to do. That's why, if re-elected, ACT Labor will commit \$70 million to create the best learning

*environments for students and teachers in our older schools... ACT Labor will enhance school environments with \$70 million for the **School Infrastructure for the Future** program to be delivered over the next four years.*

Labor committed to:

- *Upgrade and extend existing classrooms or build new ones where needed;*
- *Fund better fit out and furnishings and equipment upgrades;*
- *Deliver play area upgrades including trees, play equipment and softfall surfaces;*
- *Refurbish toilet, change room and shower blocks; and*
- *Provide new rainwater tanks and school gardens.*

The **School Infrastructure for the Future** program was to be funded to the tune of \$17.00 million in 2013-14, \$17.38 million in 2014-15, \$17.77 million in 2015-16 and \$18.17 million in 2016-17.

Across the ACT Budgets in the interim, a single appropriation has been made against that program, that of \$3.345m in 2013-14.

Other expenditure on 'Older Schools', as recorded in Education & Training Directorate Annual Reports as 'Older school capital upgrades', for the budget period 2012-2015 totals \$6.16m, which makes for shortfall against the ACT Government's 2012 Election commitment of \$63.84m.