



**MEDIA RELEASE – 7 March, 2003**

## **EDUCATION DOLLARS TO FUND WAR?**

ACSSO President Judith Bundy today expressed concern that the upcoming Federal Budget will contain substantial cuts to education funding as a result of war with Iraq. Already the Treasurer has made some predictions as to the cost of this conflict, and it would appear that the essential services of education and health will be the first front-line casualties.

"What is extremely worrying for parents is the fact that that a commitment to war has no budgetary limits. Once the troops are deployed, they cannot be withdrawn when the money starts to run out. No-one can predict the length or extent of the war, or how much it will cost."

"All we know for certain is that the Australian taxpayer will foot the bill, and essential government priorities like education must surely suffer."

Judith is also worried that another more insidious cost will be felt in Australian classrooms.

"Images of war will be displayed nightly on our television screens. Frightened young children will arrive at school each morning with these pictures firmly implanted in their minds. Teachers will be placed in the inescapable position of having to deal with these issues."

"Are our governments providing teachers with appropriate advice and strategies to handle this media blitz and its consequences?"

Yesterday saw thousands of teenagers marching for peace in our capital cities, linking with similar rallies in the US and Canada. The Federal Minister for Education said they should have been in school. The Prime Minister said that they "ran amok through the streets of Sydney causing inconveniences."

"Most parents would have given their consent for their children's voices to be heard yesterday," said Judith.

"And aren't we fortunate to live in a country where young people are free to express their opinion – governments could do much worse than to listen to the voices of these future voters. And as for causing some short term inconvenience, it is quite conceivable that these young people have a very clear focus and long term view about the kind of world they want to live in, " Judith concluded.

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For further information and comment

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