



MEDIA RELEASE – 26 May, 2003

## FEDERAL EDUCATION BUDGET – THE REAL STORY

ACSSO President Judith Bundy commented today that the same pattern is being repeated by Federal Education Minister Nelson as has occurred in previous years.

The pattern goes like this:

**A budget increase for schools is announced, with the increase for government schools made explicit. The increase for non-government schools is not mentioned. The Minister then publicly challenges the States to match the Commonwealth rate of increase for government schools. The budget is hailed as another record budget. In a transcript of a doorstep interview released yesterday, the Minister also implies that there is a fair system of funding the non-government sector, based on individual family circumstances.**

ACSSO believes that the following facts from this year's and last year's budgets, place this pattern of announcements in a very different light:

1. This year, non-government schools benefited from a 10% increase in funding<sup>1</sup> as opposed to government schools of 5.5%.
2. Students in government schools received the equivalent of \$51 each, whilst those in non-government schools received \$284 each.<sup>2</sup>
3. For the first time non-government schools receive more funding than the higher education sector. A difference of \$59m<sup>3</sup>, and a reflection of current government priorities.
4. In 2002, the present government reduced its extra funding to government schools from the budget figure of \$120m to \$88m.<sup>4</sup>
5. In 2002 the government also claimed that 16m of unspent money in the Quality Teacher Programme represented an increase.<sup>5</sup>
6. In 2002 the actual increase for government schools was close to 3.5%. After indexation, the real increase was close to zero.<sup>6</sup>
7. The government fails to acknowledge that its own funding formula is tied to that of the states, except that there is a time lag of some 18 months.<sup>7</sup>
8. In 2004 the Catholic education system will have an estimated income that is 15.2 per cent higher than the estimated cost of educating students in government schools. Other non-government schools will have an income that is 52.2 per cent higher.<sup>8</sup>
9. The SES (Socio-Economic Status) model for funding independent (but not Catholic systemic) schools does not relate in any way to individual family circumstances. A wealthy family who lives in a relatively depressed area will generate significantly greater income for an already wealthy school.<sup>9</sup>
10. The Commonwealth takes no account of the fees charged by independent schools when deciding on the level of extra subsidy that it will provide.<sup>10</sup>

As can be seen from this analysis, the government is playing a very misleading game with its media releases and selective use of statistics. It continues to systematically discriminate against students in government schools by widening the resource gap between the government and non-government sectors. ACSSO calls on both the Federal and all State Governments to rise above playing politics and take a proper leadership role to ensure that public education receives the funding it deserves. The sources of the ACSSO figures are on the next page.

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For further information and comment

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## References

1. Budget Paper No1, Chapter 6-19 Education, Table 7, Summary of Expenses
2. As above plus enrolment figures from ABS Schools, 2002 Page 25. Note that there may be small changes to these figures between 2002 and 2003.
3. Budget Paper No1, Chapter 6-19 Education, Table 7, Summary of Expenses
4. Senate Estimates 21 November 2002, as reported by Hansard, Education, Science and Training Portfolio, EWRE Page 131.  
Visit <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/commttee/s6006.pdf>
5. Ibid. EWRE Pp 132-133
6. ACSSO calculation based on 21 November 2002 evidence from DEST officers
7. Commonwealth Programmes for Schools – Quadrennial Administrative Guidelines 2000 to 2004 page 18, Adjustments to AGSRC Amounts and for Price Changes  
<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/guidelines/quadrennial/2001-04/index.htm>
8. See Corrigendum to the Report of the Senate Inquiry into Students with Disabilities at  
[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet\\_ctte/ed\\_students\\_withdisabilities/report/fcorr.doc](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/ed_students_withdisabilities/report/fcorr.doc)
9. Commonwealth Programmes for Schools – Quadrennial Administrative Guidelines 2000 to 2004 page 56, see  
<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/guidelines/quadrennial/2001-04/index.htm>
10. Senate Estimates 21 November 2002, as reported by Hansard, Education, Science and Training Portfolio, EWRE Page 128.  
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