

Australian Council of State School Organisations Limited

One voice for every child in public education



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M E D I A R E L E A S E

BIG SPENDING LITTLE VISION

“Last night’s budget saw big spending but little investment or vision for our future workforce” claimed Andrew Bidwell, President, Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO).

“Undeniably the current government can now see that investment rather than a budget surplus is key for economic growth and recovery, yet Public Education saw no additional investment, and this is despite its remit of educating the vast majority of young people for our future workforce.”

ACSSO is particularly concerned that the Budget continues to fail to provide certainty for the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education and Care (Universal Preschool). “Once again it offers funding for 12 months with no commitment of extending funding beyond the 2021–22 financial year. It also defies the current research that clearly states investment for at least two years prior to starting school has huge economic benefit; the rewards are two-fold – early education for young people and support for families so parents can work or study.” he continued.

The Treasurer also announced \$2.8 billion for the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees wage subsidy, ostensibly to help businesses keep their apprentices and trainees employed. “However, sadly lacking was any additional investment for TAFE – already decimated over the past 15 years, by both sides of politics - where is the provision for the vocational education sector so that training for apprentices and trainees could be optimised? Instead the Government chose a quick fix on training, prioritising funding to low cost, poor quality private providers.”

2020 has hit the nation hard, with both the bushfires and COVID-19, our biggest concern coming out of this is the well-being of our young people. The Primary Principals had identified a rise in childhood anxiety, prior to these events. ACSSO’s National Survey clearly identified that the COVID-19 crisis has created additional challenges with youth mental health. “What is needed in every public school is access to quality psychological support. Professional mental health provision in the form of school counsellors, who are trained psychologists, are needed at this time to support young people through the difficulties they and their families have encountered as a result of 2020. Instead, we see continued expenditure of \$61 million on school chaplains – this is totally unacceptable.”

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Investment in tomorrow's workforce today is key to guaranteeing continual economic growth - today's youth already have a difficult situation ahead of them. A visionary government would do that - this budget falls short.

For further comment

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