

FEDERAL BUDGET 2008

Key Points



Independent Schools
Council of Australia

In the area of school education, the Rudd Labor Government's first Federal Budget has primarily focussed on funding election commitments. There were no significant surprises as the Budget measures which affect the independent school sector have been previously announced during the 2007 Federal Election. Some of these measures have been, or are in the process of being implemented.

The 2008 Federal Budget has established a positive platform for the Government by confirming its election promises and providing further details of policies included in the "education revolution".

2009-12 Quadrennium

- The current SES funding arrangements for non-government schools will be maintained. The Budget commits a minimum of \$42 billion for the 2009-12 quadrennium with legislation to be considered by Parliament this year.
- In addition to the \$42 billion, negotiations will continue through the COAG process to develop National Partnership Payments for disadvantaged government and non-government schools.

National Secondary School Computer Fund

- An additional \$200 million to be delivered in 2011-12. This additional funding means that \$1.2 billion will be spent on digital education over the next five years.
- Round one of the National Secondary School Computer Fund will deliver \$100 million in funding to schools most in need of new computers by June 2008. The second round of applications will open in July 2008.
- The \$1.2 billion investment includes:
 - \$100 million commitment to support the deployment of fibre connections to Australian schools, delivering broadband speeds of up to 100 megabits per second.
 - \$32.6 million over two years to supply students and teachers across Australia with online curriculum tools and resources for classrooms.
 - Assistance for schools to make the best use of ICT with the development of support mechanisms, through funding of \$10 million over three years.

Capital

- \$457 million on school capital works in 2008-09. Over four years \$1.7 billion committed to the maintenance and infrastructure for schools.
- \$62.5 million over four years for the new Local Schools Working Together pilot program. This will encourage government and non-government schools to build and share state-of-the-art facilities for the benefit of local communities.
- \$481 million over the four years for the Solar Schools Program.

National Action Plan on Literacy and Numeracy

- \$577.4 million over four years to support schools to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes, starting with those schools and students most in need of help.
- The National Action Plan will be developed in partnership with schools, state and territory governments and non-government school systems.
- Existing literacy and numeracy programs will continue throughout 2008, and careful evaluation will identify what can be learned from them. However, these programs will be redirected into the National Action Plan from 2009. Further details of the new approach will be released following consultation.
- Under the National Action Plan, \$10 million is committed to gathering research and data to inform an evidence-based approach to literacy and numeracy programs and teacher professional development.

Early childhood education

- \$2.4 billion over the next five years on integrated early childhood initiatives.
 - \$533.5 million over 5 years to provide all Australian children, including Indigenous children living in remote communities, with access to affordable early learning programs delivered by a qualified teacher. All children will have access to 15 hours a week of early learning programs for 40 weeks a year in the year before formal schooling.
 - \$114.5 million over the next four years to establish 38 child care centres, including six autism-specific centres. This measure is the first phase of the Government's commitment to establish 260 child care centres on school sites and community land.
 - \$22.2 million over four years to develop rigorous new quality national standards for child care and preschool. A new five category quality rating system will be introduced to give parents more information about their child care centre or preschool, and to drive improvement in the quality of child care.
 - \$20.2 million (including existing funding of \$2.8 million) over five years to roll out the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) nationally; and
 - \$2.5 million in 2008-09 for the development of an Early Years Learning Framework.
- \$32.5 million over five years on a program to help disadvantaged children aged three to five years prepare for school. The Home Interaction program will be delivered, in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, to 50 disadvantaged communities across Australia.

Trade Training Centres

- \$2.5 billion has been committed over the next decade to establish Trade Training Centres in secondary schools, giving young people the opportunity to study a trade at school.

Indigenous Education

- \$56.4 million over four years for the Building Strong Foundations Program to assist in the delivery of literacy and numeracy programs for underachieving Indigenous students as well as individual learning plans.

- \$28.9 million over four years to build three new Indigenous boarding facilities in the Northern Territory.
- \$98.8 million over five years from 2007-08 to increase teacher numbers in the Northern Territory by 200 over the 2007-08 to 2011-12 period.
- The 2008-09 Budget also provides for other initiatives as part of the ongoing Northern Territory Emergency Response:
 - \$2.3 million in operational funding in 2008-09 for 10 crèches in the Northern Territory;
 - \$7.4 million will be provided in 2008-09 to continue providing breakfast and lunch to school-age children under the School Nutrition program;
 - \$19.1 million in 2008-09 under the Enhancing Education initiatives including funds to continue professional development of teachers of Indigenous students.

Education Tax Refund

- The Education Tax Refund will be available to Family Tax Benefit (Part A) recipients with children undertaking primary or secondary school studies for the relevant financial year. This includes eligible families of registered home-schooled students.
- Eligible families can claim a 50 per cent refundable tax offset every year for key education expenses up to:
 - \$750 for each child undertaking primary studies (maximum refund of \$375 per child, per year).
 - \$1500 for each child undertaking secondary studies (maximum refund of \$750 per child, per year).
- Eligible families will be able to recoup the cost of purchases including:
 - laptops; home computers and associated costs;
 - home internet connection;
 - printers and education software;
 - prescribed trade tools for use at school;
 - school text books; and
 - stationery.