

## Australian Education Union – ACT Branch

# Budget Submission 2004-05

During the next six months, the 2003/04 Enterprise Bargaining Agreements for teachers in schools and Canberra Institute of Technology must be negotiated and finalised. In view of this, the Union's focus during the 2004/2005 Budgetary process must be to highlight elements of our EBA claims which will require additional resourcing from Government.

### Claims from Current Enterprise Bargaining Negotiations

#### 1. Developing and sustaining the profession:

- Fellowships, Leading Teacher and accomplished teaching classifications to enhance teachers' skills and access higher levels of remuneration.

The EBA claim seeks to recognise and reward teachers who have shown commitment to upgrading their skills through completing higher study and/or engaging in other professional development. It also seeks the continuation and enhancement of the current Teacher Fellowship, Leading Teacher and Professional Learning Fund arrangements.

In the Canberra Institute of Technology, continued and supplementary funding is sought for the Professional Development Fund. The Union is seeking an agreed ratio of Advanced Skills Teacher and Senior Teaching Post positions to Band 1 positions. Additional resourcing is also sought to provide additional administrative support to Band 2 teachers and to allow for teachers to access Return to Industry in order to maintain their industry currency. Workload is the primary consideration for teachers at the CIT - a number of initiatives are included in the EBA claim that seek to address this issue - these initiatives need resources if they are to be successful.

- Beginning Teacher time allowance and mentoring arrangements with more experienced teachers within the same discipline area.

Under the EBA claim, a teacher in their first year of full time employment would undertake 80% of the normal load of a Level 1 teacher, providing time to access mentoring and other support. The anticipated outcome is a reduction in resignations of teachers within their first 5 years of teaching, currently the second most common time for teacher resignations.

- Casual relief staff to be appropriately remunerated and supported.

Given the acute shortage of relief teachers in the Territory, the Union is seeking a return to an earlier situation where relief teachers are paid pro rata rates commensurate with permanent or contract staff, and have access to some of the conditions, (eg professional development), available to those staff.

- Establishment of a minimum number of Executive Teacher positions schools must retain, and a ratio of 1 Executive Teacher to 6 Level 1 teachers. (Principals would have the flexibility to upgrade new promotional positions created to meet this ratio.)

The number of promotional positions has dropped significantly in recent years, and the ratio of Level 1 teachers to Executive Teachers has increased dramatically, leaving school management teams understaffed, and pushing supervisory work onto Level 1 teachers. The Union is seeking this improvement to address the workload imposition on Level 1 teachers, assist in their retention, and rebuild the promotional prospects of experienced teachers.

## **2. Preschools and primary schools:**

- Reduction of preschool class sizes to a maximum of 21. The disparity between preschool class sizes and those in early primary is now apparent and needs to be addressed.
- Further reductions in class sizes in Years 4-6 to provide a maximum class size of 25 students.

The Union anticipates better student outcomes in both sectors following these reductions. The research work on the educational and social benefits of smaller classes is extensive and does not need reiteration here.

## **3. High schools:**

- Reduction of class sizes in high schools to a maximum of 25 students to reduce behavioural management issues and support innovative curriculum and pedagogy.

The AEU believes that class sizes in high schools have a major impact on choices parents make regarding public vs private education at the point of transition between primary and secondary education. High school class sizes of 32 militate against calm social interaction in the classroom, and contribute to the alienation of adolescents at the point of transition. True pastoral care of large numbers of students in a variety of classes presents a serious challenge to the teacher. Innovative curriculum and pedagogy is also inhibited by the size of high school classes.

## **Additional Suggested Projects Outside the EBA Claims**

The AEU has been consistent over many years in its support for students at risk and has in the past called for support from agencies outside Education to support students and their families. Early intervention to support families would do much to alleviate problems with students at risk programs. However, for the purposes of this submission we recommend the following:

### **1. Support and Funding for the Integration Program:**

- Provision of a trained core of permanently employed Special Teachers' Assistants to assist both in mainstream classrooms and in alternative settings with Special Education and behavioural management students.

Integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools and classrooms has put enormous pressure on teachers of those students. Students with Autism and Aspergers Syndrome have levels of need which are not currently being supported or funded fully by the system. Specialist programs need to be prepared, in line with an Individual Learning Plan for each student.

The Senate Report *Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities* acknowledges this increased pressure on mainstream teachers and recommends provision of trained teacher aides. Children with Special Needs, whether in Special Schools, Learning Centres and Units, or in mainstream classrooms, will need support from trained STAs. The training for STAs should be devised in consultation with teachers who work with STAs and with experienced STAs themselves.

A similar situation pertains to children who are either unidentified as Special Needs students or who are not Special Needs students but exhibit behavioural disturbances. Their education in mainstream classes and alternative settings such as behavioural units needs to be supported through the provision of trained STAs.

## 2. Students at Risk:

- The Union is seeking restoration of funding for the Strategic Projects area of the Schools as Communities program to levels of funding before the cuts in 2002.
- We are also seeking the extension of the Outreach worker provision within Schools as Communities to cover all ACT primary schools and targeted high schools.

Our members speak very highly of the value that the Schools as Communities programs add to the schools where they operate. Given the findings of the report *Addressing Disadvantage in the ACT*, which indicates that few Canberra suburbs are without some level of disadvantage, we recommend extension of the Outreach worker project to all schools, with time allocation dependent on the relative level of disadvantage in the school.

The outcomes expected are in community building and in early intervention between the school and the home to assist children potentially at risk.

- A day program to cater for students with disabilities up to the age of 20 years, available for students with severe behavioural dysfunction who are unsuitable for Special Schools.

There exists a small number of Special Needs children/teenagers who have difficulty coping within Special Schools because of their sometimes violent behaviours. A day program should be established to cater for them either on a short term or ongoing basis.

- College health co-ordinators for each government secondary college.

Following the example of The Bay at Canberra College, the Union is seeking additional professional support to target students at risk during the college years. The expected outcome is a decline in the numbers of students dropping out during Years 11,12. The idea has its basis in the full service school model which is widely acknowledged as best practice in supporting students at risk.

- Support for more Learning Assistance and student welfare support in upper primary.

The focus of LA monies currently is properly on early intervention in K-3, but some children are missed and need to be picked up beyond those years. Others who are identified early for intervention need to be followed with support into upper primary. The expected outcome is that fewer children will enter high school with literacy and numeracy deficits.

- A centralised alternative setting to bring together the currently fragmented provision for students in Years 7 and 8 with severe behavioural dysfunction.

This facility would bring together services for students with mental health and/or behavioural difficulties on one site, overcoming the isolation inherent in multiple settings. It would have access to the services of professionals in the health area. It would accept students referred on a short to medium term basis, aiming to return students as soon as possible to their home school.

- Funding for offline programs within mainstream schools to cater for students who cannot pursue their education in traditional programs.

The expected outcome of these measures is to allow students who cannot operate successfully in mainstream class settings the opportunity to pursue their education in an alternative setting, and if necessary to pursue a pathway into work before completion of Year 12.

- Funding for the continuation of the SPICE program for students at risk - The SPICE program is a volunteer program for students from diverse backgrounds who are between the ages of 12 and 15 years of age. The program is targeted at students who are experiencing difficulties at school and who are at risk of dropping out of the school system. Begun as a pilot and then extended through funding provided by the Capital

Region Student to Industry Association allocating ECEF (Enterprise and Career Education Foundation) funding, the program is in its second year. A highly successful program is now at risk of being discontinued due to the uncertainty surrounding its funding. The ACT Government needs to provide funds to the SPICE program to ensure its ongoing viability.

### **3. Early intervention - the early childhood years:**

- The creation of a Deputy's position in Preschool Services.
- Preschool Services to employ a dedicated counsellor/psychologist to conduct educational and psychological assessments and offer limited counselling support to families of children in the preschool sector.

Assessment services are currently contracted in on an ad hoc basis, resulting in delays and shortages. School based counsellors are providing some voluntary services in counselling to co-located preschools in their own time. Since early intervention is the key, the preschool sector should be provided with a more systematic access to services than currently occurs.

- Funding for more physiotherapists, speech therapists and psychologists in Therapy ACT.

The shortage of professional personnel to assess children referred by teachers is a major problem, resulting in inappropriate delays in intervention to support the child at potential risk.

- Provide these assessments on site at preschools or primary schools.

The current practice of referral places the onus on parents to pursue outside assessments, often through private practitioners and at personal cost. This practice places disadvantaged children at greatest risk. The former practice of teachers being able to call for observation and assessment of the child on the preschool/school site should be re-introduced. The expected outcome is that fewer children with developmental delays or special needs would go undetected.

### **4. Violence in schools:**

Some of the recommendations of AEU position paper *Physical Violence in Schools* have cost implications. A number of items elsewhere in this submission would help address problems of conflict and violence against teachers in schools.

In addition there is a need for:

#### **(a) Improved professional learning -**

- All teachers should receive compulsory training in techniques for defusing potentially violent confrontations, and avoiding critical incidents relating to behaviour management of students, eg PART training.
- All teachers, especially those at supervisory level, should receive training in identifying mental health conditions of students which might impact on their behaviour in the classroom.
- Clarification of the proper use of restraint with violent students.

#### **(b) Alternative settings for some students –**

- Schools have a responsibility to try to provide suitable programs of study for all of their student population. If necessary, provision for students with behavioural and/or special needs should be made through special withdrawal classes on the school campus.
- The AEU acknowledges that some students are unsuited to the environment of a school, and furnish a substantial, ongoing risk to the physical safety of others whilst they attend. In these cases, the Department should provide alternative settings which can better cater for the needs of the all students in the system.
- Staff of alternative education settings need to be carefully chosen and fully trained for their role.

- (c) Provision of mobile phones and access to a central alarm system and personal duress alarm for teachers in settings where there is a heightened risk of physical violence.
- (d) Automatic provision of immediate relief for all teachers who have experienced violence in the education environment, and the opportunity to fully debrief.

## **5. Maintenance of schools' infrastructure:**

In the Union's observation, the School Based Management funding regime is not proving effective in ensuring the maintenance of the Territory's educational infrastructure. A large number of school buildings in the ACT (preschools, schools and colleges) have now reached a critical age where substantial maintenance and/or more extensive renovation is required. The Budgetary rolling program of maintenance to selected school buildings covers only two schools per year for major refurbishment, and as such is insufficient to keep pace with the Territory's rapidly deteriorating schools' infrastructure.

The AEU believes that maintenance and renovation of school buildings should not be at the discretion of Principals torn between the competing resourcing needs of their school programs and school maintenance. The Department needs to take control of maintenance of educational infrastructure to protect an important Territory resource from further deterioration. An injection of extra funding is required to assist this process and to ensure it occurs in a timely fashion.

## **6. Creativity and Innovation:**

- Provide all preschool and school aged students with the opportunity to develop their creative capacity and innovative problem solving skills, through the provision of a funded Arts/Design program to all students in preschool, primary and secondary school, delivered by specialist teachers.

The arrival of the knowledge-based economy is forcing a rethink in education of the skills required to meet the demands of future work. The current emphasis on the sciences and technology is important, but must not eclipse other disciplines which have an important contribution to make in fostering skills in creative thinking and innovation.

This program would be tailored to suit the needs of the students in each school through specialist teachers liaising with staff at the school. It could include lateral thinking/problem solving practices, dance, music, drama, visual arts etc. Links with institutions such as the National Museum of Australia, National Gallery of Australia, the School of Art, the School of Music and dance schools, for example, could provide opportunities for students beyond the school setting.

- Provide support for the adoption of multiliteracy approaches for developing high quality teaching and learning in all primary and high schools.

The demands of the knowledge-based economy require **all** teachers to develop new pedagogies that allow for:

- multiple ways of seeing, knowing and thinking
- non-linear, rich concept based learning
- both autonomous and collaborative learning, and
- opportunities for accessing learning outside the classroom

The adoption of the multiliteracy approaches across the ACT public school system would provide an opportunity for all teachers to build the skills required to develop creative and innovative lifelong learners.

## **7. Implement recommendations of *Review of Career Development Services in ACT High Schools and Colleges.***

## **8. Information Technology:**

The Union seeks a commitment from government that it will ensure all students have access within their schools to a networked computer and printer to support an integrated curriculum.

- Provide technical officers in ACT schools to support teacher and student networks and wider adoption of ICT's in teaching and learning.
- Provide improved hardware resourcing, e.g. appropriate printers, interactive hardware in every classroom and universal access to broad bandwidth.
- Increase IT support to preschools to provide four full time positions in this role.
- Professional Development for staff upskilling in computer use and extending knowledge of use in creative and innovative ways in classrooms, in order to achieve ICT integration across the curriculum.

## **9. Birrigai School:**

- Rebuilding of the Birrigai School to include Stages 1,2 and 3 of the proposed redevelopment program. Rebuilding to be in line with the outcomes of the non-urban study and Birrigai Master Plan.

## **10. Vocational Education in Schools:**

- Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training for ACT high school teachers - Funding for attendance and achievement of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training is at present provided for through the High School Development Program. These funds are finite - there is a need for ongoing access to training in the Certificate IV program for high school teachers. ANTA funds available for this purpose are provided directly to colleges not high schools. The ACT Government needs to provide additional funds to ACT high schools to facilitate the achievement of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training by the growing number of Vocational Education teachers in ACT Government high school

## **11. Joint Canberra Institute of Technology/Schools initiatives:**

- Establishment of a Scientific Experimentation Centre.

Science is a practical study. The ability to conduct and analyse experiments is fundamental to understanding, and to the development of an appreciation for the subject. Experimentation requires equipment and equipment is expensive. All teaching institutions are caught in the balancing act between the provision of quality appropriate equipment in sufficient quantities and the prohibitive cost of that equipment. Much equipment is specific for an individual experiment and used infrequently.

As a concrete example, consider the Photo-Electric Effect experiment. This experiment is pivotal to the understanding of the quantum model of matter, which underpins all physical science development for the last 100 years from the atomic bomb to the silicon chip. Einstein and Millikan both received Nobel prizes for their work on this experiment. The experiment can be repeated in a Year 12 class laboratory. The equipment required costs about \$600.00 and each pair of students needs a set. A class set is 14 @\$600 or \$8000. Far too much for a single college for equipment used just once a year; however, the opportunity for students to replicate Noble Prize winning investigations is irreplaceable and gives meaning to study in a scientific context.

The proposal is to allocate funding to conduct a feasibility study, with a detailed proposal to be presented at the end of 2004, on establishing a centre at Bruce CIT where class sets of equipment can be assembled and used on a rotation basis by students in ACT colleges. The subject areas where this is possible include Physics, Chemistry, Geology and Biology.

- Funding to create a model to allow for teacher transfer between TAFE and schools. This model to include arrangements re teachers' qualifications.

The ACT's Vocational Education and Training system provides pathways through the various sectors of public education (high schools, colleges and the CIT) enabling participants to continue through a chosen path of study as they move between the sectors. The effectiveness of the system would be enhanced by an analysis of the barriers that exist between the sectors with regard to the movement of VET teachers. A first hand awareness and understanding of the mechanics of the various sectors would be of benefit to the teachers and would have a subsequent benefit for the students for whom they are responsible.

- Reduce the opportunity costs associated with teachers pursuing a Return to Industry placement.

There is a paucity of available relief teachers in all sectors of VET available to replace a teacher as they engage in a Return to Industry. The costs to the CIT, college or high school are significant and cannot be contained within existing budgets - additional funding is needed to provide Return to Industry opportunities to teachers in CIT, ACT colleges and high schools.

## **12. Canberra Institute of Technology:**

- Restoration of funding lost since 1997.

Over the period 1997 - 2002, CIT has been required to absorb Budget reductions totalling \$16.3 million. Although some offset has been possible through some revenue raising activities the overall reductions over this period has been at least \$11.8 million. The CIT is now operating at a level of funding effectively \$11.8 million less per year than it did in 1997. In the 2002-2003 Budget the ACT Government reintroduced productivity savings of \$700,000 to the CIT Budget (that previously had been cancelled by the Labor Government). This followed reductions of \$3.0m in 99/00, \$2.7m 00/01 and \$0.9m 01/02 financial years. The ACT Government must commit to a policy of growth to address the issues present at the CIT resulting from the previous 6 years of Budget reductions.

- The CIT must remain accessible to all members of the Canberra community.

Future Budgets must ensure expanded provision of an appropriate range of fee exempt courses in CIT for disadvantaged members of the community such as the unemployed, people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and especially those of refugee backgrounds, young people at risk, women wanting to return to the workforce, people with little education, those with very poor literacy and language skills, people with a disability and people from low income families who wish to increase their education in order to improve their life situation.

- Funding to fully implement the 2002 AEU/CIT Casual Teachers' Agreement.

Under the Agreement between the CIT and AEU longer term casual teachers have the right to ask that either a temporary contract or permanent position be created in their teaching area, for which they can apply. There is a cost associated with this conversion of work from casual to more secure employment of around \$20,000 per full time equivalent teaching load.

- **Establishment of a Centre for Professional Development and Professional Learning at the CIT.**

The Centre for Professional Development and Professional Learning would provide an opportunity for teaching staff at the CIT to engage in ongoing professional development but to also provide an opportunity to engage in research regarding educational issues.

The establishment of such a centre at the CIT would provide opportunities for synergies to be established between the CIT and the Centre for Teaching and Learning Technologies being established at the Stirling Campus of the Canberra College. These synergies would be consistent with other initiatives aimed at strengthening pathways and links between the CIT and the ACT College and High School sectors.

The pedagogy of VET is an active area of development. The capacity of the CIT to remain at the forefront of VET delivery and to provide innovative delivery responses is currently limited. The establishment of the Centre for Professional Development and Professional Learning will enable the development and dissemination of these new pedagogies to the teaching workforce thus benefiting the broader ACT Community through enhanced VET delivery.

- **A 5 year program of upgrade of equipment in trades and related areas at the CIT.**

The expansion of technology and the rate of change of this technology has led to a range of equipment in the trades areas (specifically at Canberra Avenue and Bruce Campuses) becoming outdated. Additionally the age of some of the equipment in these areas limits the capacity of teachers at CIT to deliver education and training in the affected industry areas to the level necessary to meet the demands of today's workplace. \$500,000 per year is the lower end of estimates of the costs associated with the necessary equipment upgrades

The equipment replacement and upgrade program would restore CIT's capacity in these areas and support the development of ACT industry through enhanced and improved delivery and instruction at the CIT.

**CLIVE HAGGAR**  
**Branch Secretary**

December 2003