



Inquiry into Public School Funding

Acknowledgment of Country

The Australian Education Union Victorian Branch acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which union members educate children, young people, and adults in kindergartens, schools, TAFEs, Adult Migrant English Services, and disability services. We pay respect to elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first educators of these lands and honour their continuous connection to Country. Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

Introduction

The Victorian Branch of the Australian Education Union (AEU) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee's *Inquiry into Public School Funding*. The AEU represents employees in public schools who deal with the effects of inadequate and inequitable public education funding in Victoria on a daily basis. Public school students in Victoria are funded at the lowest level of all Australian states in relation to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and at the lowest per-student rate of all Australian states and territories. Whilst all other Australian states have committed to providing a headline funding share of 75% of the SRS by 2028 at the latest, the Victorian government has failed to indicate that it will do the same and has, once again, rolled over an inadequate funding deal.¹ This failure, as well as depriving more than 655,000 students in government schools of the resources and supports they need, also jeopardises or at least significantly delays access to extra funding from the Commonwealth which is contingent on states increasing their headline SRS share to 75%. At a time when Victoria's public schools are required to meet growing student learning and wellbeing needs and are facing chronic and continuing staff shortages, the Allan government's failure to deliver the required levels of funding is as duplicitous as it is despicable. It is not only an affront to Victorian public school students, their parent/carers and employees, it denies the broader Victorian community the benefits of a properly resourced, fully funded, and flourishing public school system right now and for the future.

It has been 14 years since the release of the *Review of Funding for Schooling*, widely known as the *Gonski Review*. The *Gonski Review* established a principle of needs-based Commonwealth funding of Australian public schools, aiming to ensure that "personal and social circumstances are not an obstacle

¹ Australian Government, Department of Education. (2025). *The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (2025-2034)*. <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/national-school-reform-agreement/better-and-fairer-schools-agreement-20252034>

to achieving educational potential.”² This was to be achieved by the development of a minimum resource standard calculated from funding levels for a group of reference school where at least 80% of students were achieving above national NAPLAN benchmark standards. This base rate was then to be supplemented with loadings to address additional costs associated with various school and enrolment characteristics.³ Whilst the resulting *Australian Education Act (2013)* had some drawbacks (such as its embodiment of the Gillard government’s ‘no loser’ policy that protected over-funded non-government schools), the way was open for more funding to be provided to the schools that needed it the most. However, as is currently the case with the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (2025-2034)*, the bulk of new funding to be delivered was backloaded beyond the budget forecast period which not only delayed much-needed funding, it also exposed those commitments to the vagaries of the electoral cycle resulting in successive Liberal federal governments cutting billions of funding to public schools. There were also opportunities for states to negotiate deals whereby they were able to claim funding not included in the development of the SRS as valid contributions towards their SRS headline funding targets.⁴ Victoria’s public schools cannot wait for another 10 years to receive adequate funding levels. At a minimum, the Allan government must commit to providing 75% of the SRS by 2028.

² Gonski, D., Greiner, K., Boston, K., Lawrence, C., Tannock, P., & Scales, P. (2011). *Review of funding for schooling: final report*. Commonwealth of Australia. <https://www.education.gov.au/download/1307/review-funding-schooling-final-report-december-2011/1280/document/pdf>, p.105

³ Ibid, p.154

⁴ Note that ‘headline SRS’ here refers to official SRS targets contained in bilateral agreements including any funding that does not contribute to the calculation of the SRS such as capital depreciation, regulatory costs or school transport costs. Elsewhere these funding items are referred to as ‘non-standard allowances’ or ‘non-standard funding’.

1. State and Commonwealth funding per student in Victorian government schools relative to funding in other states and territories

Despite the state Labor government’s contention that Victoria is the ‘education state’, it has long been and remains the case that Victoria is the lowest-funded state or territory for per-student funding in public schools (Table 1).

Table 1. Total recurrent expenditure excluding user cost of capital per public school student – state and Commonwealth funding ⁵

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<i>Northern Territory</i>	\$20,916	\$21,818	\$21,824	\$22,555	\$23,255	\$23,376	\$24,962	\$25,450	\$26,920	\$27,783
<i>ACT</i>	\$17,428	\$16,973	\$17,504	\$17,222	\$17,889	\$18,747	\$20,059	\$20,544	\$21,288	\$23,134
<i>Tasmania</i>	\$14,930	\$15,581	\$15,701	\$16,013	\$16,898	\$17,766	\$19,005	\$19,764	\$21,510	\$23,029
<i>New South Wales</i>	\$14,276	\$14,736	\$15,323	\$15,325	\$15,852	\$17,254	\$17,808	\$18,429	\$19,417	\$22,318
<i>Australia</i>	\$13,788	\$14,190	\$14,769	\$15,020	\$15,486	\$16,399	\$17,169	\$17,684	\$18,676	\$20,581
<i>South Australia</i>	\$14,985	\$14,781	\$15,318	\$15,534	\$16,167	\$17,002	\$17,859	\$18,579	\$19,134	\$20,289
<i>Queensland</i>	\$13,130	\$13,779	\$14,409	\$14,894	\$15,485	\$16,043	\$17,065	\$16,826	\$18,182	\$20,261
<i>Western Australia</i>	\$15,573	\$15,690	\$16,156	\$16,234	\$16,362	\$16,274	\$17,226	\$17,895	\$18,390	\$19,659
<i>Victoria</i>	\$11,824	\$12,253	\$12,932	\$13,405	\$13,742	\$14,888	\$15,500	\$16,427	\$17,397	\$18,543
<i>Vic funding rank</i>	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

It is now also the case that Victoria’s headline share of the SRS (combined Commonwealth and state shares) is also the lowest of any other state. Only the Northern Territory has a lower headline share of the SRS in 2025 although its bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth will see the latter’s share grow to 40% by 2029 meaning that headline SRS funding in the Northern Territory will 100% in that year.⁶ Alarmingly, Victoria has no published schedule to increase its headline SRS share at all and has now signed yet another one-year rollover of the current agreement where Victoria’s SRS share is unmoved. The effect of this that Victorian public schools will be funded in 2026 at the same rates they received in 2023 with SRS indexation.

The ACT’s current headline SRS funding rate is already over 100%, whilst Tasmania and Western Australia will reach 100% next year. All other states except Victoria have a schedule to reach 100% of the headline SRS funding rate by 2034. All states except Victoria also now have agreements that will reduce the amount of ‘non-standard’ funding that is allowed to contribute to the headline SRS rate over time. Non-standard funding allows state governments to divert a proportion of their SRS share away from the expenditure items that were specified in the development of the SRS, consistent with the “Net

⁵ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2025). *National Report on Schooling in Australia*. <https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/school-income>

⁶ Australian Government, Department of Education. (2025). *The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (2025-2034)*. <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/national-school-reform-agreement/better-and-fairer-schools-agreement-20252034>

Recurrent Income Per Student (NRIPS) component of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) financial data reporting methodology.”⁷

Non-standard funding allowances in bilateral agreements vary in type and degree across states and territories. A requirement under the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* is to gradually exclude capital depreciation as an allowable component of SRS funding shares. Although this funding is often replaced with other non-standard funding items allowable for inclusion in SRS targets, the overall effect is to reduce the share of these items over time. Victoria currently has no known schedule to reduce non-standard funding items from its SRS targets.

Figure 1 shows SRS funding shares for states, net of non-standard funding amounts under current bilateral agreements. The methodology for calculating these amounts is similar to that employed by convener of Save Our Schools and former Productivity Commission economist, Trevor Cobbold.⁸ A key difference in the methodology employed here is that it uses SRS and enrolment projections to 2034 supplied to Senate Estimates (SQ25-000647) in November 2025.⁹ A minor difference is that it updates Cobbold’s estimates of regulatory bodies’ expenditure (where available) as a proxy for regulatory costs allowable in bilateral agreements, with a projected growth rate based on average annual expenditure change over the last five years (compared to three in the original). These estimates are pro-rated by projected government enrolment shares where applicable under relevant bilateral agreements. In Victoria, these expenditure figures have only represented between 71% and 94% of regulatory costs reported to the National School Resourcing Board between 2020 and 2023 so they underestimate regulatory costs claimed in Victoria. In the name of transparency, state governments should be compelled to publish the annual reports they are required to supply to Commonwealth under legislation and funding agreements.

⁷ Australian Government, Department of Education. (2024). *Guidance to reporting - State and Territory Funding Contribution Requirements*. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-education-act-2013/resources/guidance-reporting-state-and-territory-funding-contribution-requirements>, p.2

⁸ Cobbold, T. (2025). NSW School Funding Agreement Leaves Public Schools Underfunded. *Save Our Schools Australia*, 4 October 2025. <https://saveourschools.com.au/funding/nsw-school-funding-agreement-leaves-public-schools-underfunded/>

⁹ Commonwealth Department of Education. (2025). *Update to SQ24-000765 - School funding and enrolment projections (SQ25-000647)*. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_estimates/ee/2025-26_Supplementary_Budget_estimates

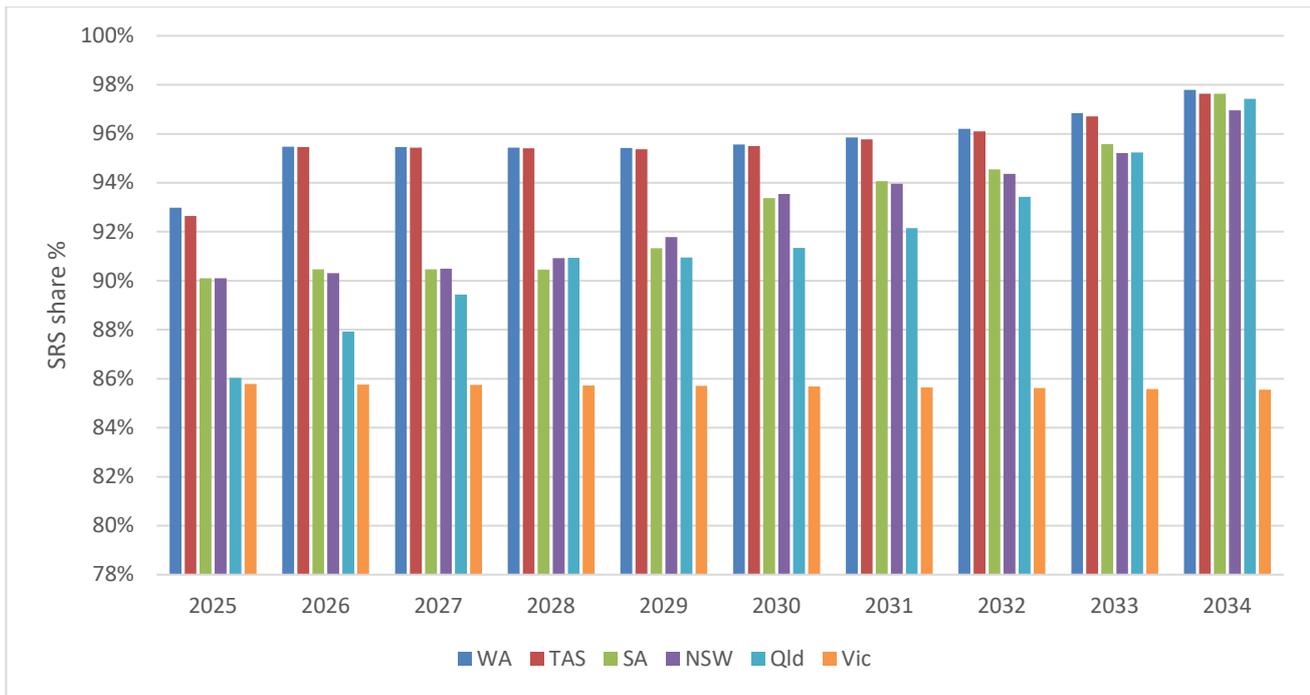


Figure 1. Estimate of actual SRS funding shares (excluding non-standard allowances) based on bilateral agreements and SQ25-000647

It can be seen from Figure 1 that all states eventually reach at least 97% (or very close to 97%) of their estimated full SRS amounts by 2034. Victoria has no published pathway to reduce the non-standard amounts allowable for their SRS funding targets or to increase the state or Commonwealth share of Victorian SRS funding. In the current agreement Victoria has added government sector regulatory costs for the Victorian Institute of Teaching, increasing its ability to claim non-standard allowances as contributions to its SRS share. This has the effect of further reducing the amount of funding that can be allocated directly to public schools.

As stated above, Victoria failed to increase its SRS share in 2024 and 2025 and will not in 2026. Under the current agreement, in 2026 the gap between Victoria’s actual SRS contribution (excluding non-standard funding) and the estimate of its full SRS is worth \$3206 per public school student.

Table 2 shows the extra funding that would be available for Victorian public schools under the funding deals struck with other states in comparison to Victoria’s current agreement, from 2025 onwards. It simply applies the actual SRS funding rates (excluding non-standard allowances) from other states’ bilateral agreements to Victoria’s estimated SRS rate and public school enrolment projections from SQ25-000647. As can be seen, the Allan government’s failure to produce a reasonable funding deal is costing Victorian public schools billions of dollars that they desperately need. Table 3 shows these amounts divided by the projected numbers of students in Victoria to illustrate how much extra funding per student would be available for Victoria under funding agreements from other states.

Table 2. Extra funding that would be available in Victoria under different states' current bilateral agreements excluding non-standard funding from 2025 (\$ million)

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
WA	1045.33	1465.36	1525.67	1588.82	1651.84	1736.65	1846.34	1974.22	2161.40	2423.97
TAS	995.62	1463.88	1522.04	1582.91	1643.54	1725.28	1831.46	1954.77	2136.59	2393.33
SA	627.03	710.16	740.74	773.29	956.06	1352.60	1522.47	1665.23	1918.58	2391.85
NSW	626.61	685.60	746.08	849.72	1033.91	1382.70	1502.84	1630.89	1849.28	2259.37
QLD	35.66	325.94	580.12	853.08	890.35	993.84	1177.01	1455.12	1855.20	2349.88
AVERAGE	666.05	930.19	1022.93	1129.56	1235.14	1438.21	1576.02	1736.05	1984.21	2363.68

Table 3. Extra per-student funding that would be available in Victoria under different states' current bilateral agreements excluding non-standard funding from 2025 (\$)

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
WA	1592.23	2221.51	2297.55	2381.76	2468.47	2587.44	2750.04	2937.81	3215.20	3603.34
TAS	1516.52	2219.26	2292.08	2372.90	2456.06	2570.51	2727.88	2908.86	3178.30	3557.80
SA	955.09	1076.61	1115.50	1159.23	1428.71	2015.24	2267.65	2478.01	2853.99	3555.59
NSW	954.45	1039.37	1123.54	1273.80	1545.05	2060.10	2238.41	2426.91	2750.91	3358.66
QLD	54.32	494.13	873.62	1278.83	1330.51	1480.72	1753.11	2165.34	2759.71	3493.20
AVERAGE	1014.52	1410.18	1540.46	1693.30	1845.76	2142.80	2347.42	2583.39	2951.62	3513.72

3. The impact of this delay and funding cut on the education of students enrolled at Victorian schools today and those starting prior to 2031

As stated above, SRS funding Victoria has already been significantly delayed by the Allan government. Simply by stalling Victoria's SRS contribution at a headline rate of 70.43% (which includes non-standard funding) means that at least three whole year levels have missed out on funding increases that could have reasonably been expected if Victoria had honoured its previous commitment to reach 75% of the SRS by 2028.¹⁰ If we assume that Victoria's funding share would have advanced towards its 75% target in equal annual increments, it can be seen that the Allan government's refusal to meet its previous commitments cost Victorian government schools around \$807 million over three years due to their failure to properly fund public schools, based on projected full SRS amounts.¹¹ On top of this, Victoria also 'materially' short changed public schools by \$219 million in 2023.¹² The longer Victoria delays signing an acceptable funding deal, the more students miss out of the proper level of resourcing they need.

¹⁰ Australian Government Department of Education. (2025). *Victoria Bilateral Agreement signed on 6 December 2018 and revised on 5 July 2022*. <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/victoria-bilateral-agreement>

¹¹ Commonwealth Department of Education. (2025). *Update to SQ24-000765 - School funding and enrolment projections (SQ25-000647)*. https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_estimates/ee/2025-26_Supplementary_Budget_estimates; Commonwealth Department of Education. (2025). *Update to SQ24-000759 - Schooling Resource Standard (SQ25-000645)*. https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_estimates/ee/2025-26_Supplementary_Budget_estimates

¹² National School Resourcing Board. (2025). *Annual review of state and territory compliance with section 22A of the Australian Education Act 2013*. <https://www.education.gov.au/national-school-resourcing-board/resources/annual-review-state-and-territory-compliance-section-22a-australian-education-act-2013-2023-funding>

This funding delay is particularly harmful for the growing number of students with additional needs in Victorian public schools. For example, the proportion of students with disability in Victorian schools has grown from 17.5% to 27.2% between 2015 and 2024. The proportion of students requiring support beyond quality differentiated teaching practices has grown by 72% over this period whilst the proportion of students requiring extensive supports has doubled. National data shows that students with disability are more likely to be in government schools. In 2024, 8.5% of public school students required 'extensive' or 'substantial' adjustments compared to just 5.6% in Catholic schools and 4.8% in independent schools.¹³ Parents/carers, teachers, education support employees, and school leaders also report growing numbers of students in Victorian public schools with other, often unmet, complex wellbeing needs.¹⁴

Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) data shows a large drop of students in their first year of schooling who are 'on track' in all five development domains in Victorian schools in 2024 (Figure 2).¹⁵ It can be seen that there were 56% of Victorian first year students meeting this criteria in 2009, increasing to more than 57% in each year between 2012 and 2021. In 2024 the proportion dropped to less than 54%. The Allan government's intention to delay reaching 75% of the SRS until 2031 means that these students will be in Year 7 before Victoria reaches its originally agreed-upon funding share.¹⁶ The Allan government would be denying this cohort of developmentally vulnerable students the support they need during the entirety of their primary schooling and potentially until they reach Year 10 or beyond. As Connors and McMorroff point out:

From the standpoint of children themselves, timeliness is a significant aspect of equity. The vital early years for learning only come once. For many children, resources delayed are opportunities denied. Schooling is not simply a preparation for adult life, but also a significant period in the lives of children and young people, deserving of the resources required at all stages for the learning and growth that is expected of them.¹⁷

¹³ ACARA. (2025). School students with disability. <https://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/school-students-with-disability>

¹⁴ Longmuir, F., Delany, T. Lampert, J. Wilkinson, J. (2024). *What the profession needs now for the future, Discussion paper two: Provision for Victoria's Public Schools* https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/3802756/WPNNF_MonashAEU_Paper2.pdf, p.15

¹⁵ Australian Early Development Census (2025). *2024 AEDC results*. <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data-hub/public-data/2024-aedc-results>

¹⁶ Parliament of Victoria. (2025). *Inquiry into public school funding*. <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publicschoolfundinginquiry>

¹⁷ Connors, L. and McMorroff, J. (2015). *Imperatives in Schools Funding: Equity, sustainability and achievement*, Australian Education Review, ACER, <https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=aer>, p.10

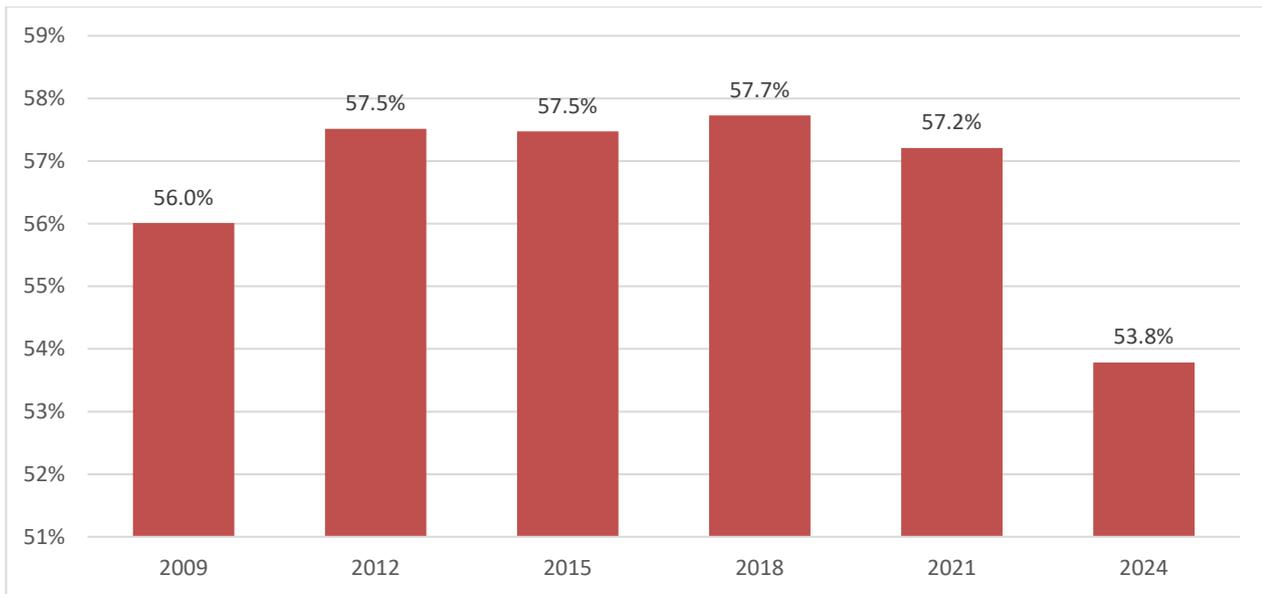


Figure 2. Proportion of Victorian first year students 'on track' on all five AEDI domains: 2009-2024.

AEDI data also shows that lower proportions of low-SES, rural and regional students, and First Nations students are 'on track' across all five AEDI developmental domains in 2024.¹⁸ Data from the Productivity Commission reveals that that these students are also over-represented in Victorian public schools in comparison to non-government schools (Table 4).¹⁹ And yet Victoria's non-government schools are currently overfunded and will be until 2029 (Table 5); Victoria's government schools will remain severely underfunded for a currently indeterminate period.²⁰ The quickest and fairest way to reduce this disparity is for the Allan government to commit to funding 75% of Victoria's full SRS by 2028, as was originally promised in previous bilateral agreements.

Table 4. Enrolment proportions at government and non-government schools by student profile

	STUDENTS WITH LOW SOCIO- EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE (2023)	NON-METROPOLITAN STUDENTS (2023)	ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FULL-TIME STUDENTS (2024)
Government schools	28.1%	22.2%	2.8%
Non-government schools	13%	21.4%	1%

¹⁸ Australian Early Development Census (2025). *AEDC Key Findings 2024* <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data-hub/public-data/2024-aedc-results>

¹⁹ Productivity Commission (2025). *Report on Government Services 2025. Part B, Section 4. School education.* <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2025/child-care-education-and-training/school-education/>

²⁰ Commonwealth Department of Education. (2025). *Response to question on notice: Update to SQ24-000760 - Overfunding of non-government schools (SQ25-000646).* https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_estimates/ee/2025-26_Supplementary_Budget_estimates

Table 5. Overfunding of Victorian non-government schools, 2025-2028 (\$)

	2025	2026	2027	2028
Catholic	39,264,899	30,691,368	21,324,646	11,097,993
Independent	55,889,693	44,588,183	31,715,090	16,880,531
Total	95,154,592	75,279,551	53,039,736	27,978,524

Increased funding levels are required to support the growing level and complexity of additional student needs. For example, better funding is required to ensure that there are sufficient education support employees including allied health professionals, and other resources to ensure that these growing student needs are met.²¹ A reduction in class size by one student for each student with an individual education plan (IEP) in a given class and a proportionate increase in the number of teachers would allow more time and support for all students. Proper levels of funding would help to reinstate the effective Tutor Learning Initiative (small group tutoring), which has been axed by the Allan government, and support expanded flexible learning options for students with complex needs or requiring enhanced engagement support. Full SRS funding could also support the employment of dedicated liaison officers to improve communication and relationships between parents/carers and schools. Sufficient funding for initiatives such as these would benefit students and employees in Victorian public schools.

A range of other strategies to support students with additional needs and general student wellbeing have been identified in *Investing in Australia's Future 2025*, released by the Federal Office of the AEU. These include:

- Expanding systemic support for teachers and principals to improve the education of students with higher needs.
- Increasing the number of specialist teachers for students with disability.
- Increasing the time teachers have to consult with students with disability and their family/carers, develop and implement individual education plans and make classroom adjustments.
- Introduce and expand full-service schools (integrating education, health and social support services) in disadvantaged regions.

They also include a number of approaches to support other education outcomes for all students:

- Increasing the number of targeted intervention programs to assist students at risk of disengaging from school.
- Reducing out-of-field teaching in secondary schools.
- Increasing vocational education and structured workplace learning options as part of a more flexible pathways model.

²¹ Longmuir, F., Delany, T. Lampert, J. Wilkinson, J. (2024). *What the profession needs now for the future, Discussion paper 3: School staff, parent, carer and community partnerships in Victoria's public schools.* https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/3908025/AEU-Discussion-paper-3-School-staff,-parent,-carer-and-community-partnerships.pdf p.11

- Ensuring careers advice is available for every student by Year 9 and through to Year 12.
- Establish a curriculum guarantee to ensure that rural, regional and remote students can learn the same wide range of subjects as their peers in urban settings.
- Provide effective systemic support for regional, rural and remote schools to ensure that they are supported with frameworks for leadership, staffing, curriculum development, student wellbeing, early intervention, and teaching and learning.²²

None of these strategies can be implemented effectively without appropriate levels of funding.

4. The consequences of this funding cut on Victoria's teaching and school workforce

Substantially increased funding is required to address critical shortages of teachers and other employees in public schools. The most recent data from the Department of Education shows attrition for public school positions growing between 2022 and 2023 whilst initial teacher education enrolments have been on a general downward trend.²³ The most up-to-date, publicly available data, the *Teacher Workforce Snapshot 2023* shows a persistent teacher supply deficit to at least 2029 with the deficit in secondary teacher supply projected to reach 3317 in 2026 and 3600 in 2029.²⁴ Research from Monash University shows that only 3 in 10 staff members intend to remain working in Victoria's public schools until they retire, with mid-career teachers being the most likely to report that they intend to leave.²⁵ This trend is extremely concerning as these are often the employees who undertake mentor roles for new teachers entering schools following the completion of initial teacher education courses and are the pool of employees from which future school leader will be developed. Top reasons given for wanting to leave the profession included excessive workloads, poor salary, a lack of respect for the profession and student behaviour. Clearly, improved working conditions and remuneration are required to attract and retain public school employees and this will require substantially improved funding. School leavers cite poor pay and working conditions as the main reasons for choosing not to pursue teaching as a career.²⁶

Victorian public school teachers are currently the lowest paid in the country, with education support employees, assistant principals and principals undervalued. Many are paid substantially less than their

²² Australian Education Union Federal Office. (2025). *Investing in Australia's Future 2025*.

https://www.aeufederal.org.au/application/files/5117/6225/0864/ForEveryChild_Brochure_2025.pdf

²³ Department of Education. (2024). *Victorian Teacher Workforce Snapshot 2023*.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/careers/Teacher-Workforce-Snapshot-2023.pdf>

²⁴ Ibid, p.19

²⁵ Longmuir, F., Delany, T. Lampert, J. Wilkinson, J. (2024). *What the profession needs now for the future, Discussion paper one: Work in Victoria's public schools*. https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/3757599/What-the-profession-needs-now-AEU-Paper-1.pdf

²⁶ Elliott, M., Loudon, W., Mohr, J., Paul, L., Scott, D., & Australia. Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2022). *Next steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*. <https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review>

colleagues in NSW, at various comparable pay classification points.²⁷ Staff shortages and churn exacerbate workloads and can become self-perpetuating if not addressed quickly, resulting in negative outcomes for students and employees.

Retention payments have been successful strategies for retaining employees in other sectors and need to be available for government school employees. Addressing excessive workloads is also crucial to not only stem high rates of attrition, but also to further improve educational programs delivered in schools. For example, a high proportion of primary and secondary school teachers surveyed for the *What the profession needs now for the future* research project in 2024 reported that their workload is increased by a lack of support for students with additional needs (84% of secondary school teachers and 80% of primary school teachers).²⁸

The AEU's submission for the 2026-27 State Budget contains a range of recommendations to improve attraction and retention for public school staff:

- Fund a 35% increase in salaries and improved conditions for school employees to address workforce shortages.
- Introduce a retention payment to address high attrition rates across in public education.
- Better support the roles of mentors for early career teachers, including early career casual relief teachers.
- Establish initiatives to address high and rising housing costs for public education staff. These could include rental assistance, stamp-duty exemptions, and a significant increase in housing owned by the Department of Education for the use of public education employees.
- Address declining initial teacher education enrolments and improve completion rates by providing fully funded studentships linked to guaranteed work in public schools.²⁹
- Support employees by improving flexibility and autonomy in working conditions including a trial of a four-day employee working week in schools.
- Reduce the accountability and compliance burden associated with increasing datafication and standardisation of teaching.
- Fund schools and regional offices to employ additional staff dedicated to easing administrative and compliance workloads.

²⁷ AEU Victoria Branch. (2025). *35% pay increase and improved conditions required to address public school workforce shortages*. <https://www.aeuvic.asn.au/35-pay-increase-and-improved-conditions-required-address-public-school-workforce-shortages>

²⁸ Longmuir, F., Delany, T. Lampert, J. Wilkinson, J. (2024). *What the Profession Needs Now for the Future: Discussion paper two*. https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/3802756/WPNNF_MonashAEU_Paper2.pdf, p.15

²⁹ AEU (2022). A ten year plan for staffing public education.

<https://www.aeuvic.asn.au/sites/default/files/Public%20Files/AEU%20Victoria%2010%20year%20plan.pdf> (p.16)

- Ensure that new initiatives in schools, including new curriculum requirements, are accompanied by a workload impact assessment to ensure that workloads associated with the initiative do not become unmanageable.³⁰

As noted in the *Third Interim Report* of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, there is a shortage of First Peoples working in public schools at a time when the proportion of First Peoples students is growing.³¹ The AEU Budget Submission also contains a range of recommendations to address this issue:

- First Peoples education workforce initiatives must be bolstered to meet growing needs. Supports for First Peoples pursuing higher qualifications need to be improved with better financial and profession assistance made available along with dedicated leadership positions.
- First Peoples employees must be appropriately compensated and provided with the resources and time when they undertake work with a cultural responsibility due to inherent colonial load.
- Clearly defined position descriptions and for First Peoples staff with specific cultural responsibilities such as Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) must be developed and strictly adhered to. The number of KESOs needs to be increased so that a ratio of 1 KESO employee for every 50 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students is achieved.
- The proportion of First Peoples employees in all settings must be increased to at least match the proportion of First Peoples students.³²

It will be impossible to adequately address current staffing issues without appropriate funding for public schooling.

5. The effect of underfunding our schools has consequences which we should not accept

Inadequate funding impacts all aspects of schooling provision, not least the support that can be provided for all students to meet their full potential. Funding public schools is an investment in today's children and young people for our future. The benefits for students, school employees, families, and the broader community of funding our public schools fairly and properly is apparent to all who have an interest in equitable educational provision and excellence in educational and wellbeing outcomes.³³ If the Allan government continues to cut and run from public schools our community will continue to confront the consequences of underfunding our children's education. The state government can and must deliver on the promise it made in January 2025 when it agreed with the Commonwealth to deliver 100% of the SRS, and it must deliver its full 75% share by 2028. No more important investment can be made than in the education of our children.

³⁰ AEU Victoria Branch. (2025). *2026-2027 State budget submission*. https://www.aeuvic.asn.au/sites/default/files/2025-11/State%20Budget%202026-27_AEU%20submission.pdf, pp.5-6

³¹ Yoorrook Justice Commission. (2025). *Yoorrook for Transformation: Third Interim Report – Volume 3*.

[https://cdn.craft.cloud/06ad3276-b3d9-4912-bcbb-](https://cdn.craft.cloud/06ad3276-b3d9-4912-bcbb-37795aade9a8/assets/documents/YoorrookForTransformation_ThirdInterimReport-Volume3_Accessible.pdf)

[37795aade9a8/assets/documents/YoorrookForTransformation_ThirdInterimReport-Volume3_Accessible.pdf](https://cdn.craft.cloud/06ad3276-b3d9-4912-bcbb-37795aade9a8/assets/documents/YoorrookForTransformation_ThirdInterimReport-Volume3_Accessible.pdf)

³² AEU Victoria Branch. (2025). *2026-2027 State budget submission*. https://www.aeuvic.asn.au/sites/default/files/2025-11/State%20Budget%202026-27_AEU%20submission.pdf, p.15

³³ Stanford, J. (2024). *Leaving money on the table: Foregone economic gains from continued SRS underfunding*. The Australia Institute Centre for Future Work. <https://futurework.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/10/Leaving-Money-on-the-Table-Oct24-FINAL.pdf>