

Budget 2019 – Schools

Schools Budget Overview

Measured against the schools' priorities for women that we have identified, the 2019 budget would indicate that there are no substantial changes to education policy and the settings remain from the National School Reform Agreement. While it is true there is an increase in school spending this is largely due to rapidly rising student numbers. While NFAW welcomes the extension of funding to early childhood education this is not a secure long-term plan which would ensure early childhood education for all students. Early childhood education is the basis of a modern schooling system and requires ongoing funding. Other measures such as the Local School Community Fund, and money for various arts, health and life education programs, while welcome, are one-off funding and do not contribute to an overall national policy plan for schooling. To make substantive improvements in these areas, a coherent program and ongoing funding is required.

WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE FOR WOMEN?

- Any changes to structures or funding have serious implications for women's working conditions and ability to deliver high quality education. Women make up the majority of the workforce in the schooling sector. At the primary level of schooling, females accounted for 81.5% of teaching staff in government schools, 82.6% in Catholic schools, and 77.1% in Independent schools. The proportion of teaching staff who were female was less at the secondary level, where the figures were 60.1% for government schools, 58.9% for Catholic schools, and 55.8% for Independent schools.
- Inadequate and short-term funding also has serious consequences for Australian women and their children in relation to accessing education and other work and family commitments in the longer term. Women are also the major care givers for children and changes to funding models impact on their relationship with schools and their ability to enter the workforce. On average women spend 8 hours 33 minutes per day caring for children under 14 years of age compared to men who care for 3 hours 55 minutes.

BUDGET MEASURES

The following table sets out the priorities identified by NFAW and the relevant 2019 budget commitments.

NFAW priorities	In 2019 budget?	Comment (if any)
Education and schooling be central to the government's program for the 21st century.	No	Education was not central to the budget. The quantum of funding as one-off measures does not support the idea of long term vision. It remains to be seen what long term benefits to student learning can come from such short term funding measures.
That the public education sector be fully funded.	No	Policy remains at the same level as the National School Reform Agreement of 2018 and growth in funding is due largely to rising student numbers.
That pre-school education be fully integrated and part of the schooling system.	Partial	Access to Early Childhood Education has been extended for another year for 350,000 children for 15 hours per week of preschool. This is only a single year's funding for those children starting school in 2021. This measure also includes funding for 2 years to implement strategies to increase attendance rates among disadvantaged and indigenous students and is welcomed but is not enough.
That all public sector schools have the services of highly qualified school counsellors and child psychologists.	Not applicable	
Other budget measures		
Measure	Comment	
Local School Community Fund - \$30.2m	While NFAW welcomes extra spending on schools this money is not targeted and can result in entrenching disadvantage. Women with greater caring duties and school involvement will find themselves required to make submissions. Those schools with parents from lower education bases may find themselves unable to compete.	
Life Education Australia (\$5m – 3 years) Arts Education Programmes (\$3.3m – 4 years) - Music Count Us In/Transformational Learning through Creativity/Bell Shakespeare's National Education Program) Mobile Musical Education program (\$2.4m for 2018-2019) Australian Constitution Centre (\$2m over 2 years)	While all these programmes are valuable of themselves there is nothing to suggest an overall plan of how this all fits student learning objectives. While NFAW agrees all experiences are valuable to education this approach does not offer long term support to students, teachers or the providers. Teachers (largely women) will be required to accommodate these programmes with no knowledge as to how long they can rely on the providers. Such funding lacks commitment to the programmes themselves and the education community. This is further evidence of no overall policy framework.	
Strengthening Teacher Capacity (Funded \$9.5 m for 4 years)	This is an on-line programme to teach Mathematics and Phonics online. While many teachers may welcome the use of the online resources it is a further impost on teachers and directive of their personal development. Many educators have suggested this is ineffective and the emphasis on phonics is ideologically driven.	

