

# **Educating** **for Tomorrow**

**Labor government's five  
imperatives for Australia's  
education sector**

**Prepared for**

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## **Educating for tomorrow: Five imperatives for Australia's education sector under Labor's second term**

Australia's education system has long been heralded as a global success story, yet persistent gaps in equity, rapidly changing workforce demands, and uneven digital infrastructure threaten to leave too many students behind. One in five Australian children and young people lacks common digital resources that prevent them fully participating in school.

As Labor begins its second term, in its first 100 days, the Department of Education has the opportunity and responsibility to start reimagining schooling and higher education for the 21st century.

### **Strategic Education Imperatives**



#### **Equity Funding**

Focuses on closing opportunity gaps through targeted financial support for disadvantaged students.



#### **Curriculum Reform**

Emphasizes adapting education to meet the demands of automation and AI.



#### **Teacher Quality**

Aims to enhance teacher satisfaction and effectiveness through support and development.



#### **Digital Connectivity**

Ensures universal access to digital resources for all students.



#### **Global Standing**

Enhances Australia's educational reputation and international partnerships.

Here are five imperatives to spearhead policy and investment in the next 100 days and beyond.

### **1. Close the opportunity gap with targeted equity funding**

Despite universal schooling, outcomes remain starkly divided by postcode, indigenous status and socio-economic background. To deliver genuine fairness, Canberra must:

- **Expand the Schools Excellence Fund** into a needs-based equity stream, directing additional per-student resources to schools serving high concentrations of disadvantaged learners, remote communities and recent migrants.
- **Embed wrap-around student support** - nurses, mental-health counselors and learning-support aides, within these schools, ensuring that barriers outside the classroom don't derail educational progress.
- **Strengthening anti-bullying policies:** The Anti-Bullying Rapid Review may be strengthened to develop a coherent national approach for addressing bullying in schools with consultations and opinions from teachers, students and parents.

This laser-focus on disadvantage will help level the playing field and unlock the potential of every Australian child, regardless of circumstance.

### **2. Future-proof skills through curriculum and vocational reform**

Automation and AI are reshaping the labor market. Our curriculum must evolve to equip students not just with knowledge but with adaptability, creativity and resilience:

- **Embed digital-literacy and critical-thinking pathways** from Year 1 onward, integrating coding, data analysis and design thinking across disciplines rather than siloing them.
- **Elevate vocational education** by creating "VET Pathways Hubs" in partnership with TAFEs, industries and universities, where students can combine classroom study with paid apprenticeships in tech, advanced manufacturing and green-energy sectors.

By breaking down the artificial divide between "academic" and "vocational," Australia can produce well-rounded graduates ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

### **3. Invest in teacher quality and workforce sustainability**

Teachers are the heart of any great education system, yet too many feel undervalued, overstretched and under-resourced. Monash University researchers have conducted one of Australia's largest surveys of teachers, which shows almost three quarters of educators feel underappreciated in the classroom. To attract and retain top talent, the government should:

- **Launch a national teacher excellence program** offering scholarships for postgraduate specializations (e.g., STEM, special-needs education), tied to multi-year commitments in underserved schools.
- **Guarantee manageable workloads** by funding additional non-teaching “learning coaches” to handle administrative tasks and individualized tutoring, allowing teachers to focus on instruction and professional growth.

A revitalized teaching profession, backed by strong career pathways and work-life balance will drive sustained improvements in student outcomes.

#### **4. Bridge the digital divide with seamless connectivity**

Australia's digital economy is experiencing rapid and sustained growth, now valued at A\$167 billion and expanding by 80% over the past five years. However, COVID-era remote learning laid bare glaring disparities in internet access and device availability. To ensure every student can learn anytime, anywhere:

- **Fast-track the National Student Connectivity Initiative**, equipping every public-school learner with an AI-use capable devices, prioritizing regional, remote and disadvantaged communities.
- **Build “Learning Hubs” in partnership with local councils**, converting underused community spaces into Wi-Fi enabled centers offering supervised study zones and on-demand tutoring after school hours.

By guaranteeing universal digital access, no student will be penalized by geography or income when the school bell rings.

#### **5. Strengthen Australia's global education standing**

Australia's universities and vocational institutions are pivotal to the nation's economy and soft power. To sustain and enhance this global standing, the following strategies are recommended:

- **Diversify and innovate international offerings:** In response to evolving global education dynamics, institutions can expand hybrid programs that blend short-term residencies, online micro-credentials, and collaborative research partnerships. Targeting emerging markets in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia can open new avenues for international engagement.
- **Promote cultural exchange programs:** Establishing initiatives that highlight Australia's rich Indigenous heritage alongside contemporary curricula can foster deeper cultural understanding. Such programs can serve as a bridge between Australian First Nations knowledge systems and global educational communities.

A refreshed global strategy will bolster our higher-education resilience, diversify income streams and cement Australia's reputation as an incubator of world-class talent. Reinventing education is neither quick nor painless. It demands sustained funding, deep collaboration with teachers and communities, and the political courage to challenge entrenched practices.

Yet under Labor's leadership and in the 1st 100 days of its 2nd term, these five imperatives can start transforming Australian schooling and tertiary education into engines of social mobility, innovation and national prosperity. The blueprint is clear, now is the time to act.