Meeting the Needs of All Students

The AEU-ACT Branch holds the following fundamental beliefs:

That:

- Our community as a whole has a responsibility to make the care, protection and education of children and young people a priority.
- Young people make an important contribution to the present and future needs of our community.
- Young people are some of the most vulnerable members of our community.
- Every young person has the right to a high quality education that enables them to achieve their full potential.
- Education can alleviate many social and economic issues that arise in our community.
- Every child and young person is able to learn.
- No single educational setting can meet the needs of all students.
- Everyone in schools has the right to a safe workplace.

While ACT public schools effectively educate and support the vast majority of students from preschool through to college, there are two cohorts of students for which the current provision of programs and settings (as at July 2012) are not fully meeting their needs:

1. Those students who are either disengaging or already disengaged/disenfranchised from schooling
2. Those students who exhibit significant emotional, psychological, behaviour or social disturbances, which sometimes manifests as abusive and violent behaviour.

The AEU-ACT Branch recognises that:

- Many hundreds of young people in the ACT do not engage with either an educational setting or employment, despite the ‘Learn or Earn’ legislation requiring attendance in full-time education, training or employment up the age of 17.
• Many of the issues preventing participation are not being addressed by current education environments in the ACT.
• Failure to meet the needs of young people often results in outcomes that are very damaging to the young person, the social fabric of the community and can result in a very expensive burden on the community.

The AEU-ACT Branch recommends the following actions which will assist in meeting the needs of all students in the ACT:

1. The AEU will lobby the Education Minister, other political leaders, the ETD to urgently seek and implement solutions to address the educational, social and emotional needs of students whose needs cannot be met in mainstream educational settings.

2. The AEU calls upon the ACT government and ETD to dedicate adequate recurrent resources to:
   (a) Provide all ETD employees with appropriate, comprehensive, ongoing, high quality professional learning that builds skills in:
       - student management and engagement (including managing abusive and violent behaviours) and professional relationships with students
       - individualised learning programs and learning styles
       - assessment, needs identification and early intervention strategies
       - vocational training, information technology, pathways transitions
       - engaging families and the community
       Such professional learning must cater for the needs of staff and be matched to the demands of the particular students in their care.
   (b) Create additional School Counsellor-Psychologist positions to ensure a ratio of 1 FTE Counsellor-Psychologist for every 500 students in public preschools, schools, and colleges. Additionally, provide resources to enable SCPs adequate time during the school day to liaise effectively with students, families and school welfare teams.
   (c) Appoint a team of independent education professionals to:
       • Identify and survey students who are:
         (i) not attending school or
         (ii) who are at school but are becoming disengaged and unable to meet their potential or
(iii) exhibiting significant emotional, psychological, behaviour or social disturbances and are not having their needs met within current programs

The purpose of such a scoping exercise is to establish the range of unmet need of students in the ACT.

• Review and develop a range of programs designed to meet the identified needs of such students with a focus on both early intervention and intensive support at all age levels.

(d) Establish and maintain resources for a range of early intervention and alternative education programs to meet the needs of students. The vast majority of these programs should be located within school settings, be in physical environments which enhance learning, and be integrated into mainstream programs wherever possible. Some programs may need to be established in new, purpose built alternative settings within the community.

(e) Provide qualified specialist teaching, executive and support staff, as appropriate, for:

- the provision of professional learning, as appropriate, to ETD staff
- early intervention and alternative education programs
- liaison and support of students and their families, including assistance with transitions between programs and student pathways.

(f) Ensure that students transferring between school stages (preschool to primary school; primary school to high school, high school to college, college to further education) and between school sectors (private to public or vice versa) are supported in the following ways:

- provision of appropriate transition and induction program for the student and their family.
- transfer of all significant information about the student to the receiving setting in a timely manner.
- sharing of relevant information about the student’s needs with staff in the receiving school, on a need-to-know basis.

(g) Establish, foster and maintain interagency collaboration to ensure coordination of government and non-government organisations to provide a holistic, full service model.