

## Press Release

### Australian Education falling behind International Rivals

#### ACDE calls for action on Federal Spending Levels

In world terms, Australia is slipping behind the pack in education, training and research, yet the future of Australia will be determined by its ability to compete with other nations in science, technology and education, according to the Australian Council of Deans of Education.

Compared with other nations in the OECD, Australia is lagging in a number of areas:

- Australian spending in education is a mere 4.3% of GDP - well below the OECD mean of 5%.
- Australia ranks a low 21st out of 28 OECD nations in educational qualifications.

In research and development, the figures are equally damning:

- Australia is 20th out of the 22 leading nations in the world in Research and Development.
- Average OECD expenditure on R & D is 1.97% of GNP but Australia's is just 1.49% of GDP.
- Commonwealth expenditure on higher education as a percentage of GDP will decrease from 0.75 in 1996 to 0.55% in 2003/4

This dumbing down of Australian Education needs to be arrested and reversed if Australia is going to be a prosperous nation.

Other nations are not waiting for the knowledge economy to arrive. The UK has set a specific target to increase its public education funding from 4.7% to 5.3% of GDP, Singapore is seeking to increase its funding to 4.5% of GDP, while even the ostensibly conservative US spends more public funds than Australia on education as a percentage of GDP. President Bush is also seeking an 11.5 % increase in the US education budget, which includes a \$375m teacher improvement fund.

Australia needs to match these targets, and aim to return direct public funding at least to OECD mean levels. Nations such as Singapore are spending \$4.5 billion to upgrade their schools system alone, and Australia needs similar commitments if we are to thrive in the knowledge economy.