

Dear Members

This is an out-of-session edition to give you some details about the Federal Budget and also to forewarn you of slight disruptions around the end of the month associated with the move of the National Office from Cook primary school into the city. Our new contact details will be posted on the website before the end of the month.

## The 2003 Federal Education Budget

As you will all know, higher education has featured prominently in this Budget—leaving no room for adult and community education. See ALA's media release on this subject ([www.ala.asn.au/news/030520.html](http://www.ala.asn.au/news/030520.html)), in which we make the point that universities are only a small part of adult learning in Australia and draw attention to the urgent need to address Australia's problems in adult literacy.

I heard Brendan Nelson speak about his reform package on Budget night. He spoke with conviction about the need for reform and to strive for excellence in the university sector. No-one could disagree with that; nor that universities need more money. However, the funding model raises serious questions for those of us concerned with equity. What a disaster for the country should university entrance be determined by ability to pay and not by ability to learn!

There are also analyses which suggest that the return from higher education to the government is as much as \$9 billion a year, (see [www1.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/iaesrwww/wp/wp2002n0.pdf](http://www1.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/iaesrwww/wp/wp2002n0.pdf) for a paper released last year by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research) a great deal more than the \$1.45 billion it will invest this year. Imagine what an injection of a tiny proportion of that would do for the ACE sector!

To get a bit more of the flavour of Dr Nelson's views on education you might like to read the transcript of his speech to the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia at [www.dest.gov.au/ministers/nelson/may\\_03/transcript\\_190503.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/nelson/may_03/transcript_190503.htm)

There are a number of sites where you can get further detail about the budget. Here are some relevant links:

- [www.dest.gov.au/at\\_a\\_glance.htm#train](http://www.dest.gov.au/at_a_glance.htm#train)
- [www.dest.gov.au/ministers/nelson/budget03/bud3\\_130503.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/nelson/budget03/bud3_130503.htm): the Minister's media release about the next ANTA agreement
- [www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au](http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au): a new site which will focus on the higher education reforms.
- [www.alp.org.au/media/0503/20004446.html](http://www.alp.org.au/media/0503/20004446.html): media release from Shadow Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Jenny Macklin
- [www.alp.org.au/media/0503/20004488.html](http://www.alp.org.au/media/0503/20004488.html): media release from Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services, Wayne Swan
- For a comprehensive look at the budget, visit [www.budget.gov.au/2003-04/index.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2003-04/index.htm)
- ACOSS's response to the budget is at [www.coss.net.au/news/acoss/1052960709\\_7476\\_acoss.jsp?subsite=acoss](http://www.coss.net.au/news/acoss/1052960709_7476_acoss.jsp?subsite=acoss)

If there are members who would like to submit reports about or links to sites covering the various state budgets, we'd love to hear from you.

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