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## **AEU MISINTERPRETS RESEARCH TO CLAIM GROWING DIVIDE IN SCHOOLS**

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Chief Executive**

In a misleading interpretation of its own research, the Australian Education Union is claiming that there is 'a growing divide in schools'.

This is another in a series of AEU statements that fall into the category of lies, damned lies and statistics.

Once again, children who go to non-government schools and their parents must put up with the socially divisive guilt trip laid on them by the AEU.

In a media release dated 13 October 2007, the AEU misinterpreted *The Social Make-Up of Schools* by Canberra researcher Barbara Preston to claim that high-income families are increasingly sending their children to private schools and low-income families are increasingly sending their children to public schools.

Specifically, the AEU draws attention to figures showing an increase in the ratio of high-income to low-income children between government and non-government primary schools between the censuses of 1996 and 2006.

In fact the research shows that the divide between the government and non-government primary school sectors has actually fallen. When primary and secondary schools are counted together there is no evidence of a growing divide on an all-schools basis between 2001 and 2006.

### ***Details***

The AEU draws attention to the increase in the ratio of high-income children to low-income children between government and non-government *primary* schools between the censuses of 1996 and 2006.

For the period 2001 to 2006 (the most recent inter-census comparison) the research shows that the 'divide' between the government and non-government primary school sectors has actually fallen.

The ratio of high-income to low-income children for government primary schools was unchanged between 2001 and 2006. But for non-government primary schools, the ratio rose from 0.50 in 2001 to 0.52 in 2006 (see Preston Table 2.3, p9). *The Social Make-Up of Schools* does not demonstrate a 'growing divide' as claimed by the AEU but rather it shows a narrowing in the AEU's preferred measure of the 'divide'.

Combining primary *and secondary* schools (the Preston Table 2.3, p9) shows that between 2001 and 2006:

- government primary school ratio was unchanged
- non-government primary school ratio moved up 0.02
- government secondary ratio rose 0.04
- non-government secondary rose 0.02.

These figures roughly cancel out each other, which means there is no evidence of a growing divide on an all-schools basis between 2001 and the new information presented by the 2006 census.

The Preston report confirms AISV figures showing that more children from well-off families attend government schools than non-government.

It shows that just over half (54%) of children from well-off families attend government school students; 26% attend Catholic schools and 21% go to other non-government schools.

The research notes that government schools have higher shares of Indigenous students and children from sole parent families. There are, however, various measures at the State and Commonwealth level for redirecting some school funding to compensate for social disadvantage as measured by low Socio-economic Status.

It should also be noted that:

- the non-government school sector has a larger share of students who are disadvantaged by coming from a non-English speaking background
- the balance of the non-government sector student population is more heavily weighted towards 'higher cost' secondary school students who are more expensive to educate than primary school students.