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The upcoming federal budget can provide vital relief and support for IEU members

Next Tuesday's federal budget is an opportunity to keep education at the centre of national policy and deliver much-needed financial relief for IEU members and their families.

The federal government has in recent years begun to address long-term underinvestment in schools and early childhood education and care (ECEC). This work must continue, backed by ambitious and sustained financial commitments and fully funded education outcomes.

Like all Australians, IEU members are facing cost-of-living pressures, compounded in many cases by [protracted wage disputes](#) with school employers. The federal budget presents a timely opportunity to support members struggling with housing affordability and surging fuel costs.

Our 2026 Federal Budget Priorities

While the budget must address many competing demands and policy challenges, several targeted federal investments would deliver immediate benefits for education workers and students.

- **Affordable housing is a basic right for all essential workers:** Teachers, support staff and ECEC professionals are often unable to [live and work in their local community](#) due to soaring rents and house prices. More action is needed as housing affordability continues to worsen.
- **Recent gains in ECEC wages must be protected:** The [ECEC Worker Retention Payment](#), which underpins higher wages for around 200,000 workers, is due to expire this year. The payments must be extended to maintain workforce stability and support high-quality early education.
- **Supporting our next generation of teachers:** Positive government reforms to support student teachers and new graduates should be expanded. [Payment rates](#) for student practicum placements should be increased, and [HELP debt relief extended](#) to teachers working in a broader range of regional and remote areas.
- **National leadership on teacher workload:** The [National Teacher Workforce Action Plan](#) is now four years old, yet workload pressures remain at crisis levels. It's time to revisit the elements of the plan focused on [reducing workload](#). Targeted investment is needed to enliven and expand these initiatives into practical measures to ease workload pressures in schools.
- **Student wellbeing and quality education must be non-negotiable in policymaking:** Policy decisions across many portfolios have the potential to affect schools and students. Reforms, such as proposed [changes to the NDIS](#), must not inadvertently add to the burden on school support services already under strain from student wellbeing needs and increasingly [complex classroom behaviours](#).