

Turnbull's schools funding plan abandons Gonski and short changes students



Malcolm Turnbull's school funding policy will hurt students by not delivering the full Gonski funding our schools need, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that today's policy announcement was a quick fix, designed to get the Coalition through an election campaign, that would leave schools more than \$3 billion short of the full six years of needs-based Gonski funding.

"Malcolm Turnbull has confirmed today he doesn't support Gonski, won't deliver Gonski and his only alternative plan is a pre-election fix which will ensure more students are left behind," Ms Haythorpe said.

"The extra funding being promised falls far short of what is needed and will see disadvantaged schools and students with fewer resources than the Gonski Review recommended," Ms Haythorpe said.

"This means that not all students will get the individual support in the classroom they need to help them succeed."

"Gonski funding is working, but we need the full six years to make sure all our schools have the resources they need.

"We are seeing results lifted through, smaller classes, extra numeracy and literacy programs and one-to-one support, and we need the full funding to make sure all students can benefit."

Ms Haythorpe said that making the States accountable for schools spending was important, but it was the Federal Government that was providing two-thirds of the extra funding under the Gonski agreements.

"The majority of States are already delivering this extra funding straight to schools, which are using it to deliver programs that help lift student results.

"Mr Turnbull's plan means that States are not required to contribute their share of Gonski funding set out in signed agreements with Victoria, NSW, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT. This means those states could spend hundreds of millions of dollars less on schools.

“We need the Federal Government to deliver its share of the last two years of Gonski. Not a compromise that will leave schools \$3 billion short.

“Malcolm Turnbull needs to match Labor’s \$4.5 billion commitment to fund Gonski in full.

“While Australia’s results on global tests have declined in the years prior to Gonski, this was during a period where funding was not based on need, and where increases favoured already advantaged schools.

“An analysis of Productivity Commission data by Save our Schools found that over the 15 years leading up to 2013/14, combined government funding per student rose by 17 per cent in real terms for public schools compared with 39 per cent for private schools.

“From 2009/10 to 2013/14 government per student funding to public schools actually fell by 3 per cent in real terms while private school funding rose by 10 per cent.

“That’s why funding on the basis of need is so important. We need the full six years of Gonski funding to address these inequities and make sure all schools have the resources they need for their students.

“Minister Birmingham’s comments that Gonski funding will be used to: “build a second or third sports shed or pretty up a school gate” shows an embarrassing ignorance of how the funding is being used, and the needs of disadvantaged schools.

“He needs to visit some of the schools which already using their funding to improve results through targeted literacy and numeracy programs, more one-to-one support for students who are struggling and professional development for teachers.

Ms Haythorpe said the Coalition’s plan to tie funding increases to other measures lacked detail and had not been discussed with the States.

“We are seeing a series of thought bubbles which fail to address the real issues.

“We have no issue with testing student literacy and numeracy when they starts school. But what happens to students who are behind? We need to have the resources in place to help students who are struggling get help as soon as they need it.

“Minister Birmingham talks about making maths and/or science compulsory for Year 12s but has nothing to say about addressing the shortages of specialist maths and science teachers.

“The “cash for grades” idea is simply a distraction, we have no detail of how it might work and there has been no consultation with State Governments who actually run schools.

“There is no international evidence this can lift results and a 2012 report from the Productivity Commission found that: “Efforts to improve teacher performance should not focus on the payment of performance bonuses. The long history of mixed results from overseas experiments with teacher bonuses suggests that an effective and widely-applicable system is unlikely to emerge in the foreseeable future.”

Authorised by Mary Franklyn, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.

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