

Time to meet the need

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Every day the capacity of our schools to do the very best by our students is compromised by a lack of resources.

The original Gonski Review recognised this: "The system as a whole must work to meet the need of all Australian children now and in the future."

Schools funding must be about meeting the needs of every learner by equipping every teacher with the tools, resources and time to do this.

Every teacher knows the importance of the right resources for providing students with a high quality education.

Teaching is more complex and demanding than ever before, yet the new federal funding model shifts resources away from public schools and towards the already over-resourced non-government sector.

The union's school funding campaign has always been about ensuring all schools have the right level of resourcing to meet the learning needs of every student, by providing every teacher with more time to plan and collaborate, quality professional development, additional learning support staff where required and extra intensive support for students in need. It is about giving schools the capacity to develop whole school programs that engage all students.

In the past four years, we have seen schools across the state start to get the resources they needed via a Gonski funding agreement between the state and federal government. But two-thirds of the money has not been delivered, despite a formal Commonwealth-NSW agreement.

That funding was due to

increase significantly in the next two years to help all schools in our system move closer to a national Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) — a standard that was created by the original Gonski panel as an objective measure to indicate how much funding each school required to meet the needs of all of its students.

Unfortunately, the Turnbull Government cut the funding and unilaterally tore up the agreement.

The Turnbull plan will only deliver 20 per cent of what is required for public schools to meet the national SRS. For private schools, the Turnbull Government will deliver 80 per cent of the funding towards this standard. This is now enshrined in law, passed in June this year.

As an example of what will happen under the Turnbull plan, Trinity Grammar will get a \$28 million increase over 10 years compared with \$4 million for Blacktown Boys High School.

Even with state government funding taken into account, all public schools in NSW will be below the resource standard in 2023 and, therefore, under resourced.

Teachers will not be provided with what they need to do their work and students' learning needs will not be met.

Students with disability is an area with a history of inadequate funding to meet the needs of students. Schools have been participating in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data, which is an annual census. Teachers categorise and measure the support provided to students with disability. This data has

KEY FACTS: BIRMINGHAM-TURNBULL FUNDING PLAN

- Cuts \$1.5 billion from NSW public schools over the next four years.
- Ends the cooperative funding arrangements between the states and the Commonwealth.
- Introduces a flat indexation rate that means funding is not determined by student need.
- The original Gonski plan intended for all schools to have funding lifted in order to reach a minimum resource level by 2019 so the needs of all children could be met. This is the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).
- The Federal Government's funding commitment as a proportion of the SRS will deliver 80 per cent to private schools and only 20 per cent to public schools.
- Less than 50 per cent of the additional funding over the 10 years will now go to public schools, compared with the NSW-Commonwealth agreement where our schools were due to receive more than 80 per cent.
- Plan locks in under-resourcing of public schools for at least 10 years.
- By 2027, across Australia, 84 per cent of public schools would be receiving less than the 95 per cent of the SRS.
- Currently, 17 per cent of private schools are above the SRS. But, under the Turnbull plan, that would jump to 64.7 per cent of private schools receiving more than 100 per cent of the SRS by 2027.

exposed the huge difference between the number of students with disability that schools currently are funded to support and the number they actually have.

While the Federal Government has committed to using the data from next year, it has failed to provide the needed funding to meet the needs of students with disability. Next year, the number of students identified will increase from 212,000 to 470,000, an increase of 122 per cent. However, funding will only rise by 6.2 per cent or \$368 per student on average.

Our campaign will continue until all public schools are funded to at least the national Schooling Resource Standard so that all teachers have what is needed to deliver a high quality education to every child.

The next election is critical. Already Labor has said it will reverse the Turnbull cuts. We want all sides of politics to commit to getting all schools to the national Schooling Resource Standard.

We need all teachers to get involved in the next phase of the campaign that will be launched early in 2018 — to talk to parents, caregivers and community members so that we can ensure every public school is properly resourced. While significant progress has been made in the past four years, we must keep going now and finish the job.

The needs of all students and their teachers must be met.