Broken promise on school disability funding a betrayal of students



Thousands of children with disability will be left without funded support at school after the Federal Government's failure to deliver a promised increase in resources to schools in 2016.

Education Minister Simon Birmingham has failed to explain how the funding will be delivered, and last week's meeting of State and Territory Education Ministers failed to address the issue.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said media reports today had revealed data presented to Education Ministers last week showed that schools had no funding to assist more than half the students with disability who need additional support.

"We know that there is huge unmet need in the system, we need Education Minister Simon Birmingham to show leadership and deliver the promised funding," Ms Haythorpe said.

"Despite five years of data collection and repeated promises by the Federal Government that extra funding would go to schools from 2016, we are no closer to getting the extra resources that schools desperately need.

"These continued delays are hurting some of the most vulnerable students in Australia and preventing them from getting the education they need

"The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for disability for 2015 data found that 12.5 per cent of students need "supplementary, substantial or extensive support" – compared with only 5.3 per cent of students currently getting funded support.

"This finding is backed by data collection from previous years, and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. How much more evidence do we need of the huge unmet need in disability education before governments act?

"We don't have a lack of data, we have a lack of political will to ensure students with disability can get the education they deserve.

"Properly funding students with disability is a key part of the Gonski reforms and is critical for ensuring that schools can

meet the needs of all their students.

“That’s why a ‘disability loading’ to deliver schools the resources they needed for disability, and meet unmet need in the system, was a recommendation of the Gonski Review, and was bi-partisan policy at the 2013 Federal Election.

Former Education Minister Christopher Pyne said in June this year that, from 2016:

“Every child in Australia with disability will be able to receive the correct loading, as they should, to match their disability”

“Minister Birmingham has also stated that funding from 2016 will be informed by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on disability (NCCD), which has now been completed.

“We need to know what has happened to that promise and how students with disability are to be funded next year.

“Educators and parents know that the resources available to schools for disability do not go close to meeting the needs of students.

“This represents a broken promise by the Federal Government, and a failure by State Governments to hold them accountable, despite the levels of unmet need in their school systems.

“There are thousands of passionate and dedicated teachers making a difference to students with disability – they need to be backed with the resources they need.

“Things like in-class support, equipment and individualised learning plans can make huge difference for students with disability and their ability to benefit from school.

“Every year that we delay is another year that students with disability miss out on opportunities at school.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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