We need Gonski resources to continue progress in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education



Improving Year 12 retention rates and literacy results for Indigenous students outlined in today's Closing the Gap report are promising, but schools need more resources to address their needs, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that despite some positive news, the gaps in results for Indigenous students remained a matter of national concern and required the full six years of Gonski funding.

"The Closing the Gap report confirms that Indigenous students are still behind the rest of Australia in results, something which we need to address through resourcing schools," Ms Haythorpe said.

"The Turnbull Government's decision not to fund the last two years of the Gonski agreements will cost schools $4.5 billion and deny resources to the disadvantaged schools which educate the majority of Indigenous students.

"They have no plan to address need beyond 2017 and we still do not know how funding will be distributed to schools – only that there will be no increase beyond inflation. This means that no public school will be funded according to the needs of its students.

"Gonski funding includes an extra loading for Indigenous students, because it recognises the extra needs they have and the importance of education in addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

"In States which are delivering Gonski funding it is already making a difference through things like engagement programs, one-on-one support for Aboriginal students and literacy and numeracy programs.

"Many schools are also using Gonski to help them build links to local Indigenous communities and better involve parents in their children's education.

"Lifting Indigenous education is a long-term challenge and we need the full six years of Gonski funding to build on the great things these schools are doing.

“Today’s report highlights recent progress, but also the need for greater investment to close the gaps in results between Indigenous students and the rest of the nation.

“School attendance rates for Indigenous students were ten percentage points lower for Indigenous students (83 per cent versus 93 per cent), with bigger gaps in remote areas.

“The Turnbull Government has admitted its Remote Area Attendance Strategy is not working but has no alternatives to lifting attendance, just a plan to cuts schools funding.

“While Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent retention rates have risen from 45.4 per cent in 2008 to 58.5 per cent in 2012/13 there is still a 28 percentage point gap between them and the rest of Australia.

“Results in literacy and numeracy have risen in 2015, but the report warns that results can vary from year-to-year.

“Addressing Indigenous disadvantage is complex, but education must be at the heart of any long-term effort to close the gap.

“That is why it is still a concern that WA and the NT – two jurisdictions with high numbers of Indigenous students – have failed to pass on Gonski funding to schools.

“If Malcolm Turnbull is serious about addressing Indigenous disadvantage he needs to commit to the full six years of Gonski funding which will lift results for Indigenous students.

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