New figures show that government funding has massively favoured private schools



Media Release - Save Our Schools

Updated school funding figures published today by Save Our Schools show that government funding per student in private schools has far outstripped that for public schools over the past 15 years. SOS National Convenor, Trevor Cobbold, said that increases in government funding for many elite private schools has far exceeded that for many disadvantaged public schools.

“The new figures show that Australia has an incoherent and unfair school funding system. Past government funding increases have been woefully misdirected to favour more advantaged students over disadvantaged students.

“There can be little wonder that Australia has failed to improve the results of disadvantaged students or to reduce the large achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students over the past 15 years. Public schools bear the very large burden of disadvantage but received less than half the funding increase provided to private schools.

“Between 1998-99 and 2013-14, government funding (Commonwealth and state/territory) per private school student, adjusted for inflation, increased, by 39% compared with only 17% for public schools. More recently, real funding for public schools actually decreased while funding for private schools continued to increase. Between 2009-10 and 2013-14, public school funding per student fell by 3% while private school funding increased by 10%.

“Other figures drawn from the My School website show even more perverse funding patterns, with government funding per student for many high fee, exclusive private schools in Victoria and NSW increasing by several times more than for many highly disadvantaged schools.

“In Victoria between 2009 and 2013, the average funding increase per student for 16 selected elite private schools was 25% compared with 3% for 17 disadvantaged public schools. Six disadvantaged schools had their funding cut.

“For example, government funding for Korowa Anglican Girls School, with 83% of students from the highest socio-educational advantage (SEA) quartile and 1% from the lowest quartile, increased by 38%. In contrast, funding for Northern

Bay P-12 College in Geelong, with 73% of students from the lowest SEA quartile and 1% from the highest quartile, had its funding cut by 18%.

“In NSW, the average funding increase per student for 14 selected elite private schools was 23% compared with 11% for 15 disadvantaged schools. One disadvantaged school had its funding cut.

“For example, government funding for Ravenswood Girls School, with 85% of students from the highest SEA quartile and none from the lowest quartile, increased by 28% while funding for Punchbowl Boys HS, with 63% of students in the lowest SEA quartile and only 2% in the highest quartile, had its funding cut by 3%.

Mr. Cobbold said that the incoherent and unfair funding system is set to continue because the Turnbull Government has refused to fund the last two years of the Gonski plan which would have seen an extra $5.8 billion delivered to public schools.

“Continuation of this unfair funding system will incur major social and economic costs because of the failure address disadvantage in education. It severely limits the life prospects of hundreds of thousands of students, it harms the economy, and it weakens the social fabric of Australian society.

“A bi-partisan commitment to a national school funding plan directed at reducing disadvantage in education is desperately needed. A high performing education system with minimum levels of disadvantage means a high performing economy.”

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