Gonski needed to help the one-in-three disadvantaged students not ready for school

New research has found one-in-five students arrives at school not ready to learn, rising to one-in-three from disadvantaged backgrounds, showing the need for Gonski funding to increase resources in schools, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the Australian Early Development Census had found strong links between social disadvantage and children not being ready to learn when they started school.

“This report shows that 22 per cent of children were vulnerable in one area of their development when they started school,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Between 2009 and 2015 the gap between the number of children in disadvantaged areas who were vulnerable to developmental problems widened, compared to those from the least disadvantaged areas.”

The report found that:

- Children living in the most disadvantaged communities have a 33 per cent chance of being developmentally vulnerable, while those in the least disadvantaged communities had only a 16 per cent chance.
- In 2009, disadvantaged children were 2.9 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable in language and cognitive skills, but by 2015 they were 4.1 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable.
- In 2015, 42 per cent of Indigenous students were not developmentally ready for school.“Gonski funding is designed to direct resources straight to the schools which educate these students, making sure they get the support they need to benefit from school,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“If Malcolm Turnbull does not match Labor’s commitment to fund the full six years of the Gonski agreements, and invest an extra $4.5 billion in our schools in 2018 and 2019,then these schools will not get the funding they need to properly support these students.

“All students should be able to get help at school if they need it, and it is clear that students in disadvantaged areas are more likely to require more support from the moment they begin school if they are to succeed,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Many children struggle in some areas where they start school but increased resources for schools can help these children by giving them the one-to-one support and other programs they need before they fall too far behind their peers.”

“Gonski funding is already allowing schools to deliver things like speech pathology, targeted literacy and numeracy support and behavioural programs to help these children.

“Education Minister Simon Birmingham admits that there are stark differences in the performance of students based on their socio-economic background, yet is not supporting the Gonski funding which would target resources straight to the schools which educate those students.

“The AEDC data backs other research showing that 1-in-5 Australian children arrives at school not ready to learn. These children need extra support if they are to catch up.

“Research from the Mitchell Institute last year found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are not ready to learn when they start school have only a 1-in-3 chance of catching up by Year 7.

“Only 40 per cent of students from the most disadvantaged households complete Year 12, and they are less likely to go on to further education or find employment.

“It is not in Australia’s interests to have students leave school without the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need for work.

“Needs-based Gonski funding is our chance to make sure all students get the help they need at school.

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