Minister Birmingham still can't explain his schools cuts or future funding plan



Today's Senate Estimates hearing has once again shown that Education Minister Simon Birmingham cannot explain his funding plan, which will cut $3.9 billion in Gonski funding from schools, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said states and territories needed to stand firm against the plan to scrap Gonski after 2017, and to redistribute funding between states.

"Minister Birmingham wants states and territories to agree to a new funding deal early next year, but has again refused to give basic details of how much each state will lose under his new model.

"None of the 'analysis' of funding arrangements he is talking about has been shared with states or the public.

"The Coalition's funding plan, as outlined in the Federal Budget, will still see schools $3.9 billion worse off in 2018 and 2019 alone.

"It will still see 62 per cent of federal funding increases distributed to private schools, whose needs are far less than public systems.

"Minister Birmingham has again refused to say how much individual states will lose under his 'redistribution' of funding after 2017.

"Despite the Federal Government's own Budget Papers showing a cut to funding to public schools in the NT and Tasmania after 2017, Minister Birmingham could not explain how these schools are to be funded.

"All that Minister Birmingham can say is that these cuts are 'indicative only' and are 'not the starting points for discussions' with the states.

"How is it possible for him to walk away from his own Budget Papers without telling us what his alternative funding model is?

"It is no wonder the majority of states and territories have said they do not support the federal government's plan to cut schools funding after 2017.

“Pitting one state against another will do nothing to lift results in schools – what is needed is to lift our overall investment in schools and target the extra funds to addressing disadvantage.

“As Estimates has shown, public schools in every state are still below the Schooling Resource Standard the Gonski Review recommended. Shifting money from one system to another will not fix this.

“Ending Gonski will take money from the most disadvantaged schools, which are already using it to lift results for their students.

“It would mean many schools would never get the resources they need for their students.

“Minister Birmingham still can’t say how he would prevent cost-shifting and guarantee that states and territories pass their Gonski funding on to schools.

“Coalition governments in the NT and Western Australia have been allowed to cut their own funding, and the Federal Government must ensure this cannot happen again.

“Minister Birmingham has indicated today that data from the 2015 Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Disability (NCCD) is close to release.

“This data will be vital in demonstrating the real level of unfunded need for disability in our schools.

“We will welcome the release of this important data, but it must be accompanied by funding so that all students with disability can get the support at school which matches their need.”

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