Analysis shows no big increases in schools funding pre-Gonski



A new analysis by Save Our Schools has busted the myth that Australian schools have had major increases in funding in recent years.

It also backs previous findings that private schools received far bigger increases than public schools in the years leading up to the Gonski funding reforms, worsening the imbalance in resources between schools.

The analysis shows that, despite claims of rapid funding increases from Education Minister Simon Birmingham, school received moderate growth in per student funding once inflation is taken into account.

The Save our Schools analysis found that Minister Birmingham's claim that schools funding had grown by 50 per cent since 2003 was deceptive.

SOS convenor Trevor Cobbold said that once combined state and federal funding was taken into account, the increase in TOTAL government funding for the nine years from 2004-05 to 2013-14 was only 4.5%.

That's only 0.5% per year. Translated into dollars it means just $472 per student for the whole period, or a miniscule $52 a year.

But the funding was not distributed evenly or fairly due to pre-Gonski funding models which focused on sector rather than need.

Total government funding per student in private schools, adjusted for inflation, increased by three times more than for public schools - 9.8% compared to only 3.3%.

While the mix of federal and state government funding may have changed over this period , this is hardly a concern to educators and parents, who pay taxes to both levels of government and expect them to work together to provide resources to schools.

This issue is also addressed by the Gonski agreements, which require states and territories to provide one-third of the extra resources our schools need while the Federal Government provides the remaining two-thirds.

Mr Cobbold said the analysis disproved claims that funding increases would not lift school performance, saying that the

more equitable Gonski funding model gave Australia its best chance to lift school performance.

Australia's decline in PISA scores has largely occurred during this period when schools funding was distributed inequitably.

"OECD studies show that targeting funding increases to disadvantaged schools and students is fundamental to improving student achievement," Mr Cobbold said.

"Inadequate funding is a major factor behind the failure to improve the results of disadvantaged students in Australia and reduce the large achievement gaps.

Despite the drop in PISA scores between 2000 and 2015, the Australian school system has had some major achievements.

OECD data shows that only 68% of 24-34 year-olds in Australia had attained an upper secondary education in 2000, which was the fifth lowest in the OECD.

By 2015, this had increased by 20 percentage points and was the largest increase in the OECD except for Portugal and Turkey.

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