AEU survey of principals shows Gonski making a difference



Students who struggle with literacy and numeracy, or who have a disability or learning difficulty, will suffer the most if Malcolm Turnbull scraps Gonski funding after 2017, an AEU survey of principals has found.

The AEU's State of Our Schools survey for 2017 found that 90 per cent of principals whose schools received Gonski funding reported it was making a 'significant difference' to their schools.

However only 19 per cent said the funding received so far was enough to meet the needs of all their students – and were concerned many students would continue to miss out if funding was stopped.

The survey results are being released in Canberra today as part of the arrival at Parliament House of the two 'Gonski Buses' which have spent the last three weeks visiting schools and communities across Australia.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe will lead a delegation of principals and teachers at Parliament House to highlight the importance of Gonski funding.

Ms Haythorpe said the findings were proof Gonski needs-based funding was making a difference, but that schools needed the full six years of Gonski funding to support their students.

"Gonski funding is turning lives around and lifting results for students across Australia. We need the full six years of funding through to 2019 so every child who needs help at school can get it.

"The only reason Malcolm Turnbull ignores the evidence Gonski is working is because he does not care about students who have the greatest needs in our schools.

"His plan to stop Gonski at the end of this year will cost schools $3.8 billion in extra resources which are due to be delivered through the Gonski agreements.

"Malcolm Turnbull needs to tell us which students he wants to miss out on support at school."

When the State of Our Schools survey asked public school principals which groups of students would miss out if Gonski funding was not continued in 2018 and 2019 they said:

- Students who have fallen behind in literacy and/or numeracy (84% of principals named this group)
- Students with a disability or learning difficulties (62% named this group)
- Students who are disengaged or at risk of dropping out of school (43% named this group)
- Students who need specialist support (27% named this group)
- Gifted and Talented students (24% named this group)

The survey, of 1428 principals across Australia, also found high class sizes, growing staff shortages in schools across Australia, and principals having difficulty filling maths, science and technology teaching positions.

Key findings include:

- 67% of schools are receiving Gonski funding directly and 90% of those principals say it is making a significant difference. This figure rises to 94% of principals whose schools receive more than $200,000 in additional funding.
- Only 19% of principals whose schools have received Gonski funding say it is enough to meet their needs.
- The three main uses for Gonski funding are: extra student support staff, 54%, professional development for teachers, 51%, and extra specialist literacy and numeracy teachers or coaches, 47%.
- 46% of principals say their schools are under-resourced or significantly under-resourced, while only 12 per cent say they are adequately-resourced.
- 33% of classes are of 26 or more students, a slight increase on 32% in 2016.
- A growing number of principals say their schools are suffering from staff shortages, a total of 51%, up from 37% in the 2016 survey.
- 58% of principals say it is becoming harder to fill vacancies, while only 1 per cent say it is becoming easier. This is up from 48% in the 2016 survey.
- Principals report the top three areas that are hardest to staff are: maths 59%, science 41%, technology 35%

“It is clear that a lack of resources, and shortages of staff, remain major issues for schools, ” Ms Haythorpe said.

“We are seeing schools doing fantastic things with the Gonski funding they have received so far, but about two thirds of the extra funding schools need is to be delivered in 2018 and 2019.

“Schools still don’t know how they will be funded after this year, because Malcolm Turnbull will not release any details of his proposed funding model.

“No state or territory government supports cuts to Gonski, and Malcolm Turnbull needs to listen to them and give our schools the resources they need.

“Anything less is failing our students.”

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