Survey shows public schools depend on fundraising and teacher contributions for basics

Australia's public schools are increasingly reliant on fundraising for everything from literacy and numeracy teachers to library books and computers, and teachers are dipping into their own pockets to provide students with the basics, an AEU survey of educators has found.

The AEU's State of Our Schools survey for 2017 has found that 83% of schools use fundraising to add to their budgets, and that 90% of principals who fundraise describe it as 'important' or 'very important'. It also found that half of all public school teachers spend more than $500 of their own money each year on classroom basics.

"This survey is more evidence that our public schools, which educate the majority of students, are relying on the efforts of parents and teachers due to a lack of needs-based funding," Ms Haythorpe said.

"Reliance on fundraising and teacher contributions for essentials shows our public schools are not getting the support they need.

"Teachers and principals should be spending all their time on the education of their students, not working out how many barbeques they need to organise and run to pay for a literacy and numeracy program.

"Teachers are aware of the shortages of resources in their schools, and it is a major concern they feel that they need to pay for basic resources which should be available to all students as a matter of course.

The survey showed that fundraising was being used for school essentials: with 50% of schools using it for computer hardware or software, 45% for sports equipment, 43% for library resources or textbooks and 26% of schools for basic maintenance on school infrastructure.

Teachers were most likely to spend their own money on stationery (78%), classroom supplies (75%) and library resources (43%).

“Gonski funding is beginning to make a difference, and we are seeing schools doing fantastic things with the extra resources they have received so far, but about two-thirds of the extra funding schools need is due to be delivered in 2018 and 2019,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“We need this funding to close the gaps between schools, so that students at every school can get the support they need, when they need it.

“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.

“All we know is that he is denying schools $3.8 billion in extra resources contained in the Gonski agreements.”

Key findings of the survey, which was completed by 1428 principals and 7513 teachers, include:

- 83% of schools engage in fundraising, and 90% of those say it is ‘important’ or ‘very important’ for their annual budgets.
- 65% of teachers said their school was under-resourced, while only 5% said it was well-resourced.
- 95% of teachers spend their own money on school supplies, with 50% spending more than $500 each year and 10% spending over $2000.
- More than half of full-time teachers work over 50 hours per week on school-related activities, while 29% work over 55 hours per week.
- 75 per cent of teachers believe their workload is increasing.

“Lack of resources in schools has a major effect on students and, when combined with increasing workloads, it is a key factor in teachers leaving the profession,” Ms Haythorpe said.

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