Skewed funding shows need for full Gonski



A new analysis of My School funding data has shown the importance of Gonski needs-based funding to fix a broken system which saw government funding to private schools rise more than twice as fast as public schools from 2009 to 2015.

The analysis, by funding expert Bernie Shepherd, shows combined state and federal government funding to independent schools rose by 38.7%, funding to Catholic schools rose by 35.6%, while funding to public schools rose by just 17.6%.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said Australia's most disadvantaged students had been let down by a skewed system that saw their schools miss out on vital resources.

"In the years leading up to Gonski we were not funding schools on the basis of need. We had a flawed and inefficient funding system which was delivering the biggest gains to private schools," Ms Haythorpe said.

"By 2015, less than 10 per cent of the increased funding contained in the Gonski agreements had been delivered to schools."

"While this funding has made a difference to disadvantaged students, and has been used to lift results, it is simply not enough to overcome years of flawed, sector-based funding.

"Gonski is delivering smaller classes, literacy and numeracy programs and extra support for students who need it, but the funding so far has not been enough to cover every student that needs it.

"Malcolm Turnbull must abandon his plan to end Gonski funding after 2017, and honour the agreements in full.

"If he does not he will be denying vital resources to the students who need it the most. Without Gonski, gaps in resources and achievement between schools will continue to grow.

"80 per cent of additional funding in the last two years of the agreements, 2018 and 2019, would go to public schools.

"Malcolm Turnbull needs to work with the states to deliver resources to schools, not cuts.

"We do not need arguments about which level of government should contribute to schools, we need the federal government to honour signed agreements which run until 2019."

The analysis, of the most recent My School funding data, shows that between 2009 and 2015 total combined State and Federal Government recurrent funding rose by:

- 38.7% for Independent schools (from $6304 per student to $8743)
- 35.6% for Catholic schools (from $7725 per student to $10,479)
- 17.6% for public schools (from $10554 per student to $12,416)

This has further widened the gap between the sectors and led to a situation where Independent and Catholic schools have more resources than public schools despite educating fewer disadvantaged students.

In 2015 the average amount of recurrent funding for each sector – including income from fees, investments and parent contributions was:

- $18,444 per student for Independent schools, a 34.5% increase since 2009.
- $13,321 per student for Catholic schools, a 36.9% increase since 2009.
- $13,140 per student for public schools, an 18.1% increase since 2009.

Public schools have 30.2% of their students coming from the lowest SES quartile, compared to Catholic schools with 14.4%, and independent schools with 8.9%.

Public schools also educate a higher proportion of students in remote areas, and with disability.

“This is why a needs-based funding system is essential, to ensure that all schools have the resources they need for their students,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“We know that disadvantaged students are three years behind their advantaged peers by the time they get to Year 9. Unless we invest in the schools which educate these students we won’t turn around the performance of our school system.

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