Turnbull's Gonski chaos will short change students

Malcolm Turnbull's latest policy on schools funding will leave schools with billions of dollars of resources less than they need, and is no substitute for honouring the six-year Gonski agreements in full, the AEU said today.

AEU Victoria Branch President Meredith Peace said that under the new plan many schools would never reach the minimum resource standard outlined in the Gonski agreements.

"We are seeing a continuation of this government's shambolic approach to schools funding, with an announcement of another review and a ten-year timeline for a new schools funding system," Ms Peace said.

"Schools can't wait ten years for the resources their students need. A student in Year 4 today will have left school by the time this funding is delivered.

"If Malcolm Turnbull can afford to give companies a $50 billion tax cut, he can afford to give students the support they need to succeed at school.

"The overall amount of extra funding going to schools over the next four school years is an extra $2 billion, where $3.8 billion is required in 2018 and 2019 alone to deliver the full six years of the Gonski agreements.

"There is already a plan to lift all schools to the minimum resource standard – the six year Gonski agreements signed with states in 2013, and Malcolm Turnbull needs to honour them.

"Under the Gonski agreements, 80 per cent of extra funding in 2018 and 2019 is to go to public schools, which have the highest needs. Under Malcolm Turnbull's new model public schools are to get less than half of the extra funding.

"Malcolm Turnbull has effectively abandoned the most disadvantaged schools and their students.

"Faced with united opposition from the states and territories, Malcolm Turnbull has put off making a new deal with them until next year.

"No state government has been consulted about this plan or knows how its schools will be funded in 2018.

"The second Gonski Review will not examine the crucial issue of how much extra funding is needed to ensure that all schools have the resources they need for their students.

"Malcolm Turnbull doesn't want it to look at this issue, because he knows his level of spending won't be enough to give all schools the resources they need.

"How can the system Malcolm Turnbull wants be needs-based when he wants to provide 20% of the Schooling Resource Standard for public schools yet 80% of the SRS for private schools?"

“The 20% and 80% figures appear to be have plucked from the air, with no educational justification, or consideration for how much funding these schools are receiving from state governments.

“It marks a step away from the principle of state and federal governments working together to ensure every student attends a properly-resourced school.

“If the Federal Government is to provide only 20% of the SRS to public schools – what happens to schools in the Northern Territory which have high needs and are already receiving 23% of the SRS from the Federal Government?

There are also major concerns about the plan to change indexation of the SRS beyond 2021 to a rate which ‘reflects real cost growth into the future’. This is something which could be used to slow school funding increases.

David Gonski said today that many schools are doing great things with the Gonski resources they have already received.

“He is right. Where Gonski funding is being delivered we are seeing students’ lives turned around because they are getting the help they need, when they need it.

“Students are getting more support through smaller classes, extra literacy and numeracy programs and more one-to-one support.

“We need this funding to continue as planned in 2018 and 2019, not a desperate attempt at policy on the run from Malcolm Turnbull.”

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Further updates

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