Federal Schools' Funding: The Turnbull Plan



by Pat Byrne, President SSTUWA

The model adopted by the federal government is neither needs based nor sector blind, despite what the federal government says. In fact, the arbitrary nature of the 80:20 split between federal and state government contributions means a specific allocation to the private sector, irrespective of student need or the wealth of individual schools.

The final version means that there will be less money available nationally than would have been the case under the original provisions of the Australian Education Act – the 3.56 per cent indexation rate is lower than the current rate.

1. The 80:20 split is irrespective of need and certainly not sector blind – it is actually sector specific. Currently Catholic schools receive 78.7 per cent of their funding from the federal government, independent schools receive 74.2 per cent and public schools receive 17 per cent of their funding from the federal government. The new model will see Catholic and independent schools receiving 80 per cent of their funding from the federal government – hence the reports of large increases to already wealthy schools. Public school federal funding will increase from 17 per cent to 20 per cent, with no individual schools receiving anything like the increases going to some independent schools.
2. State funding to private schools is already greater than 20 per cent of their schooling resource standard (SRS); this means that private schools will be funded at, or greater than, their SRS.
3. States are required to provide a minimum of 75 per cent of the required contribution, meaning that, in reality, public schools will only be required to be funded at 95 per cent of their SRS. No provision has been made for public schools to be required to be funded beyond that – it is up to state governments to decide.
4. If states fail to provide the minimum of 75 per cent of the required contribution they will be penalised, by a reduction in federal funding. Therefore children in public schools will be further disadvantaged.
5. By 2023, 65 per cent of private schools will be receiving more than their SRS in funding; 84 per cent of public schools will be receiving less than their SRS.
6. There is no serious effort to reduce over funding – the current discussion concerns approximately 25 elite schools. Less than one per cent of private schools will have annual funding decreases over the next 10 years.
7. There are 255,000 additional students with disabilities (SWD) requiring funding assistance, an increase of 122 per cent. This funding package provides an extra $95 million for these students – an additional 6.2 per cent. Public schools in SA, WA, Tasmania, NT and ACT will see cuts to SWD funding.
8. Special arrangements have already been made for:

- Catholic schools – will have funding maintained for one year while negotiations occur. They are seeking an additional $1.1 billion in federal funding.
- ACT private schools – funding will also be maintained as it already funds its schools to the SRS.
- An additional $20 million to be given to Tasmania for SWD – $2 million per year for 10 years, as promised to Jackie Lambie.
- Transition arrangements for approximately 300 overfunded schools, half of which are NT public schools.
- Assistance to NT of $78 million – which covers a major flaw in the model that sees the NT massively underfunded

under this plan.

The establishment of a National Schooling Resource Board to monitor the model and assess compliance is a positive step. This was recommended in the original Gonski report but never implemented.

The Board will review socioeconomic status score methodologies as well as SWD loadings. There will be representatives from government, the Education Council (ministers of education), the Catholic sector and the independent sector.

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