Federal cuts will magnify existing disadvantage for rural, regional and remote public schools, submission finds



A significant shortfall of Federal funding for public schools will magnify the stark disadvantages and under-resourcing that already disproportionately threaten regional, rural and remote public schools around Australia, a submission to a government education inquiry has found.

The Australian Education Union has detailed the risks of Turnbull's school funding plan in a submission to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education, which will report to the Federal Government by the end of the year.

'The Turnbull plan already concentrates funding shortfalls among public schools. What this submission shows is a Federal Government prepared to heighten that impact for country children, 70 per cent of whom are enrolled in government schools,' said Correna Haythorpe, Federal President of the Australian Education Union, today.

Schools in regional, rural and remote areas already face learning challenges compared to their metropolitan peers on NAPLAN. International measures of learning progress such as PISA tell a similar concerning story, with 2015 results revealing a two-year gap in maths literacy between metropolitan and remote students. Differences in learning achievement attributable to the disadvantages of location can be found across a range of year levels and learning areas.

'Like the Federal Government's unjustifiable decision to cap its funding of government schools to just 20 per cent of the school resourcing standard, as it funds private schools at 80 per cent, there can be no reasonable excuse to further discriminate against public schools that happen to be located in regional, rural and remote areas,' Haythorpe said.

'The Turnbull Government's low-ambition, low-growth trajectory for public school funding will fall most heavily on country children. More broadly, many public schools will remain below the school resourcing standard, and an increasing proportion of wealthy private schools above it, even after ten years.

'Already struggling with challenges around distance, facilities, teacher retention, support services and professional development, rural, regional and remote schools will now have to contend with inadequate funding for longer, and children will bear the brunt.

'If the Federal Government disputes these realities, it should release comprehensive figures for projected Federal funding

that can be directly compared with funding that would have been made available had it honoured the original State and Territory agreements, instead of rejecting them as part of its flawed Gonski 2.0 rebranding,' Haythorpe said.

The submission calls for public schools to be funded at 100 per cent of the school resourcing standard, increasing the proportion of Federal funding to public schools to reflect the Federal Government's greater revenue-raising capacity, and the immediate reversal of cuts to disability services across public schools in five states and territories.

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