Abbott Government must act now to fully fund students with disability

Media reports today revealing huge differences in government funding for students with disability at different schools show the need for the implementation of full Gonski funding to meet the urgent need in disability education.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said students with disability were hugely underfunded in Australia and the inequities in funding revealed today – with some wealthy schools receiving over $40,000 for every student with disability - were further evidence of a failing system.

“These figures clearly show that if the Abbott Government does not commit to the full six year funding of the Gonski education reforms, with their goal of bringing all schools to a minimum resource standard, we will be left with an even more inequitable system than we have now,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“It is not acceptable that schools are given different amounts for educating students with disabilities, funding should be on the basis of need, as recommended by the Gonski Review.

“It adds to the concern we already have that at least 100,000 students with disability are not receiving funding support because the Abbott Government failed to implement its promise to fully fund disability through a needs-based loading in 2015.

“The current system vastly underfunds the real needs of students with disability, leaving them with a school system that does not let them reach their potential.

“We do not know the full number of students with disability who are not getting funding, or those who are getting less than required to meet their needs. These students have the right to an education that lets them reach their potential.

“Failing to invest in educating students with disability will lead to massive social costs in the future.

“We have had enough of excuses and inaction from the Abbott Government and their inability to fix this crucial issue.

“The Abbott Government made an election promise in 2013 to increase the ‘disability loading’ paid to schools from 2015. However no money was put aside in last year’s budget and a meeting of State and Territory Education Ministers in November last year confirmed this will not happen until 2016 at the earliest.

“We will know on Budget Night this year whether the Abbott Government is serious about supporting students with disability or whether it will disappoint them again.

“States and Territories also need to take responsibility and put pressure on the Abbott Government to honour the full six years of Gonski reforms, including a disability loading that reflects the actual cost of educating students with disability.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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