Where is Pyne's plan for the future of our school system?

Today's Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) report predicting booming demand for schools and shortages of specialist teachers has exposed Education Minister Christopher Pyne's lack of a plan to improve Australian schools, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that Minister Pyne was failing on Gonski funding, failing on improving teacher training and failing to deliver for students with disability.

"Today's ACER report predicts a boom in demand for schools and specialist teachers over the next decade and means it is more important than ever for the Abbott Government to deliver the final two years of the Gonski funding reforms," Ms Haythorpe said.

"We need to make sure that all schools meet the minimum resource standards recommended by Gonski, and that will only happen with the full six years of needs-based Gonski funding.

"It is also time for the Federal Government to implement the Gonski recommendation that they provide capital funding for public schools to help State Governments deal with this growing demand.

"The ACER report also warns us that we face acute shortages of specialist teachers – in crucial areas like maths, science and languages – over the next decade.

"So where is the workforce planning to ensure all secondary students are taught every subject by a qualified teacher?

"We need to do more to train and retain specialist teachers. The current situation where 40 per cent of Years 7 to 10 maths classes are taught by non-specialists is not acceptable.

"The ACER report warns that existing shortages of specialist teachers in secondary schools will get worse and that even more children will end up being taught by 'out-of-field' teachers over the next ten years.

"Instead of addressing these issues, Minister Pyne has launched another attack on teachers today, claiming that it is "a crime" that some teachers have poor literacy and numeracy skills.

"This is an overblown and unfair attack, and it comes from a Minister who has no plan to lift academic standards for entry to teaching courses.

"Last month Minister Pyne released his response to the TEMAG review of teacher training, which had no measures to lift the ATAR scores of teaching students or impose minimum entry standards for courses.

"Minister Pyne even said that people could become good teachers "regardless of ATAR scores", a statement contradicted by research prepared by ACER for the TEMAG review.An affiliate of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and Education International (EI)

"Academic ability is important for teachers, and we need to address the drop in entry standards and ensure we are recruiting the best students for teaching courses.

"Minister Pyne is also failing to deliver the funding required for schools to educate students with disability, by failing to keep his election promise to introduce a "disability loading" from 2015.

"As a result we still have more than 100,000 students with disability whose schools are receiving no extra funding for their needs.

"Minister Pyne spoke last night about the issues faced by students with dyslexia, yet he has consistently refused to increase resources for schools to deal with increasing numbers of students with disability and learning difficulties."

“He said that one-in-ten students has some form of dyslexia, but he knows that only one child in twenty is funded for any kind of disability.

“He is happy to attack teachers, but has no positive agenda to deliver more resources to disadvantaged schools, improve entry standards for teaching courses, address shortages of specialist teachers, or address the chronic underfunding of disability in schools.”

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