Pyne 's broken promise on disability funding



Education Minister Christopher Pyne needs to face up to his Government’s broken promise on disability funding, and take the lead in addressing the huge levels of unmet need in the education system, the AEU said today.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that rather than denying there is a problem, Minister Pyne should listen to the teachers and parents who are at the frontline of the system every day, and who could tell him of the huge shortfall in resources.

“The AEU’s State of Our Schools survey found that 79 per cent of principals said they did not have enough funding for students with disability, and 84 per cent said they had taken funding from other areas of their school budgets to deal with the needs of students with disability,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“A delegation of parents and children with disability visited Canberra today and told MPs of the struggles they face finding a school that is properly funded to educate their children. They spoke of the difficulties they faced in getting support so that their children could be included in class, and begin to reach their potential. Some have moved towns or States to get a better deal for their children at school.

“These parents need “the fixer” to fix this problem as the Coalition promised to do prior to the 2013 election.

“The Abbott Government has introduced an interim measure to fund disability in schools. This is a stopgap that does not recognise the full unfunded need in the system, which is being measured by the National Data Collection on disability in schools

“The Gonski Review recommended a full loading, covering the real need of all students with disability, to be based on this data collection.

“There are at least 100,000 students with disability whose schools do not receive support.

“The Productivity Commission’s 2015 Report on Government Services found that 190,887 students are receiving funded support in schools.

“However other research has found the total number of students with disability in Australia is at least 100,000 higher.

“The 2011 National Data Collection trial report estimated the total number of students with disability at 296,417 or 8.4 per cent of school population

“ABS data from 2009 showed that there were 292,600 students with disability in Australia, a number which would have increased with population growth.

“We are still in the dark about more recent figures from the National Data Collection because the Abbott Government has defied an order of the Senate to produce copies of the reports on the data collection in 2013 and 2014.

“The ABS research also found that only 54.3 per cent of students with disability are receiving any funded support in school. It also found that 28.5 per cent of students with disability with a “severe or profound core activity limitation” are not receiving funding support.

“This is a picture of a system that is failing to deliver any support to schools to educate significant numbers of students with disability.

“Minister Pyne has never been able to explain why the Coalition has walked away from its pre- election commitment to introduce a full disability loading, as recommended by Gonski and based on the real need identified by National Data Collection.”

The Coalition said on August 23, 2013 that: “We have long argued that the current funding arrangements for students with disability and learning difficulty are unfair and inequitable. If elected to Government the Coalition will continue the data collection work that has commenced, which will be used to deliver more funding for people with disability through the ‘disability loading’ in 2015.”

The Coalition’s 2013 education policy stated: “The Coalition will match the Commonwealth funding committed by Labor to extend support for students with disabilities for twelve months, while a new ‘loading’ formula is developed for these students. We will continue the data collection process that has started with the States and Territories so that future funding for students with a disability can be based on each student’s level of need. Current funding arrangements for students with a disability and learning difficulty are unfair and inequitable. Students with disabilities deserve better support so they can access the schools and education programmes that best suit their needs.”

Schools and children with disability need Minister Pyne to take the lead and implement this promise.

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