Schools review must consider funding

The Australian Education Union (AEU) is urging the federal government to ensure school funding is a key consideration of the review of the National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA).

The NSRA is the foundation for bi-lateral agreements between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, setting out goals for student performance and outcomes for students with additional needs, and minimum funding contributions.

The Productivity Commission is currently conducting a review of the NSRA; however, the terms of reference exclude any consideration of funding.

“The current review is hamstrung by the very agreement it is considering. There is a clear link between student outcomes and funding,” AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said.

“Any consideration of student performance and outcomes for students with disability, First Nations students and other students experiencing disadvantage requires a comprehensive consideration of the underfunding of public schools, which is entrenched in the agreements associated with the NSRA for every state and territory.

“The current agreements are so deeply flawed because they leave public schools below the minimum funding standards set out in the 2012 Gonski review, and they were developed without any reference to the teaching profession – the very people who have to implement the priorities they set.

“The recurrent funding shortfall has a direct impact on the ability of schools to deliver the reforms set out in the NSRA,

as well as their ability to ensure ongoing staffing and resources for the delivery of learning and support programs for students.”

The present NSRA expires at the end of 2023, and negotiations for agreements covering 2024-2029 are expected to commence later this year.

“There is still an opportunity for the federal government to recraft the Productivity Commission review to include funding,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“We also urge the federal government to consult directly with the teaching profession through the union and to update the terms of reference to ensure a thorough examination of the direct relationship between funding, equity and student outcomes.”

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