WA public schools underfunded by $31m



Official figures have revealed Western Australian public schools are being underfunded by $31 million, with the shortfall rising to an incredible $374 million by the end of the decade.

New analysis conducted by the Parliamentary Budget Office shows that the Commonwealth needs to invest an average $203 million each year to lift their share of funding for public schools in WA from 20 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) to 25 per cent by 2028.

State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia President Matt Jarman said the alarming new figures showed a need for urgent action.

"These figures, from the Parliamentary Budget Office no less, show the crisis looming for public education in WA," he said.

"We need the state and federal governments to get their collective acts together.

"It is unacceptable that public schools teach 66 per cent of secondary students and 72 per cent of primary students yet get well under the minimum funding
they need."

Mr Jarman said the national estimate was that proper funding would see an extra $1,800 for each pupil every year.

"The effect would be incredible for education outcomes, for the state's economy and for issues in a huge range of areas that would benefit the community," he said.

"Public schools in WA get just 95 per cent of the minimum funding they need.

"That figure becomes even worse when you realise a further four per cent in funding that used to be supplied separately, has now been rolled into one package – meaning schools are now getting only 91 per cent of the funding they need.

“With full and fair funding, our principals can employ more teachers and reduce class sizes. We can recruit more education support staff and give teachers the time and support they need to offer students greater individual attention.

“We can bring more allied health professionals into schools, like counsellors and speech therapists, taking the pressure off families and giving the students that need it that extra boost.”

The AEU has called on the Albanese Government to make the investments required in WA public schools to allow principals and teachers to cut class sizes and provide more individual attention and support for every child.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said 98 per cent of public schools were currently not funded to the standard set by the SRS, the minimum amount all Australian governments agreed was required to meet the needs of all students.

“The Albanese Government needs to lift the federal government investment in public schools to 25 per cent and negotiate agreements with state and territory governments that will ensure every public school is funded to a minimum of 100 per cent of the SRS by 2028,” she said.

Ms Haythorpe reiterated public schools in WA were only funded to 95 per cent of the SRS.

“But with an average additional $203 million in federal funding each year, the Albanese Government can end this underfunding, changing the lives of WA public school students,” she said.

Mr Jarman said the funding would change lives and lift results.

“This is about our students, and making sure they get the opportunity to reach their full potential,” he said.

“Families of the 322,294 students enrolled in public education from kindy to year 12 should be beating down the door of their local MPs to insist they pressure both the state and federal governments to stop prevaricating and deliver full funding to public schools.

“Those children’s futures depend on it.”

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