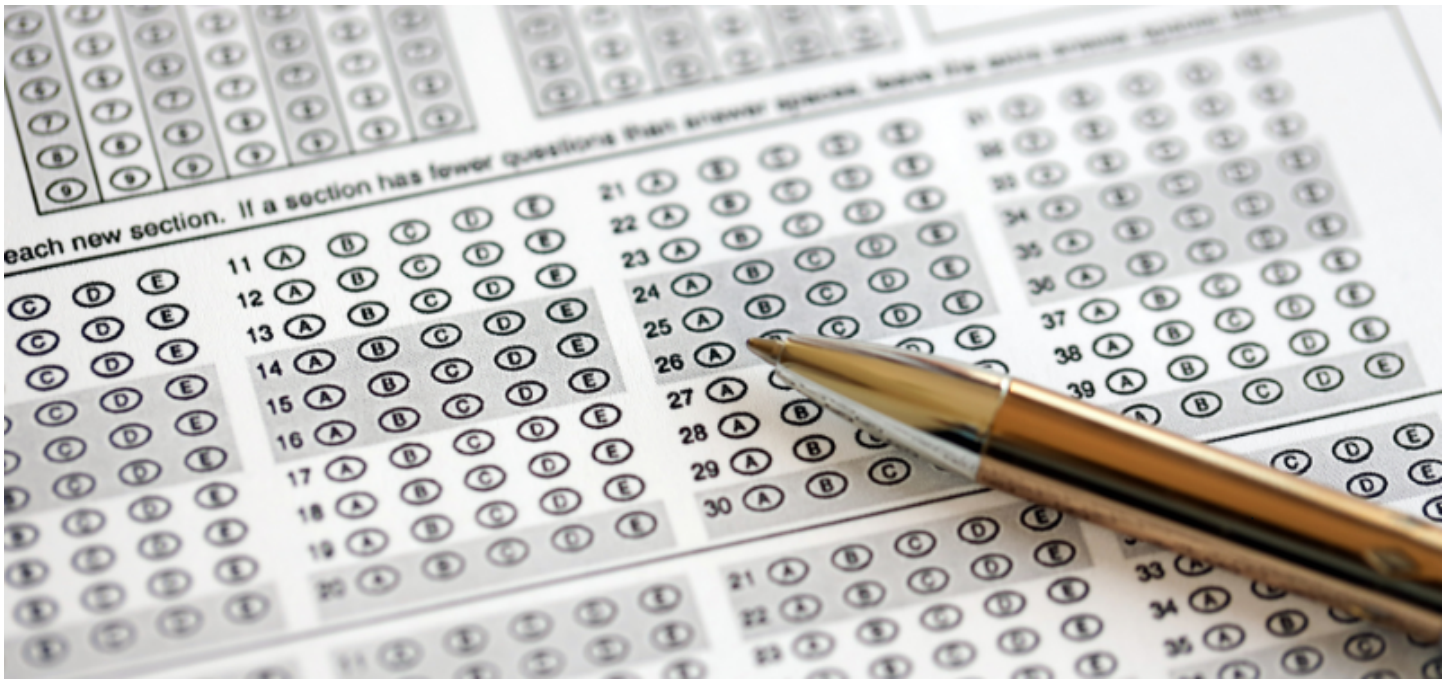
NAPLAN flaws reflect funding shortfall



The recent media coverage of NAPLAN 2024 has supported the long held SSTUWA view that NAPLAN is not fit for purpose.

It is well worth considering what the Lawrence review report, Facing the Facts, said about NAPLAN:

Finding: The introduction of NAPLAN has not resulted in any sustained improvements in aggregate educational outcomes or in reducing educational inequality.

Finding: The benefits for teachers from NAPLAN have not materialised and many have experienced increased workload and a loss of professional standing as a result.

Finding: Individual national testing has narrowed the curriculum for children while teachers spend more classroom time "teaching to the test."

Recommendation 9: That National, State and Territory ministers consider replacing NAPLAN, a census assessment, with a sample assessment like PISA, conducting tests less frequently and without publicly identifying schools in the results.

As Facing the Facts reported, the Whitlam Institute in 2017 - seven years ago - found that following the introduction of NAPLAN teachers had observed:

- A narrowing of teaching strategies and curriculum.
- Negative impacts on student health and wellbeing.
- Deterioration in staff morale.
- Negative impacts on public schools' reputations (particularly in disadvantaged areas and hence their capacity to attract and retain students and staff).

The negative impacts of NAPLAN have been so frequently and comprehensively assessed, by organisations ranging from the Gonski Institute to a litany of academic studies and, of course, Facing the Facts, that it is almost incomprehensible that it is still in place.

Original Gonski expectations were for 80 per cent of students to be achieving minimum standards. In 2024, one in three

students are not. Clearly funding makes the difference.

Successive governments, having wedded themselves to this flawed testing system, have been led to only one useful outcome; it highlights the impact of a broken funding system that gives more money to private schools than they need, while leaving most public schools short of their minimum funding requirements. Simply put, too much of the right money has gone to the wrong schools.

As AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe put it after this latest round of results were released: “The results show that the current funding system is leaving the students with the highest levels of need without the support they need to thrive, which is completely unacceptable.”

“Teachers and education support personnel work very hard to cater for all of their students’ needs but they must be backed by governments with full funding.

“Prime Minister Albanese and Education Minister Jason Clare’s recent funding ultimatum to state governments will not close the public school funding gaps. We need urgent action now with a full 25 per cent from the Commonwealth and 75 per cent from state and territory governments to ensure that all schools are funded at 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard.

“As a nation, we cannot leave the most vulnerable students without the resources and support they need to fulfil their potential.

“It is public schools that educate the most vulnerable students in Australia, with 82 per cent of students from low socio-educational advantage backgrounds and 83 per cent of First Nations students. This makes full funding for public schools a non-negotiable to ensure that all students and teachers are receiving the vital funds needed for high quality teaching and learning.”

Of course, WA needs even more than 100 per cent. That might sound strange but the reality that was recognised in the original Gonski findings over a decade ago, was that this state needs additional funding to address the requirements of regional and remote students.

Instead of delivering the extra five per cent identified by Gonski, we instead saw a reduction of four per cent through an accounting trick that allows the WA state government to count what used to be an **additional** four per cent in funding as part of their 75 per cent contribution.

So, we have a testing mechanism that fails students, places additional workloads and stress on teachers, diminishes the efforts of schools and then we set teachers up to fail by not providing the financial investment needed to improve educational outcomes.

It’s a good job we are apparently the lucky country because policies like this suggest we are far from being the clever country.

Read more: *New WA funding deal still leaves public schools underfunded*. Plus, *Are the NAPLAN results really an epic fail?*.



By Matt Jarman
President

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026