

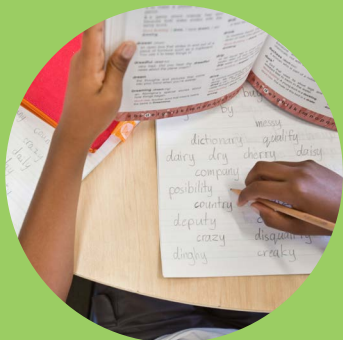
A photograph of two children in a garden. A boy in a green polo shirt is sitting on a wooden bench on the left, smiling. A girl in a school uniform is standing on the right, holding a large, yellow, hand-painted flower prop. The background shows a garden with various plants and a school building.

# FAIR FUNDING NOW!

DELIVERING FAIR  
AND EQUITABLE  
FUNDING TO PUBLIC  
EDUCATION







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# Why school funding must be fair and equal

As public school teachers, principals and support staff, we are committed to meeting the needs of every child and passionate about seeing them succeed.

But the right resources are crucial and that is why we are running the Fair Funding Now! campaign.

We know that a national 'needs-based' funding system is the fair and equitable way to resource schools. This was identified in the first Gonski Review in 2011 that found unfair funding arrangements were contributing to falling results and widening achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds.

We campaigned across the country for the national funding system and additional resources recommended by the Gonski Review and we succeeded.

After the Commonwealth introduced a needs-based funding system in 2014, we saw public schools use the additional resources to achieve outstanding results for students.

However, that improvement is now being put at risk by the Turnbull Government's new funding changes that end needs-based funding and leave public schools across the country under-resourced.

## The Turnbull Government has failed children and parents

2018 and 2019 were the years when we were due to see the biggest ever investment of needs-based

funding in public schools by the Commonwealth Government.

Schools were ready to use that funding in ways that fundamentally change the education that children receive such as smaller class sizes, additional specialist teachers and new literacy and numeracy programs.

But, instead, the Turnbull Government tore up signed agreements with five state and territory governments and cut \$1.9 billion of that funding.

Its plan will leave 87 per cent of public schools underfunded in 2023 and two-thirds of private schools overfunded. Working together we can change this.

In this policy blueprint we explain what needs to happen to make funding fairer and ensure every child has the opportunity to access high-quality education.

You can also read the stories from principals and teachers across Australia about how proper funding helps them transform the lives of their students and contributes to the broader community.

I hope you will join us in this campaign which is all about our children and our future.

We cannot stay silent while millions of children miss out on the additional attention and opportunities that could change their lives.

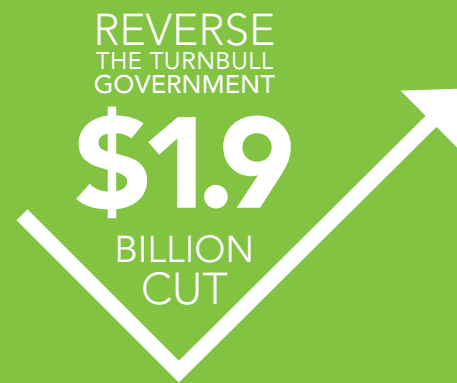
It is only by finally ending the under-resourcing of public schools that we can ensure every child gets the support and opportunities they need to succeed.

We need fair funding now!

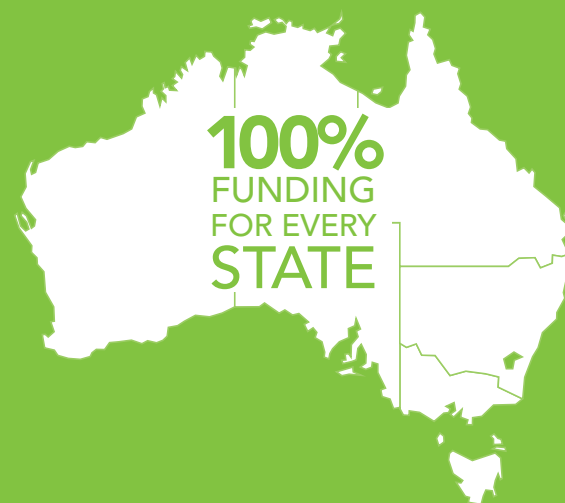
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## Fairer funding



## All schools properly resourced



## Upgrade classrooms and facilities



## More support for students with disability



Fair funding now

## The AEU bottom line

Australia's public schools must be properly funded. It is the nation's obligation to ensure that schools can meet the needs of every student, and that all students have the opportunity to reach their potential.

But the Turnbull Government has abandoned needs-based funding for public schools.

Its plan will undermine public education and see \$1.9 billion cut from public schools in 2018 and 2019.

In total 87 per cent of public schools will receive less than their Schooling Resource Standard entitlement by 2023.

The AEU calls on the Federal Government to commit to:

- 1. Fairer funding now**  
The Turnbull Government should immediately reverse its \$1.9 billion cut to public schools for 2018 and 2019.
- 2. All schools properly resourced**  
Agreements should be struck between the Commonwealth and the states and territories to ensure public schools in every state and territory are funded to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2023. The 20 per cent cap on the Commonwealth share of the SRS should be removed from the Australian Education Amendment Act.

- 3. Upgrade classrooms and facilities**  
A capital fund should be established for public schools to help meet rising enrolment growth and ensure all students are educated in classrooms and learning spaces where their needs can be met. That fund, recommended by the Gonski Review, should be \$300m in 2018 and increase each year in line with enrolment growth and rising costs.
- 4. More support for students with disability**  
The Turnbull Government's cuts to disability funding in five states and territories should be reversed. The National School Resourcing Board should immediately review the 3 levels of funding for students with disability to better align them with the actual costs of delivering high-quality education.

Properly delivering on needs-based funding in this way will ensure that every child will be given the opportunity to learn.

Through access to high-quality education, every child will be supported to become a confident, creative participant in society. ▲



## Why needs-based funding matters

Every child deserves to have their individual needs met at school.

That's why it is so important to have needs-based funding for Australian schools.

A 'needs-based' funding system is fair and it's efficient.

Under a needs-based system the highest amounts of funding are delivered to the schools where student needs are highest.

A public school that has a large number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, for example,

would receive more funding than a school of a similar size with fewer students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

With needs-based funding, principals and teachers have the time and the resources to plan and implement teaching and learning strategies that meet the specific needs of students at their school.

In an AEU survey<sup>1</sup> 90 per cent of principals said that receiving additional needs-based funding made a significant difference to the quality of education delivered at their schools. ▲

<sup>1</sup> AEU's State of our Schools survey, 2017

## What is the Schooling Resource Standard?

The Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) is an estimate of the amount of public funding that a school needs to meet the needs of its students.

There are two main elements: base funding for each primary and secondary student, plus additional amounts, or 'loadings', to help schools whose students have higher needs.

The loadings deliver extra funding for schools based on the number of Indigenous students, the number of students who have a disability or are from a non-English speaking background and the number who live in low socioeconomic areas. There are also loadings for small schools and schools in regional and remote areas.

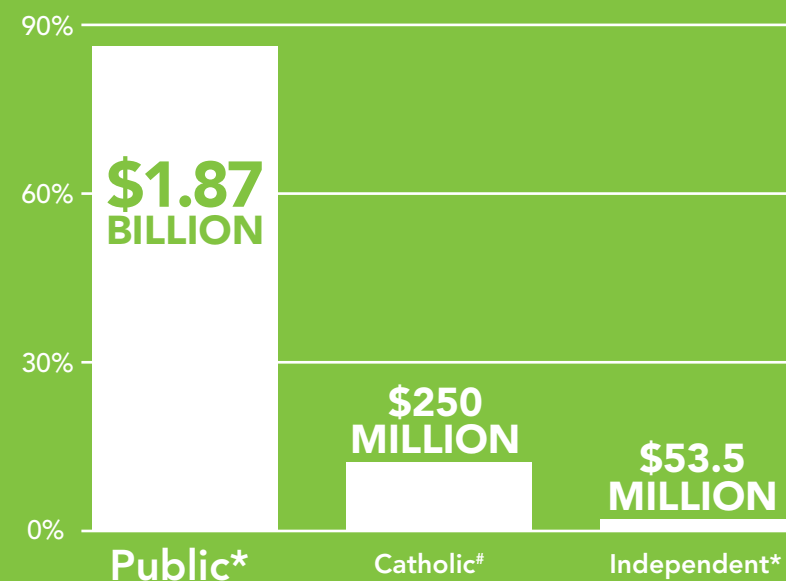
The base amount is currently set at \$10,953 for each primary student and \$13,764 for each secondary student.

Governments need to work together to ensure that all public schools reach the Schooling Resource Standard.

Right now almost all public schools across the country are below the standard and almost one third of private schools are funded above it. ▲



# Turnbull Government cuts to public education



Source: \* Parliamentary Budget Office, \* National Catholic Education Commission

## Reduced funds for students with disability

Northern Territory  
36%  
CUT



Tasmania  
46%  
CUT

Fair funding now

## Turnbull fails public education

The original Gonski plan<sup>1</sup> was to ensure that the Commonwealth worked with state and territory governments to ensure that all schools received 100 per cent of their Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) entitlement.

But that goal has been abandoned by the Turnbull Government.

The Turnbull Government has now set arbitrary levels of funding that ignore the SRS formula. Public schools will receive just 20 per cent of their SRS entitlement by 2023 while private schools will receive 80 per cent in the same period.

Schools also receive funds from their state or territory governments but even after that's taken into account, 87 per cent of public schools will be funded below their entitlement by 2023.

Sixty-five per cent of private schools will be funded above their entitlement by 2023.

These cuts will have a devastating impact across the country.

Schools had plans to:

- Reduce class sizes
- Employ more specialist teachers in areas such as literacy and numeracy
- Improve the ongoing training and support of teachers – particularly those who are new to the profession
- Provide intensive support for students who are in danger of falling behind in literacy and numeracy
- Provide more time for teachers to collaborate and develop individualised learning plans for students
- Employ more specialist staff such as speech pathologists and more student support staff

## \$1.9 billion cut to public education

The original Gonski plan, developed by the Gillard Government and set down in signed agreements with five state and territory governments, would have seen needs-based funding for schools increase significantly over a six-year period.

But Malcolm Turnbull has slashed the Commonwealth funding for the final two years (2018 and 2019) of that six-year period.

The Turnbull Government has cut more than \$2.1 billion from schools, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office and the National Catholic Education Commission.

Public schools are worst affected with a cut of almost \$1.9 billion.

## Reduced funds for students with disability

The Turnbull plan involves reducing the funding for students with a disability in public schools in five states and territories — Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Tasmania and the Northern Territory will be the most affected, with disability funding to public schools being cut by 46 per cent and 36 per cent respectively.

These further cuts to disability funding — which is already chronically underfunded — will hurt our most vulnerable students. ▲

<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/review-of-funding-for-schooling-final-report-dec-2011.pdf>





# Delivering quality teaching and learning

Teachers, principals and support staff are the most important resources in our public schools. To deliver quality teaching and learning, they must be properly trained and supported.

Strong educational results start with fully qualified teachers who have reasonable workloads and who receive meaningful and relevant professional development.

We know that, where teachers, staff and school leaders are given opportunities to share their knowledge and experience, student outcomes are improved. Further, teachers are supported and equipped to provide a broad, engaging and inclusive curriculum, where student learning is personalised and relevant to individual needs.

Quality teaching and student learning also depend on appropriate staffing levels, with the relevant mix of teaching, specialist and support staff to cater for students' needs.

In a fully resourced school, teachers, support staff and principals are able to provide targeted support for students with additional needs.

With smaller class sizes, and access to technology and technical support, teachers can focus on providing a high-quality, productive and safe learning environment.

It's also about systemic support, where, for example, schools can access the same high level of resources, whether they're in metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas. We believe that both levels of government, federal and state or territory, have a responsibility to provide systemic support and structures that enable quality teaching and learning to happen.

A safe, well-resourced learning environment supports, encourages and challenges its students. In turn, these students feel engaged in their learning.

We agree with the recommendation of the 2011 Gonski review that federal and state/territory governments have a mutual responsibility to adequately fund our schools.

With its greater capacity to raise revenue, the federal government needs to provide the majority of the additional funding that public schools require to reach the Schooling Resource Standard. We need to ensure that the

Turnbull Government delivers this funding in full.

As our case study shows, needs-based funding, fully delivered, can transform the lives of our students.

Quality teaching and student learning depend on factors such as:

- Attracting and retaining fully qualified teachers, principals, specialist and support staff
- Developing and delivering a rich, relevant, student-centred curriculum
- Supporting ongoing, relevant professional development for all staff
- Supporting teacher involvement and control over student assessment
- Facilitating appropriate staffing levels, including specialist staff and support staff, as well as access to technical support
- Providing targeted support for students with additional needs, including students in low socioeconomic areas, regional and remote schools, and communities where students' first language is other than English. ▲



# Funding supports programs to lift literacy

It may be a small school, but Mahogany Rise Primary in the Melbourne suburb of Frankston North is drawing on the latest literacy research for an innovative program that's delivering big results.

The school has been using speech pathologists to help train teachers to improve students' oral language skills. And that, in turn, has brought significant improvements in literacy, numeracy and other areas.

Oral language is a key to helping students both read and write, says principal John Culley.

"If students don't understand what's being communicated, we have to teach them to be able to decode what's being said so they can understand. And, if they can't express their own views, they lose out big time. Therefore, we're trying to shore them up in that way as well," he says.

The program has been in place for about seven years providing plenty of data to prove its value.

"We can see the students' growth over time because we've been testing them from Prep all the way through to Year 6. The data has been very positive and it encourages us that we're on the right track. We know the students' expressive and receptive language skills have improved significantly and that is then linked into their reading and writing and approach to numeracy," says John.

"Interestingly, as soon as we take our foot away from the pedal, the results drop. So, we know it must be continued all the way through primary school. We're now trying to expand it into our secondary college, which is quite close by," says John.

The program has also helped teachers to understand their students better and it's had a big effect on the way they teach, he says.

Extra Gonski funding has helped to support the program. The funding has also provided other

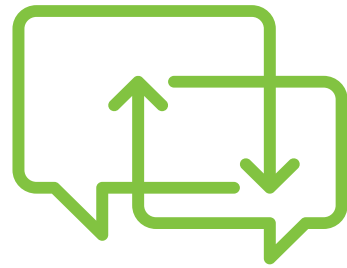
support that's designed to remove barriers to learning. The school co-ordinates a range of services including a youth worker, a family engagement worker, an occupational therapist, two psychologists, a paediatrician and a lawyer to support families with complex needs.

The focus on student well-being and engagement is building greater engagement of students and the parent with the school and creating a strong community.

John says that needs-based Gonski funding has allowed Mahogany Rise to meet the challenges of its complex environment and ensure that its students and families can fully participate in learning.

Under the Turnbull Government's new funding plan, Mahogany Rise Primary School will miss out on \$400,000 of funding it expected to receive over the next two years. ▲





## Investing in educational leadership

Strong educational leadership in our schools is critically important.

Leaders in education have a significant role in engaging, motivating and collaborating with teaching staff, students and the broader community. They must be community leaders as well as innovators in teaching and learning and in creating positive school cultures.

Maintaining a complex network of relationships, and influencing the culture of a classroom or school, provides far-reaching benefits for students and school communities.

If we recognise the scope of what educational leaders do and support them to do it, this leads to a strengthening of professional culture, high-quality teaching and learning and improved student achievement.

To date, the value of educational leadership has not been reflected in the professional conditions for leading educators.

Given the range of the work they do, leading teachers and principals must be given the time to do the job properly.

Aside from the time to plan and lead in education, school leaders must be given opportunities for ongoing professional learning and mentoring. Given proper planning, time and resources, professional development and mentoring become drivers of collaborative teaching practice within and between schools.

This purposeful and shared approach to improving how we teach helps build a teaching community. At the heart of that community is shared practice: a wide-ranging professional dialogue between teachers. Together, these elements improve practice and strengthen the profession of teaching in the eyes of teachers and the broader community.

Administrative requirements of departments must also be kept

in check so that leaders are not overburdened. Governments need to understand that our schools need educational leadership not bureaucratic leadership. When leaders are taken away by the administrative requirements of the school, that's time they can't spend developing the skills of their staff and developing the positive culture of their school.

Leaders need time to lead and to develop their leadership capabilities. They need time to facilitate whole-of-school discussions, develop policy direction, forge links with parents and the school community and create a positive organisational culture, high-quality curriculum programs and a strong professional learning community.

Funding underpins strong educational leadership, providing staff and resources to allow leaders to learn, grow and lead.



## Finding a leading edge

"This place could get out of hand very quickly," says Upper Coomera State College principal Mike O'Connor. "It's big. And size breeds complexity."

The numbers tell the story: there are more than 2000 students and 180 staff; some 50 nationalities represented and almost 100 students are from an Indigenous background.

Upper Coomera is a Prep to Year 12 school on Queensland's Gold Coast.

With such a large and diverse student population and many specialist learning programs in place, the 30-strong leadership team of department heads, reading coaches and deputy principals must be on their game to inspire, motivate and energise staff.

"I'm very much committed to purposeful, deliberate coaching, not just ad hoc incidental learning," says Mike. "People actually have to put aside the time to purposely and

deliberately work with others on their development, not just think they're going to somehow evolve into this wonderful leader through osmosis. It doesn't happen that way."

The school has also built a strong network of professional learning teams, using Gonski funding to employ reading coaches, for example, who've helped to build capability among teachers and improve student results. The teams have been "incredibly successful, particularly in our junior school", says Mike.

"We set aside time, which funding has allowed us to free up, so that teachers can be coached and also coach.

"That's a big deal in schools," he says. "You often hear teachers say they can't get to the work that's actually about capability development because there's always an interruption. We've been able to create a structure where they have that free time, that clear space to be coached.

"We're seeing significant improvements in instructional practices in classrooms from that process," he says.

For example, a literacy strategy to improve reading performance across the school includes introducing the "whole college reading framework" and employing extra literacy teacher aides. This initiative has also included coaching and professional development and engaging a new head of curriculum to coach and mentor teachers. This is part of a long-term plan to create a strong culture of teaching literacy at the school.

Administration and bureaucracy are also kept in check.

"The administration demands are always there. I think we as leaders need to be very efficient and effective in how we manage those and also quite selfish in pushing back to the bottom of the in-tray things that aren't about our core business," says Mike. ▲





## Early intervention programs and specialist staff

School programs that identify and support students who need extra help are a critical element in a successful education strategy. It is important that all students, whether they are disengaged and struggling with learning or gifted, have the chance to discover their potential, their passions and interests at school with the support of early intervention programs and specialist staff if required.

This requires resourcing to ensure that schools can provide a broad enriching curriculum that meets the needs of the individual learner and that provides the opportunities for students of all abilities to develop their natural interests and skills. Unsupported, children experiencing disadvantage can become increasingly disconnected from education, and this can lead to poorer educational outcomes and fewer adult pathways and opportunities.

Our public schools educate the most diverse student population in Australia, and enrol an increasing proportion of students

who come from a disadvantaged background. This includes lower family employment and income, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, non-English-speaking background, disability, learning difficulties and behavioural issues. Some students experience compound disadvantage as they have two or more factors of disadvantage.

However, with adequate resources to fund and provide early intervention programs, schools can ensure that all students have access to high-quality education.

Early intervention initiatives can be delivered by teachers combined with specialist staff such as speech pathologists, counsellors, family liaison officers, social workers and interpreters. Students can be supported by smaller class sizes, and safe and culturally appropriate spaces in which to work.

The capacity to provide early intervention programs and specialist staff to run them, must be across all schools, whether

they are metropolitan, rural, regional or remote. Particular challenges also exist in smaller, non-metropolitan schools which tend to have fewer resources and encounter more barriers to teacher and specialist staff recruitment.

In an AEU survey of principals who received extra funding between 2014 and 2017, 58 per cent reported that it was spent on additional student support staff. Thirty-eight per cent of principals reported spending extra funding on specialist literacy and numeracy teachers or coaches.

When schools have appropriate resources then they can invest in time for staff to develop and implement differentiated or personalised learning strategies for students, delivering better support to prepare students for life beyond school.

Identifying needs and allocating appropriate, targeted resources will close the achievement gap for all students. ▲



## Targeting individual learning

Extra Gonski funding has gone a long way at the Lismore High Campus of The Rivers Secondary College in northeast New South Wales. And it's producing strong results for both students and teachers.

A raft of new strategies and resources to target individual learning and students with learning difficulties have been made possible by the extra funding.

Working closely with students to identify and overcome barriers to learning, Lismore High has introduced a new project-based curriculum and teaching program. There's also a new senior study program for Year 11 and 12 students, using individual planning sessions as well as group activities focused on enabling students to achieve their academic goals.

The school has employed an

Aboriginal Community Officer to work more closely with families and is running a tutoring program for Indigenous students, providing tailored packages of individual support for Aboriginal students. Meanwhile the extra funding has also allowed more targeted support for EALD (English as an additional language or dialect) students.

The changes have been backed by a substantial investment in new technology, including the purchase of educational software that supports learning in literacy and numeracy and new computers. All students in Years 7 and 8 now have access to their own laptops, which has freed up access for students to other computer laboratory spaces.

As a result of these and other changes over the past two years of additional funding, school attendance rates are the highest in five years, and HSC results are

the most improved in ten years while literacy and numeracy results are above state average.

The Gonski funding has also allowed the school to increase its budget for professional learning so all teachers could undertake intensive training in the new project-based system. This provides a consistency of approach which benefits students.

Student behaviour in class has dramatically improved and students, staff and parents are all very positive about the project-based learning program.

Under the Turnbull Government's new funding plan, Lismore High Campus will miss out on \$1.6 million of funding it expected to receive over 2018 and 2019. ▲





## Early career teaching – mentoring and support

Starting out in a new job after university is daunting, and it's no different for early career teachers. Managing a new classroom full of students and navigating the school system can be a steep learning curve.

Teacher graduates have undertaken many practicums and are ready to deliver high-quality teaching in the classroom, but gaining experience takes time. Ongoing professional development is an essential part of this process and this starts with proper induction and formal mentoring.

Mentoring allows experienced teachers to share their knowledge and skills with their new colleagues and be the 'go-to' on everyday classroom challenges, and how to manage the administrative load.

Mentors help new teachers develop their curriculum and deepen their pedagogical understanding of the work. They can share practical advice on student wellbeing issues and show them how to work together to achieve strong outcomes in a school.

Mentors also support new educators to identify students who need extra help, and to tailor or differentiate learning tasks to meet individual needs. Mentoring also helps build a professional community among teachers.

Early career teachers who start work in rural or remote locations, or in schools with many children from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly benefit from the strong collegiate structure created through mentoring.

But, for mentoring to be effective,

it needs to be an official part of the teaching schedule, with time-release built in for the mentors and the new teachers. This 'mandated' mentoring also must include professional development and coaching resources to support mentors to do this work.

There is currently no formal system of support, training or funding for mentoring in Australian schools. In the last three years, two out of five teachers were mentors of early career teachers, but only 15 per cent received funded release to do this work<sup>1</sup>.

Fully funded formal systemic support of early career teachers is essential, and this must incorporate mentoring, induction and ongoing professional learning, with paid time release. ▲



## Ongoing support valuable from day one

When Katerina Duckstein set foot in the classroom as a teacher for the first time, she was luckier than many new educators. She could call on her mum – a teacher with 35 years' experience – for advice.

Now four years later, and established in a career she loves, Katerina remembers feeling overwhelmed and yet also relieved that some behaviour management strategies she'd learned at university were useful. "I don't know if anything fully prepares you for your first day or week of teaching. It feels out of this world."

Katerina says she was lucky to get a mentor from her very first day, a teacher with 16 years' experience who had received training in mentoring.

"She was fantastic", says Katerina. "She was really experienced and pre-empted issues that might arise."

"What was difficult is that 'you don't know what you don't know'," she says.

While Katerina was "overwhelmed with making sure my students were being looked after", her mentor reminded her to take care of herself and her voice. "When you're using your voice every moment in the day, it can become strained and you often get sick, particularly in the first year."

The mentoring was structured with scheduled planning time together, and this, plus her mother's support, brought it all together for Katerina.

A year later, at her next school, most of the teaching staff were relatively new to their careers, and there was no formal mentoring. "In my second and third year, and even this year, it's more so a buddy, not really a mentor. So, there's a huge gap in

the system of mentoring," says Katerina.

For Katerina, mentoring is a big issue. She believes that new teachers need four or five years of mentoring, and ongoing professional development beyond that. "It's absolutely lifelong," she says. "Most teachers are collegial. But it's all about having the time and resources."

For now, Katerina is concentrating on developing her skills within the curriculum. She's taken on board advice to take care of her voice and not strain it through overuse.

"Being at a third school, I have a stronger knowledge base now. Obviously, I understand how to teach, but I am really refining that skill set so that I can be the best teacher I can be." ▲

1. AEU State of our Schools survey, 2017





## Class sizes – why they matter

Smaller class sizes mean every child gets the attention they need.

Smaller class sizes offer a range of benefits both in and beyond the classroom.

Students thrive when their teachers have the capacity to meet their individual learning needs and that's why smaller class sizes are vitally important. Smaller class sizes enable teachers to provide individual attention for every child, particularly those who need more help.

There's also evidence that students participate more in smaller classes. They're more likely to interact with their teacher and they are less disruptive. That means the teacher spends less time on behaviour management issues leaving them more time to teach. Students in smaller classes

also report better relationships with teachers and a more favourable learning experience than those in larger classes.

In particular, teachers in smaller classes have more opportunity to monitor each student's learning and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

When a child's individual learning needs are met then their attitude towards school is positive and their learning future is secure.

Research also suggests that students in smaller class sizes are more able to adapt to intellectual and educational challenges.<sup>1</sup>

More one-on-one teaching time enables teachers to practise differentiated teaching – that is, adapting teaching practices to fit an individual child's needs. Giving young children this

attention has a hugely positive effect on learning outcomes. The most well-known study on class room size<sup>2</sup> in primary schools demonstrates that students from smaller classes achieve better results in literacy and numeracy than students from larger classes. These benefits were particularly pronounced for students in lower socioeconomic groups.

The STAR study<sup>3</sup> also showed that smaller class sizes had a marked and positive effect on students' life experience that was visible far beyond the classroom. But smaller class sizes can only be achieved with adequate funding. It takes more teachers, increased school resources and more classrooms to give schools the opportunity to introduce smaller class sizes. ▲



## Tackling disadvantage with individual support

Not every class at Paralowie School is a small one – the school can't afford that. But, in those classes where numbers are lower, the results speak for themselves.

Principal Peter McKay says students thrive on the extra attention from their teachers. In particular, it has meant significant growth in reading and writing. Having extra time to spend one-on-one with each student can make a big difference.

"The teacher is able to get around to work more closely with the students because there are fewer in the class," says Peter.

"So smaller class sizes coupled with a good collaborative learning program for teachers – where they've got time to share practice – brings about better results."

"Where we're able to keep the class size at about 22, we see better growth than in classes of up to 30 on average. We'd like to keep every class small but we're not currently able to," he says.

Considered one of the most disadvantaged schools in South Australia, Paralowie is in Adelaide's northern suburbs. Almost 40 per cent of its 1,400 students come from non-English speaking backgrounds. There are high numbers of students with disabilities or learning difficulties, and many parents are dealing with unemployment or low incomes.

Extra schools funding has helped to provide programs that support these students and set them on a path to a better school experience.

The funds have paid for more education support staff to provide support in classrooms, individual learning plans and extra literacy programs.

The school has also invested heavily in programs for its reception and junior primary students. "If we can put the right foundations in place in those early years, then that will lead to more success as the students move through the middle years

and into the senior years," Peter says.

Increased funding has also allowed the school to provide more programs and facilities for older students. For example, Year 12 completion rates have improved from 38 per cent to more than 90 per cent in recent years, by providing VET pathways and job programs to ensure every student can leave the school with a purpose.

All the extra resources and support for students have seen reading and writing results improve. What's more, the benefits spread beyond literacy – students who received extra support were also more engaged and successful in other subjects, Peter says.

Despite the obvious and documented success of the additional programs and smaller class sizes, Paralowie will miss out on \$1.2 million in funding under the Turnbull Government's new plan. ▲

1. Barrett, N., & Toma, E. F. (2013). Reward or punishment? Class size and teacher quality. *Economics of Education Review* 35, 41–52.

2. Schanzenbach, D. (2014). Does Class Size Matter?, National Education Policy centre. Retrieved from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/does-class-size-matter>,

3. *ibid*, pp.3-4





# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Providing proper funding and resources, and understanding and respecting culture, are critical to closing achievement gaps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

We need to ensure that equal access is provided to all and that programs are culturally appropriate and targeted to individual needs. Schools can then implement effective strategies for early intervention and improve attendance and student engagement in learning programs.

Supporting and training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to become teachers and education support staff, and helping them to stay in the profession, is important. Additional staff, including teachers, support staff and specialists are needed. We also need to ensure that initial training for all teachers includes cultural understanding and strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that

recognise each child's capacity to succeed at school.

It is crucial that the community and parents are supported and engaged in the school so that programs are community-owned. Evidence shows that 'wrap-around' strategies empower families and the broader community, and help students engage at school.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and experience compound disadvantage.

The Schooling Resource Standard acknowledges each type of disadvantage — including disability or attending a smaller or less well-resourced school. It is the Turnbull Government's obligation to work with the states and territories to ensure that the full Schooling Resource Standard entitlement is paid to ensure that schools can help students reach their potential.

For example, Northern Territory schools funded under a National Partnership Program for schools in areas of low-socioeconomic status have made greater literacy and numeracy gains than unfunded schools. Often this funding was used to implement specifically targeted programs and to employ staff to deliver a culturally appropriate curriculum. But a withdrawal of Commonwealth Schools funding for the NT over the next 10 years under the Australian Education Amendment Act will make it difficult to capitalise on gains already made and jeopardise progress in remote schools.

Properly resourced programs and schools are proving they can support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to succeed at school and establish healthy pathways for their adult lives.

To close achievement gaps, governments must close resource gaps. ▲

Fair funding now

## Visible improvements from extra funds

At remote Bwgcolman Community School, on north Queensland's Palm Island, students are making huge strides in literacy, thanks to a targeted program as well as extra funding and resources.

Visible improvements in the reading abilities of the youngest students are proof that their strategy, paid for by extra funding, is absolutely on the right track, says school principal Beresford Domic.

All 280 students at this Prep to Year 12 school are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and, for the majority, English is a second or third language.

In 2016, the school introduced a new Read to Learn program to Prep children. Within one year, 75 per cent of the students were at or above the national benchmark for reading at their year level.

"We've been able to train and employ extra teacher aides so we've got five or six people in the room, and each of those people takes a group of kids," says Beresford.

"Having that density of adults in

the classroom means you can work with students individually and get them reading.

"I can walk into a classroom and see kids engaged every day."

The program also engages the community. Locals trained as teacher aides learn transferable skills and gain confidence in themselves and the students they support.

"I have seen a real increase in the enthusiasm of the non-teaching staff," says Beresford. "They are part of a team that's achieving good things for their kids in their community. They feel empowered."

Extra funding means the school's guidance officer comes to school three days a week, rather than one day only, supporting students who are experiencing what Beresford calls the "now" and "historical" traumas created by things such as poor housing, unemployment, poor health and nutrition, lack of access to quality educational services, institutionalised racism and low expectations, domestic violence, substance abuse,

inadequate models of service delivery, dispossession and dispersal, stolen wages and Stolen Generations.

"This continues to have a huge impact on this community," he says.

The school has employed more community education counsellors to provide "wrap-around support for families" to strengthen school attendance and engagement.

From his 17 years teaching in Indigenous schools, Beresford has seen the transformative power of high expectations for students, community engagement and proper resourcing.

"We've still got a lot of challenges, but I can tell you that the extra funding that we got at Woorabinda school, for example, which was all Gonski money, gave us the opportunity to employ more staff, more teacher aides, and have the resources to provide a world-class education to the children of the community.

Every child deserves the very best chance, says Beresford. "I know they can do it." ▲





ALMOST  
**75%**  
OF STUDENTS WITH  
**DISABILITIES**  
ATTEND  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



THE TURNBULL GOVERNMENT HAS CUT COMMONWEALTH FUNDING IN FIVE STATES AND TERRITORIES FOR 2018, TASMANIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY BEING THE MOST AFFECTED.



Fair funding now

## Students with disabilities

Every child must have the chance to receive a high-quality education and this is critically important for children with disabilities who face challenges that other students do not.

Almost 75 per cent of students with disabilities attend public schools, which work hard to ensure that issues such as access, specialist support, and health and wellbeing are appropriate for their students so that they can learn in a safe environment.

But the stark reality is that this cannot be achieved without adequate funding and schools are struggling to find the resources they need. The number of eligible students continues to grow, while government funding to provide support for students with disabilities does not.

Most public school principals report<sup>1</sup> that they have insufficient

resources to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and, as a result, have to use funds earmarked for other school programs. Almost 90 per cent of principals responding to a survey said they had used funds from other areas of their budgets to provide resources for students with a disability who were ineligible for targeted government funding.

These much-needed resources for students with disabilities include assistance for teachers, specialist support, appropriate learning spaces and funding to pay for professional development of classroom teachers.

Despite this resourcing crisis, the Turnbull Government last year cut Commonwealth funding for students with disabilities in five states and territories for 2018. The worst hit are Tasmania, with

funding cuts of 46 per cent, from \$18 million to \$9.7 million, and the Northern Territory, with a 36 per cent cut, from \$26.7 million to \$17.2 million.

While the Federal Government acknowledged that the number of students with a disability was greater than previously funded, increasing more than 120 per cent from 212,000 to 470,000 students, its overall funding level increased by only 6.2 per cent.

This extraordinary move will severely impact on schools' capacity to support all students to access a high-quality education.

These cuts must be reversed as a matter of urgency. In addition, the disability loading must be reviewed to determine the real costs of ensuring that all students with disability can access a high-quality education. ▲

1. AEU State of our Schools survey, 2017



# Rural, regional and remote schools

Schools are the heart of vibrant rural, regional and remote Australia, drawing communities together and fostering learning and opportunity.

Yet they also face particular challenges and barriers that can impact on student learning outcomes.

Smaller school sizes and geographical isolation can make resourcing more difficult, whether it's to recruit classroom teachers or access specialist staff for literacy and numeracy support, or to gain technical support and up-to-date technology.

Teachers strive to develop and deliver a rich and inclusive curriculum, often without the support of ongoing professional development because of funding and time release barriers. Initial teacher education should also be strengthened to focus on the needs of students in non-metropolitan areas.

Many students in rural, regional and remote areas come from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds, with higher levels of family unemployment, and these factors compound school resources gaps. In addition, students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, or those with a disability, or whose first language is not English, need greater support. More children in non-metropolitan areas present with one or more developmental vulnerabilities in their first year of school; fewer complete Year 12 or enrol in tertiary studies.

We know that fully funded, high-quality education has the potential to boost all students' educational achievements and create meaningful life pathways.

Over the past few years, our teachers in remote schools have spoken of the huge improvements in students' literacy and numeracy as a result of extra funding for specialist staff

delivering targeted programs.

Investing in the attraction and retention of staff has also produced strong benefits for schools because it allows them to offer a broad and inclusive curriculum for their students. All schools need strong educational leadership, and this is particularly important for rural, regional and remote schools, as leaders develop the critical connections between the local community and the school.

The proof is there: full funding of our schools is transformative.

The Turnbull Government's new funding proposal ignores these facts and the government has turned its back on our students in regional, rural and remote Australia. ▲



## Making sure rural students don't miss out

Growing up in the country can be filled with adventure and freedom, creating resilience and independence in young people.

But when schools in rural, regional and remote areas don't receive the same level of resources as metropolitan schools, students can face gaps in educational achievement.

Colac in western Victoria, where unemployment is high and incomes are low, has been buffeted by the ups and downs of farming and local industries. At Colac Primary School, a large number of students are in vulnerable circumstances, many suffering from the trauma of family violence, and they're at a severe educational disadvantage. Some students are as much as two years behind their year level.

In this environment, principal Shelby Papadopoulos has been putting to good use every cent of her extra Gonski funding on resources to help her students. And it's paying off.

A speech pathologist is working with children who've entered the school with speech and language difficulties, there are literacy specialist programs and a wellbeing case manager works with vulnerable students and trains staff to help children coping with trauma.

"That's seen a big difference for us with teachers being able to intervene immediately to support those children who need a different response before they can be in the right head space to begin learning," says Shelby.

After just two years of funding for the new programs, more staff and specialist training for existing staff, the students' growth has been significant.

While the teaching staff are delighted with the progress, it's the students themselves who are noticing the difference. Shelby mentions one young student, who'd been a reluctant and disengaged reader since Prep and was 24 months behind his peers. After working with an

intervention literacy specialist for 12 months, the student is now reading at his age level and "he's really, really excited", she says.

"So, the growth that child has made should now hopefully secure his long-term educational outcomes and mean that the world is his oyster."

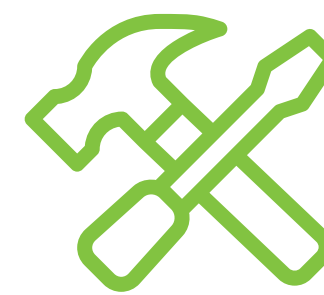
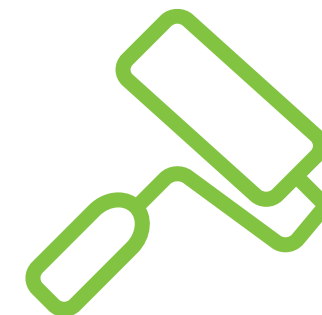
"We're hopeful that we can continue the momentum to ensure that all students are able to meet the expectations of their age and Year level," says Shelby.

"We're coming from a position of never having had the financial ability to provide the level of support our students require. It would be heartbreaking if we lost not only the capacity to maintain what has been achieved but also the possibility of being able to make that same difference for all our students."

Under the Turnbull Government's new funding plan, Colac Primary School will miss out on \$100,000 of funding it expected to receive over the next two years. ▲







## Building and maintaining classrooms and facilities

Quality teaching is not only about a rich curriculum and committed teaching staff. The buildings and spaces in which we work and learn play a big role in how we engage in that experience. Anyone who has endured a hot summer or cold winter in a temporary portable classroom knows this only too well.

The facts are that many established classroom buildings in our schools need updating or replacing, and we also need more classrooms and schools to meet rapidly growing student enrolments.

We need federal, state and territory governments to commit to a serious funding investment to build and upgrade our school stock. Buildings that are too hot, cold, dark, noisy or crowded get in the way of quality teaching. Relying on portable classrooms is not a viable plan.

School design has evolved substantially over past decades in recognition of new learning styles, modern technological advances, and closer understanding of the link between performance and environment.

The modern school needs multifunctional, flexible learning spaces, with a robust wifi network. And that's on top of basic issues such as healthy temperatures, sound quality and airflow.

We know that well-designed classrooms improve student behaviour and engagement in learning, which in turn contributes to improved performance.

The type and quality of school infrastructure also influences the learning opportunities that schools can offer. Access to modern libraries and quality science laboratories with integrated IT facilities,

performance spaces and sporting facilities shapes the school culture, student experience and achievement.

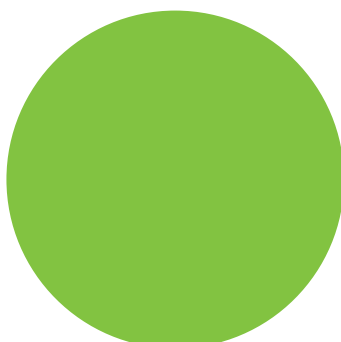
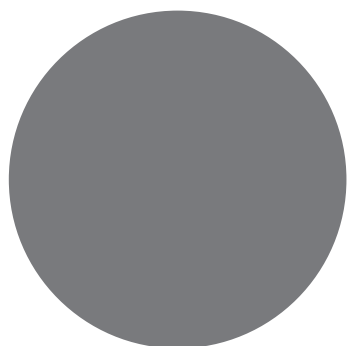
Under the Turnbull plan there is no capital funding for public schools.

By contrast, private schools will receive almost \$2 billion in capital funding over the next decade.

The AEU calls on the Federal Government to create a new capital funding stream for public schools. This funding for new and upgraded public school classrooms and learning spaces should be \$300 million in 2018 and increase each year in line with enrolments and school costs.

Australia's public education system needs properly funded school facilities and infrastructure to support our students to learn and thrive. ▲





**Help ensure every child gets a  
high-quality education.**



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