



# Independent Education Union

Media Statement

Wednesday 5 October 2011

## IEU Submission to Gonksi Review of school funding

The Independent Education Union in a submission to the Gonksi Review into School Funding has called for four main points to be addressed, and for these points to be the backbone of any changes to the school funding system:

- A resource benchmark of funding for each student, which underpins the school funding system and properly acknowledges the right for a decent education for all students.
- A complete overhaul of the funding of education for students with special learning needs or disabilities, where full funding should be met for these students.
- Indexation based on Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) not inflation.
- No decrease of funding in real terms for any school.

Federal Secretary of the IEU, Mr Chris Watt said that the IEU supports the Gonksi Review into school funding, but it is vital that the IEU's key points be addressed.

### School funding resource standard

The IEU has long supported the development of a national benchmarked standard for schools, which would indicate the resources needed to provide for the educational needs of every Australian student.

In this context the IEU welcomed the commissioning of work by the Gonksi Review panel to investigate the feasibility of a national schooling recurrent resource standard. Unfortunately, the IEU believes that the Report provided falls significantly short in delivering clarity, transparency, simplicity or a clear way forward in relation to this concept.

The IEU believes that consideration of such a benchmark and its validity can only be properly considered if it is placed within an implementation framework.

We again challenge the Australian Government to increase funding in school education to meet, and beat OECD education funding levels and make Australia a world leader in education.

The recent OECD report in Australian schooling, welcomed by the federal government, reminds us that despite Australia's relative wealth in OECD countries, well above average, and performance of student assessments, also well above average, Australian government expenditure on school education is below average

and indeed ranks around 17th out of the 29 countries.

The predecessor Ministerial Committee, MCEETYA, report in 2005 showed that the actual cost of meeting the National Goals was \$11,186 per secondary student in 2003 dollars.

Unless a substantial recommitment is evident from governments then the next phase of the development of a fair model of funding cannot take place.

Australia is in the middle of a mining boom and surely we can afford to put some of this increased revenue into ensuring that no school is worse off.

It is a simple equation that an increase in funding for school education would mean a boost to the Australian economy and lead to better prospects for our nation's future.

Any new resource standard must meet the Melbourne Declaration of Goals for Schooling before a fair funding model can emerge.

### **Full funding for students with a disability and special needs**

With respect to students with a disability as one group of disadvantaged students, the IEU has long argued that the costs of meeting these students learning needs should be met irrespective of in which sector the parents enroll their child.

Currently there is a substantial difference in the level of resources and support available for disabled children between the government and non-government sector as a consequence of funding decisions.

While the report gives some acknowledgement of the under-resourcing of the needs of disabled students in non-government schools in terms of government funding it makes the unacceptable recommendation that additional funding to resource the learning needs of these students would be 'clipped' from the current funding of all non-government students.

As the Prime Minister acknowledged yesterday a significant amount of funding needs to put into funding the education of children with special needs and disabilities and the IEU believes that this is something that deserves full funding.

*"We as a nation can do better for kids with disabilities and we should do better."  
(Tasmanian Community Cabinet, Monday 3 October 2011)*

### **Indexation based on Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) not inflation/No decrease in funding**

A cut in the Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) index would mean a real cut to school funding, a loss of teachers' jobs, and a decrease in the standards of education.

The AGSRC funding model is based on overall movements in the funding given to government schools and does not transfer the "higher average cost of educating students" as some would want the public to believe.

The AGSRC index is critical in ensuring teacher job security and employment conditions and overall education standards.

Schools and teachers are nervous about reports that the Gonski review will effectively recommend slashing funding for some of the poorest schools in the country.

It is the fact that the cost of education is increasing way ahead of inflation which is the reason for any increase in funding to non-government schools. A change to the indexation to an inflation index could mean a massive cut to educating children across Australia.

The cost of education a child has gone up in both government and non-government schools, and it is fair and right that increases in funding should meet these increased costs.

Minister Garrett keeps telling the public that no school will be worse off, but these reports seem to be sending the opposite message. The latest Gonski Review reports have reflected a fundamental misrepresentation of the way in which schools are funded.

The debate should be about an increase in funding for all Australian schools, not some kind of thinly disguised and uninformed war against families who choose to send their children to a non-government school.

The education funding debate needs to be about ensuring that every school in Australia ends up with more funding.

The IEU believes the review of the way schools are funded, along with the mining boom is a once in a generation opportunity to significantly increase funding for every school in Australia and to stop the government versus non-government sector debate once and for all.

**Media Contact: Evan Langdon 0429 020 409 or [elangdon@ieu.org.au](mailto:elangdon@ieu.org.au)**