

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS**
PRESS RELEASE 701#

**AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION MINISTERS PULL APART WITH
EDUCATION FUNDING**

At what the Australian Education Union called a farcical Education Council meeting in Hobart on Friday 7 April, the Turnbull Government's attempt to scrap Gonski funding was completely rejected.

Education Minister Simon Birmingham failed to present an alternative funding proposal. He also failed to convince a single state to back attempts to end needs-based Gonski funding after 2017.

State and territory ministers have spoken out against the plan, saying that the Turnbull Government must honour the six-year Gonski agreements, and that cutting funding will hit disadvantaged students the hardest.

NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes said that failing to honour the last two years of the Gonski agreements would have the biggest impact on disadvantaged students.

He presented a new analysis which showed that NSW faced losing \$1.3 billion in 2018 and 2019 if Gonski funding was not extended past this year.

He said this worked out to an average of \$1400 less in federal government support for every NSW public school student and \$500 for every private school student.

Mr Stokes said: "*We have a bi-lateral agreement and have met our obligations and we will be insisting the Commonwealth does likewise*".

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that Malcolm Turnbull needed to listen to the states, and honour the full six years of the Gonski agreements, which would deliver an extra \$3.8 billion in resources to schools.

"But only one-third of the extra funding in the Gonski agreements has been delivered, and we need funding to continue in 2018 and 2019 so all schools have the resources they need.

Ms Haythorpe said that the Turnbull Government had repeatedly failed to meet its own deadlines to develop a concrete funding proposal in the 11 months since it announced it wanted to end Gonski.

"We have had months of excuses, and there is still no detail, and no alternative proposal on the table.

But, Birmingham was not fussed. At a doorstop interview he said he had been a morning of ‘constructive discussions with the Education Council amongst himself and the state and territory ministers.’ When confronted with funding differences he diverted the discussion into reports on NAPLAN online. But finally, when confronted by a journalist with funding issues he said a few very interesting things as follows:

Journalist: *Will some schools lose funding under a Gonski deal for the next two years?*

Simon Birmingham: *Funding is at record levels and it keeps growing, as I said, above inflation, above enrolments. And so systems, states, territories, should absolutely be able to expect to keep doing the great things they’re doing and to be able to do more with our record growth funding into the future.*

Journalist: *Tasmania has quite a unique set of education issues here, we’ve got quite low attainment rates compared to the rest of Australia. Are you confident that a new funding deal will benefit Tasmanian students?*

Simon Birmingham: *We’re really committed to ensuring the Gonski principles of distributing funding according to need are adhered to, and in fact are better reflected in many ways, in a more equitable and consistent approach to funding than the 27 different hodgepodge deals that we inherited. And that’s important for a jurisdiction like Tasmania because those principles ensure additional support for students from lower socio-economic settings, for students in smaller regional or remote settings, for students of Indigenous backgrounds, for students with disability. These are the types of needs-based principles that we want to see funding distribution applied to and that we’re committed to seeing occurring under a more consistent setting that can only be to the ultimate long-term benefit of states like Tasmania.*

and later,

Simon Birmingham: *The Turnbull Government’s been working very hard in terms of the reforms that we think are necessary to lift school improvement and achievement, and in terms of how it is that we transition away from a hotchpotch of different funding deals towards a more consistent approach in the future. And each day we get a step closer to that, and today’s another day st- another day, another step closer.*

Journalist: *What do you mean by more a consistent approach?*

Simon Birmingham: *Right now, schools of identical need, of identical socio-demographic circumstances, can have very different levels of Commonwealth funding across the country. Thousands of dollars more going to a school that, in terms of their composition and mix of their students and those student backgrounds, is identical to one in another state or territory, receives significant different Commonwealth funding because of different deals that were done at the time. Commonwealth Government should absolutely treat states and territories in a fair and consistent manner.*

Now, it should reflect need, and need means ensuring that a state or territory like Tasmania, with some additional particular issues in lower socio-economic circumstances and challenges, should receive additional funding because of that. But schools that have

exactly the same challenges, whether they're in Tasmania or Queensland or WA, should be receiving the same type of support from their Federal Government. And I think all Australians would expect that that's the approach the national government should take.

Journalist: What was today's mood of- how was the meeting? How was the mood inside the room?

Simon Birmingham: Oh, there's lots of politics played in front of the cameras when it comes to school funding from different states, different political parties, unions, et cetera. But ultimately, I find my colleagues constructive to work with, and I'm certainly committed to working with them as constructively as possible in the future.

<http://www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/Latest-News/ID/3457/Doorstop-interview-Hobart>

DOGS NOTE THAT, THE RHETORIC IF NOT THE REALITY OF THE NEEDS POLICIES BEING CANVASSED BY STATE SCHOOL LOBBIES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA HAVE FILTERED UPWARDS TO THE OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL MINISTER.

But

DOGS ALSO NOTE THAT, WHILE STATE SCHOOL LOBBIESTS ARE GAINING THE MORAL INITIATIVE, THEY ARE UP FRONT AND NAÏVE.

PRIVATE SCHOOL LOBBIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ACTIVE BEHIND THE SCENES AND HAVE THE INSIDE RUNNING ON FUNDING ISSUES. AFTER ALL, PRIVATE

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