

## Dissenting Report from the Australian Greens

1.1 All children deserve the best education possible to set them up for a bright future. No child's education outcomes should depend on their family's wealth, income or which state they live in. Parents should never have to shop around because they worry that their local public school does not have the resources it needs to educate their kids—because public education should be the gold standard, not a safety net.

1.2 That's why instituting a Genuine Gonski model of funding is critical for our children. As identified by David Gonski in his original report handed down in 2011, we need a genuine, sector-blind, needs-based model that prioritises funding to look after needy schools and kids. We need a greater investment sooner, so we can give every child the chance to finally reach their potential. This is what a Genuine Gonski funding model would do, and what the both Liberal and Labor parties have failed to deliver over the past six years.

1.3 We have never had a Genuine Gonski model. The current 'Gillard Gonski' isn't needs-based. It has locked in funding to wealthy private schools at the expense of public schools.

1.4 The Turnbull government's 'Gonski 2.0' does not address the historical imbalance between Commonwealth and State contributions to different sectors. The government's proposal offers certainty to private schools but the Commonwealth does not offer certainty that the neediest public schools will catch up after years of neglect.

1.5 The Australian Greens position for school funding aligns with a Genuine Gonski model, which is based on the following four principles:

- Genuine needs-based funding. Public funding should be delivered to schools on the basis of need. Students who face disadvantage should have an education that is equal to that received by students right across the country. Extra funding should be distributed on the basis of low socio-economic status, disability, aboriginality, low English proficiency, school location/remoteness and school size.
- More money to the right schools, faster. There are some schools across our communities that are currently chronically underfunded and some schools that are chronically overfunded. The current reality is that more money is needed for public schools and less money should be put into overfunded private schools—and it needs to happen quickly, not over ten years as proposed.
- Ensuring States doing their fair share. All levels of Government across Australia need to commit to the principles of the Genuine Gonski model to ensure that all of our students are properly resourced. The government's model leaves the States and Territories responsible for 80 per cent of funding to public schools. States do not have the revenue raising capacity of the Commonwealth and as a result, public schools—the sector containing the

overwhelming majority of disadvantaged schools—do not have any certainty that they will receive adequate funding.

- Transparency and Accountability. The Gonski report recommended an Independent Schools Resourcing Body. An institution with powers similar to an ombudsman to have access to documents and make public statements and reports would deliver real accountability against all levels of government and school systems. Needs-based schools funding requires the ability to track and review the funding of schools across all sectors and from all sources. An independent body would not only improve the delivery of funding but it would help end the partisan bickering, misinformation and the politicisation of our education system.

1.6 The original Gonski did not require the Minister to set funding conditions on teachers, principals, curricula and national testing through regulation-making power, yet this provision is included within the Australian Education Amendment Bill 2017.

1.7 While the government has commissioned David Gonski to review improving teaching and education quality, it would be an irresponsible use of the Parliament's power to allow the government to pre-emptively regulate without knowing the results of the review or the government's future intentions. This issue needs to be resolved independently of any reforms associated with this legislation.

1.8 The Australian Greens are acutely aware that many submitters criticised both Labor's departure from the Gonski principles and shortcomings of the Turnbull government's proposal.

1.9 This inquiry received submissions from a number of education and schools funding experts as well as interested parents, principals, stakeholders, union bodies and State Governments. These submissions and the evidence given at public hearings have been considered in the development of the Australian Greens report.

1.10 The Australian Greens recognise the Australian Education Union's concern about the government's decision to not honour the National Education Reform Agreement and subsequent Commonwealth/State/Territory 'Gonski' agreements beyond the end of 2017.

1.11 The Australian Greens note the evidence received that since the Gillard Gonski Agreements were not legislated, the funding amounts promised to the States cannot be legally enforced. The Australian Greens note evidence to the Committee from Minister Birmingham:

The government's policy has been quite clear since the 2014 budget, if not earlier, that this would be the last year in which those agreements would be

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applicable, in terms of future funding, and that they would come to an end by the end of this calendar year.<sup>1</sup>

1.12 We further note in 2013, the Australian Greens sought to secure these funding amounts in law, so that it could not be undone by a future government. Our approaches to the Gillard minority government were rejected.

1.13 The Australian Greens also note the concerns of the AEU, as well as others, in relation to the role of the State and Territory governments in this funding model. The Australian Greens believe that the Commonwealth must include State and Territory governments in any legislated model to make sure that all public schools are brought up to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

1.14 The Australian Greens recognise the submissions from peak bodies representing public schools including the Australian Council of State Schools Organisations, the Australian Secondary Principals Association, the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Australian Government Primary Principals Association to end the complexity of special deals, deliver schools to their SRS quicker and create an independent resourcing body.

1.15 The Australian Secondary Principals Association's evidence to this inquiry highlighted the importance of a non-political approach to education funding, noted their concerns relating to the length of a ten year transition and the need for states and territories to do their fair share and recognised the importance of a genuine needs based funding model.

1.16 Both the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Australian Government Primary Principals Association's submissions to this inquiry noted that a single, simple, needs-based, transparent and predictable funding arrangement will achieve the best educational opportunities for all Australian students, but warned that a delivery timeframe of ten years is too long.

1.17 Establishing an independent resourcing body to act as a watchdog and deliver openness and transparency into funding allocation and delivery was supported by the Australian Primary Principals Association, Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association, Australian Government Primary Principals Association, Grattan Institute, Australian Secondary Principals Association, Catholic Secondary Principals Association, Catholic Secondary Principals Association, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia and Australian Special Education Principals Association.

1.18 The Australian Greens note statements of multiple witnesses who claimed that the government's Schools Funding Estimator led to significant confusion and concern

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1 Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Education and Training, *Estimates Committee Hansard*, 1 June 2017, p. 71.

in the education community. Management of public displays of school funding should fall squarely within the jurisdiction of the Independent Body.

1.19 The Australian Greens are deeply concerned by the admission of the Catholic Education Commission that they actively distribute funding to schools in a way that is inconsistent with the needs-based funding model, expressed via the Schooling Resource Standard and needs-based loadings.

1.20 The Australian Greens note evidence from the Grattan Institute that stated that under the current *Australian Education Act 2013*, Australia is still a long way from aligning school funding to student need. It went on to state that years five and six of the Gillard Gonski Agreement would have resulted in a situation where comparable students in comparable schools receive vastly different funding amounts.

1.21 They recommended hitting the government's proposed funding target in six years, not ten, ensuring the states did their fair share and establishing a National Schools Resourcing Body which would, among other responsibilities, review the SES formula.

1.22 Based on the evidence received during this Committee, the Australian Greens cannot support the legislation in its current form and are determined to ensure fair, needs-based schools funding.

### **Recommendation 1**

**1.23 The Australian Greens recommend schools that are underfunded, including public schools across the country, receive an increase in funding over a shorter time frame.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**1.24 The Australian Greens recommend a model be implemented that would tie State and Territory Governments into these reforms and require them to collectively bring public schools to their resourcing standard.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**1.25 The Australian Greens recommend an independent National Schools Resourcing Body be established to act as a watchdog over all levels of government and school systems, oversee and review all aspects of schools funding to inject both transparency and accountability into education funding across the country.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**1.26 The Australian Greens recommend the National Schools Resourcing Body should also have responsibility to review the SES and the capacity to contribute mechanisms.**

**Recommendation 5**

**1.27 The Australian Greens recommend conditions relating to teachers, principals, curricula and school testing currently being undertaken by David Gonski must be kept independent of any changes to needs-based funding legislation.**

**Senator Sarah Hanson-Young  
Australian Greens Education Spokesperson**

