



Australian Government

Our Ref: MS19-000255

Chair
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Jcpaa@aph.gov.au

Government Response

on

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT REPORT No. 476
Australian Government Funding

General Comments

The Government is committed to ensuring a high quality school system that assists each and every Australian child to reach their full potential, so they can fully participate in the economic and social life of the community. The Government is providing a record \$310.3 billion investment in recurrent funding to all Australian schools from 2018 to 2029. Commonwealth funding is growing from \$18.7 billion in 2018, to \$25.9 billion in 2023 and \$32.4 billion in 2029.

Education is the foundation of a skilled workforce and a productive community. The better literacy and numeracy skills a young person has, the more likely they are to continue at school, undertake tertiary study, and go on to highly skilled and paid work. The jobs of the future are likely to be more complex than the jobs of today and will require higher levels of education.

Every student deserves funding based on their need to give them the best chance in life. That is why the Australian Government targets funding for the schools and students who need it the most, no matter where they go to school or what type of school they attend. The Government is committed to achieving quality school outcomes by providing extra support to disadvantaged students to ensure they have the assistance they need to succeed.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government amend the *Australian Education Act 2013*, and the accompanying Regulation as required, to include a specific legislative requirement that the Department of Education and Training

- Monitor compliance and prove assurance that Australian Government school funding is delivered in accordance with the Act
- Monitor the use of Australian Government school funding in achieving the objectives of the Act.

Response

The Government does not agree.

The Government supports appropriate transparency and accountability for the record and growing levels of funding in schools so that principals and teachers can focus on teaching, not paperwork, and deliver improved student outcomes. The Government recognises that accountability requirements should be efficient, and not adversely impinge on teachers' time.

The Government believes schools and school systems are in the best position to determine how to allocate government funding to address the educational needs of their students and supports their autonomy to do so.

Public officials have general duties under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, and the broader framework of the APS Values and APS Code of Conduct as set out in the *Public Service Act 1999*, when administering any Government program, including those based within a legislative framework. It is within this general framework that there is an expectation that a department has in place a reasonable and risk-based monitoring and compliance approach to ensure that requirements on funding provided under legislation are met.

The *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) and the *Australian Education Regulation 2013* (the Regulation) provide the legislative authority for the Department of Education to administer Commonwealth funding for schooling to approved authorities for schools, block grant authorities and non-government representative bodies.

As a condition of funding, authorities are required to comply with the requirements of the Act and the Regulation, irrespective of any monitoring arrangement/s the Department of Education has in place.

The Department of Education's response to Recommendation 2 of the JCPAA report provides further details on the steps taken to strengthen existing assurance arrangements.