



Hunter Workers Submission to the Senate Education and Employment Committee inquiry on the matter of the [Better and Fairer Schools \(Funding and Reform\) Bill 2024](#).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in this critical area of Government Policy and Budget consideration. Where the opportunity arises Hunter Workers would welcome the Senate Inquiry Conducting an in person public hearing in the Hunter and appreciate the opportunity to present our submission to the public hearing.

Formerly known as Newcastle Trades Hall Council, Hunter Workers has been the central organisation for workers and Union members in the Hunter Region since 1869. The Trades Hall was established during the struggle for shorter working hours by local workers to combine the strength and capacity of our early Unions and improve working conditions, wages and living standards. Today, we continue to campaign for the social and industrial advancement of working people, representing all working people across our region with a combined Union membership of 64,000+ Union members from 25 local Unions.

Public Education and public schools are a key part of our community in the Hunter and Hunter workers calls on the Federation government to listen to the profession and fully fund our public schools. In the Hunter, Unionists, teachers, principals, parents and school community members continue to call on the Federal Government to fulfill its election commitment and get every public school to the 100% resourcing standard as outlined in the Gonski recommendations.

“Differences in educational outcomes must not be the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions.” *David Gonski*. The gap between the Government’s offer to states of 22.5% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and the full 25% is not acceptable. As is the legislation proposing to lock in a floor of only 20% which any future government could revert to, resulting in funding cuts to schools.

Hunter Workers believes that Every child deserves a qualified teacher for every lesson, every day. It is their right and an essential part of the government’s obligation to ensure the provision of public education of the highest quality in every community. Unfortunately, children in the Hunter are being denied their right to quality learning because of this funding shortfall.

Schools and members in the region continue to report that a lack of funding is affecting teacher shortages, well-being and student learning. In addition to the disruption of hundreds of classes, essential specialist learning programs are being collapsed daily to cover gaps and professional learning abandoned. A failure to act now risks failing generations of students and teachers in the Hunter and across the country.

Hunter Workers believes that every student in Newcastle and the Hunter deserves the resources and support they need to thrive, and that fully funding public schools is the only way to ensure every child in Newcastle and the Hunter gets the support they need to succeed. Providing a quality education for every child is not just a moral imperative, it's an economic necessity. Today's Hunter students are the lifeblood of tomorrow's workforce. Short-changing their education now will have consequences for decades to come in the Hunter. Especially as the region transitions, to new jobs, training and skills.

Amazing things happen in our public schools every day in The Hunter, but the Government is exploiting the goodwill of teachers to maintain standards. This is not acceptable or sustainable. Hunter Workers calls on the Federal Government to lift its share of funding to 25%, (including setting a floor of 25% as opposed to 20% SRS) to ensure that public schools are genuinely funded at 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard.

In Unity

Leigh Shears
Secretary
Hunter Workers