

**Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit – inquiry into National Funding Agreements**

**Additional Information for the Inquiry**

**Q1: Response to request for additional information on identifying low SES schools**

The definition used for the allocation of funds for Smarter Schools National Partnership for Low SES Communities was referred to as IRSED and ICSEA in the spreadsheets provided. The main issue was that the data for government and non government schools was not comparable. Non-government school data was derived from a selection of student addresses whereas government school data was derived from Census Collection Districts in a set area around each school. The collection methodologies varied yet the schools were ranked as if the data were comparable.

The Low SES definition should be based on the following principles:

The independent schooling sector considers that any proposed changes should be measured according to the following criteria for assessing funding models.

**Equity** – Per student funding for schools serving communities with similar attributes should generally be comparable.

**Transparency** – Assessment of need should be based on reliable and transparent data.

**Consistency** - Funding arrangements should apply consistently to all schools across the non-government sector regardless of organisational arrangement.

**Student-based** - The independent sector supports a student-based approach to assessing need for the purposes of a school funding model. A student-based methodology which relies on robust data regarding student characteristics provides an effective and transparent means to determine the resourcing needs of individual schools.

**Robust data** – Any funding model must rely on reliable, robust, up-to-date data that cannot be subject to manipulation or interpretation.

Using these principles, I would support the use of the socio-economic status (SES) funding model. The current SES funding model relies on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census collection data which has been collected under controlled and consistent conditions, thereby meeting the criterion of being robust.

**Implications for outcomes** - The outcomes were identified in a menu of activities for each reform. The use of a consistent allocative mechanism would simply have enabled a common foundation from which schools could select relevant activities from the menu to achieve the predetermined reforms. In order to have an effective approach to achieving the outcomes, the independent sector should have been included in the initial discussions where the reforms and menu of activities were identified. This would have ensured that the menu of activities would be inclusive of and accessible to the diverse range of schools and sectors.

In addition, the use of a consistent methodology between sectors would have allowed for a larger and broader spread of independent schools to be included. The positive effects of the National Partnership could therefore have achieved greater reach.

**Q2: Additional Information regarding the \$16 million cost of the NP evaluation**

In the original response reference was made to \$16 million allocated for evaluation of the program. Subsequent figures available from the NSW Department of Education and Communities (provided confidentially) indicate that \$18.74 million was allocated to the evaluation. Of this, \$9.7 million was from Commonwealth funds while the remaining amount of \$9.04 million was provided by the NSW Government.

It is worth mentioning that the NSW NP Evaluation Committee has collected baseline data plus put five longitudinal evaluations out to tender, with the possibility of a further evaluation to be done.

The Literacy Numeracy Program has evaluated the literacy and numeracy programs used in the NP in NSW.

It is the view of AISNSW that the funds allocated to the NP evaluations was excessive and disproportionate to the amount of funding available overall and has resulted in significant intrusions in schools (i.e. too much evaluation in relation to the work being carried out), requiring a significant amount of administration and support to be provided by the sector peak body, and an inordinate amount of time spent on committee work to manage the evaluations.

**Dr Geoff Newcombe**  
**Executive Director**  
**Association of Independent Schools of NSW**

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