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More in NT coffers but less hitting classrooms

CRAIG DUNLOP

NT Government school funding 2012-13 to 2015-16

Overall: DOWN 4.6 per cent
Primary: DOWN 2.5 per cent
Middle years: UP 2.1 per cent
Senior Years: DOWN 16.8 per cent
Funding per student: DOWN 4.7 per cent



DESPITE hundreds of millions in Gonski funding being handed over to the NT, the amount of money making its way into public school classrooms has gone backwards by nearly 5 per cent, according to figures compiled by the Australian Education Union.

Between 2012/13 and 2015/16, government schools had cuts of 4.7 per cent on a per-student basis, with the bulk of the cuts hitting senior high school students.

AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe said the funding cuts came despite the fact the Territory had the worst educational outcomes in the nation.

"Public schools are getting \$29.72 million less in 2015/16 than they would have got if funding had been maintained at the 2012/13 level," she said.

"They are getting cuts despite the Giles Government being given \$272 million extra in Gonski funding over four years by the Federal Government. We need to ask: where has that money gone?"

AEU NT branch secretary Anita Jonsberg said union members had repeatedly raised concerns about the impact of funding cuts.

"We've heard many stories of experienced contract teachers who are not having their contracts renewed because they are too expensive, and being replaced by graduates," she said.

Ms Jonsberg said she wanted answers about where the education funding was going, and wanted the Territory Government to pursue education funding more aggressively in Canberra.

"We don't want to make it

seem that there is a war on private schools because there isn't; the reality is we want proper funding to improve the quality of education," she said.

Education Minister Peter Chandler dismissed the budget breakdown as "another round of scaremongering from the Teachers Union" but did not answer where the Gonski funding had ended up.

"Each year since being in government the budget has increased," he said, noting the

Government's combined \$53 million capital investment for the Henbury and Palmerston special needs schools.

Mr Chandler did not respond to questions around how much of the education budget was going towards the private sector.

He said the AEU should "be ashamed of themselves" for "trash(ing) the public education brand" and noted Darwin High School was an exemplar of a quality public high school.

Mr Chandler cited a renewed focus on early childhood education, the introduction of global school budgeting, and "streamlining" the "overly bureaucratic" education department among the current Government's list of achievements.

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Bushfire tamed before it could fry Macca's



A bushfire threatened McDonald's and the United servo on Bagot Rd yesterday

Picture: PATRINA MALONE

\$55k boost for tourism in Daly area

MORE than \$55,000 worth of tourism infrastructure grants has been awarded to Birding Billabongs NT and the Mount Nancarrow Wilderness Retreat.

Birding Billabongs NT is a new eco-tourism business in the Douglas Daly region.

It offers caravan sites and camping grounds close to billabongs and other waterways.

Chief Minister and Tourism Minister Adam Giles said the business received a grant of more than \$27,000 to install solar power on the 4800ha property, which would "minimise the impact on the natural environment, improve electrical capacity and provide a solid platform for growing the business by reducing energy operating costs".

Member for Daly Gary Higgins said the Mount Nancarrow Wilderness Retreat on the Daly River would put its \$30,000 towards providing its campers with electricity to power portable fridges, fans, lighting and battery chargers.

"Currently the site is powered by a Remote Area Power Supply installed in 2008, which is reaching capacity," he said.

The business will use the funding grant to install a heavy-duty generator.

DANI McDONALD

A BUSHFIRE on Bagot Rd forced police to close a McDonald's restaurant and a United petrol station, and even threatened to close down the main road itself.

Firefighters and emergency services were alerted to the fire about 130pm yesterday as it ravaged the bushland between Dick Ward Drive and Bagot Rd along Fitzner Drive.

Police were called to the scene to prevent people accessing the petrol station



and McDonald's for about 20 minutes.

Sergeant Michael Valladares said police closed off the left lane of Bagot Rd going outbound because the fire kept flaring up along the fence line.

Firefighters had the blaze under control by 3.30pm.

The cause is under investigation.

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