



Australian Education Union (W.A. Branch)

P.O. Box 6140, East Perth, W.A. 6892
Inwats: 1800 199 073
President: **M. Keely**
Secretary: **D.A. Kelly**

Telephone: (08) 9325 5311
Facsimile: (08) 9221 2394
Email: aeuwa@ca.com.au

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The Secretary
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and
Education References Committee
Suite SG 52, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

The Australian Education Union of WA believes the present funding model used by the Federal Government to provide recurrent grant money to Western Australian schools is flawed as the larger proportion of funds goes to the private schools.

The current funding model, the SES (socio-economic-status) model is both flawed and biased against state government schools. It is also flawed and biased against schools within similar CCD (Census Collection Data) districts.

Any which way demonstrates the SES funding model does not function properly. For an overall point of view please refer to the main AEU submission.

Non-government schools determine which students enter their grounds and what guidelines to which they must conform. Public schools are open to all and tend to educate the bulk of "disadvantaged/needy students."

Non-government schools are not publicly accountable for how they manage the school even though all are in receipt of some State and Federal Government (i.e. taxpayers) money.

When the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Bill 2000 was introduced the then Federal Minister for Education, Dr Kemp, said the Commonwealth had the principal responsibility for funding non-government schools and that the new Bill promoted equity in education. We would question the basis of such a statement

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Supporters of Dr Kemp and the Federal Government described the reforms as promoting, “means-tested voucher” government schools with the “more flexible management structures of the private sector” publicly-owned and financed, but ... self-governing, and “the public system more like the (expanding) private system” Dr Kemp also raised the possibility of means-tested funding of government schools.

Two other supporters of Coalition policies, Brian Caldwell (advisor to the Kennett Government) and Don Hayward (Kennett’s first Minister for Education), have estimated that if these market policies are followed, only around 30% of government schools will survive.

The WA branch of the AEU believes that education should be available to all students and funds should be allocated according to need. It is widely accepted about 30% of students attend a non-government school and 70% attend a government school. It is also accepted that the larger percentage of funds for schools – all schools – comes from state governments with the Federal Government providing recurrent funding.

It is the recurrent funding model (SES) which is causing the problems. As we will point out it is not only flawed but it is not transparent. Funds provided by the Federal Government are given to non-government schools and they are allowed to spend that money as they see fit, but they do not tell the public how their taxpayer dollars are being spent.

Every dollar to a government school is accounted for and under the Westminster conventions of government there are checks and balances within the system now embedded through various Public Service Acts. There are no such expectations applied to the non-government sector.

What the WA branch of the AEU wishes to highlight is the inconsistencies within WA.

The SES funding model is biased towards the wealthier schools and is inconsistent.

Examples: Penrhos College, Como, received funding increases of 152% and its “brother” school of Wesley College received increases in funding of 145% but Methodist Ladies College only received 37% increase. Hale School received an increase of 115% while Scotch College received 79% and its “sister” school Presbyterian Ladies College received 71%

The largest schools tend to get larger percentage increases while the smaller schools tend to get smaller percentage increases the exceptions being Bible Baptist Christian Academy received 232% and the Japanese School in Perth 218%. The student enrolments were 28 and 26 respectively.

Kerry Street Community School (Fremantle Electorate) with 23 students received funding increases of 33% as did Carnarvon Christian School (Kalgoorlie Electorate) with 25 students.

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But Mukinbudin Christian School (O'Connor Electorate) with 26 students received an increase of 67%.

It seems it doesn't matter how you try and offset these anomalies there is no transparent justification ... even though we try to line up similar schools in similar suburbs and similar student numbers.

Even if you can line up similar schools such as Culunga Aboriginal Community School which has 103 students they received a 54% increase in funds while in the same electorate of Pearce the Riverlands School with 110 students received an increase of 86%.

Guildford Grammar School (Hasluck Electorate), a larger boarding school, received a 64% increase in funding, while a country-based boarding school, Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School (Forrest Electorate) received a funding boost of 198%.

Guildford has 792 students as against Bunbury with 605 students.

The inconsistencies are baffling and we would prefer to see a system of funding which is fair, reasonable, equitable across all schools regardless of status and it must be transparent.

Yours sincerely



Mike Keely
President, AEU (WA Branch)



Anne Gisborne
Deputy President, AEU (WA Branch)