

APC Review

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF
AUSTRALIAN PARENTS COUNCIL INCORPORATED
Print Post Approved No PP241613/00074

VOL. XLVIII NO 1
February 2019
First School Term

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The Australian Parents Council is assisted by funding from the Australian Government through
the Department of Education and Training.

*APC Review is prepared for publication and printed by **Bokprint**, 69 Boland Street, Launceston, Tasmania 7250*



APC Survey results show that higher than expected fee rises would see a quarter of students moved out of non-government schools

Eighty five per cent of parents with children at non-government schools reported that they would struggle to pay higher than expected fee rises and be forced to make 'significant sacrifices' to keep their children at the school of their choice, with 25 per cent saying they would have to move their children to different schools, according to a national survey carried out by the Australian Parents Council (APC) and its affiliates.

The figures were consistent across both Catholic and independent schools. 'This just goes to show that the non-government school sector is far more sensitive to funding changes than many people realise. Higher than expected fee rises would have an enormous impact on hundreds of thousands of families, who have chosen to send their children to non-government schools and put enormous pressure on government schools,' said APC President Shelley Hill.

Parents are concerned about the impact of the Australian Government's new funding arrangements, that will use income tax data as a measure of parents' capacity to contribute to school fees, according to the survey.

Seventy-five per cent say they want to know the likely impact on school fees at their child's school, 65 per cent were worried about fairness and nearly half wanted to know more information about how accurate using income tax data will really be. As one respondent succinctly commented: 'Tax data does not show family circumstances.'

'The government needs to address all parent concerns and make information widely available to families. We are after all the biggest stakeholders in this debate, who ultimately foot the bill for our children's education. Parents need to have confidence that the new system is going to be fair for everyone,' explained Shelley Hill.

The survey, which was completed by 676 parents around Australia, found the education issues

they are most concerned about are:

- the quality of teachers (85 per cent)
- children's well-being (78 per cent)
- provisions to help all children achieve their best (72 per cent)
- tailored teaching and learning for each student (65 per cent).

When asked what the single most important issue was, children's well-being came out on top. These issues came out way ahead of any others. The next nearest areas of concern were young people being prepared for work (43 per cent) and the management of technology and cyber bullying (42 per cent).

'Parents value good teaching and children's well-being above all else. They know that these two things are the foundations of a good education. Quality teaching and happy children equal productive classrooms. Parents also want to see children treated as individuals and every child given opportunities,' said Shelley Hill.

One respondent commented that 'our children need to be happy and healthy in school with a key focus on mental well-being and this is achieved through education in a way which each child learns to the best of their ability.'

Others commented that 'school needs to provide more for individual learning styles and less about fitting into the box,' and there needs to be a 'focus on enabling all kids to thrive and reach their full potential'.

'We would appreciate less of a cookie-cutter approach.... and a more individual approach helping each child,' wrote another.

Several commented on the value of good teachers and some called for more support.

'We need teachers that are passionate about teaching to foster a love of learning and for our children to feel valued members of a school community and to feel they can contribute successfully to society.'

'You can have the best teachers but no support. They have too much on their plate.'

One parent wrote that 'the stress that teachers are under to accommodate the individual needs of students, without the resources required, particularly in the inclusion of students with special needs and high behavioural needs' was an issue.

Commentators also wanted parents to be included more in their child's education.

'Schools and Education Departments seem to forget that they are providing a service to us as parents and our

children as students and they do not take our needs or opinions into account.'

'I'm concerned about how little parents are consulted about curriculum and what is being taught.'

The survey also looked at the reasons why parents chose particular schools for their children. Forty six per cent of parents who decided on non-government schools cited religion or ethos as a deciding factor. More than 50 per cent of Catholic and independent school parents also said that best fit for their child, school culture, safety and well-being, location and reputation were important considerations. By far the least important factor across all school sectors was NAPLAN scores, with five per cent of parents surveyed saying they were a consideration.

'Parents choose non-government schools for a multitude of reasons, but what is obvious and supported by our survey findings is that they simply want the best for their child and have their well-being at heart.

'Parental choice is a fundamental right in the Australian education system that is obviously valued by many parents. It is important that this choice is kept accessible and affordable,' said Shelley Hill.

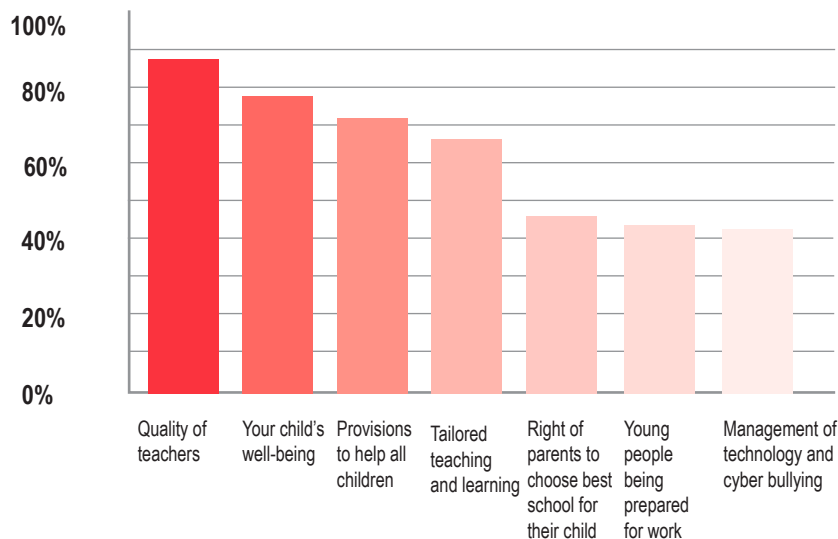
Source: www.austparents.edu.au.



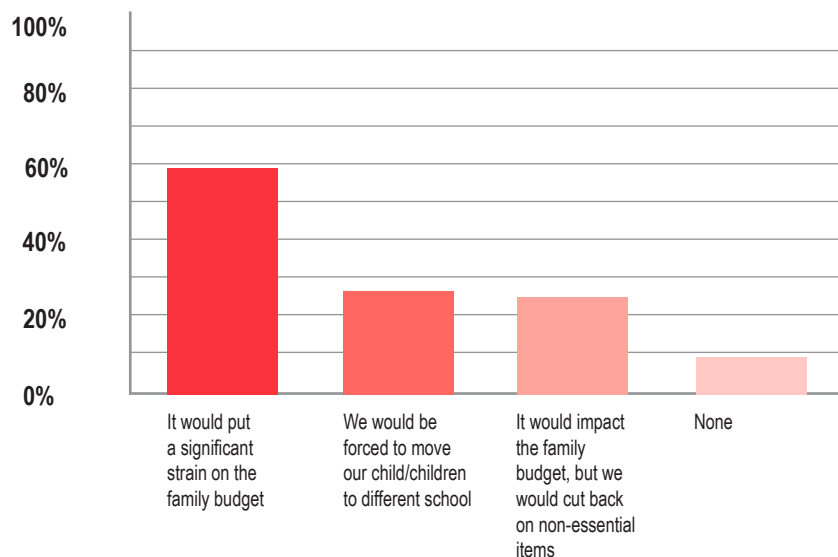
Shelley Hill APC President

Continued Overleaf

Q5: What issues are important to you when it comes to education?



Q8: If school fees increased more than expected, what effect would it have on your family?



Record levels of funding for schools Minister tells House

Education Minister Dan Tehan says the coalition government is providing record levels of funding for Australian schools, with \$309.6 billion in recurrent funding going to all schools over the 2018 to 2029 period, and Commonwealth funding for government schools increasing by 86%.

Minister Tehan told the House of Representatives on 5 December 2018 that Commonwealth funding for state schools last year was \$6.8 billion and will continue to rise to \$7.3 billion this year, \$7.9 billion next year and \$8.6 billion the year after - 'going up and up and up.'

'Commonwealth funding for Catholic schools was \$6.3 billion last year. It will be \$6.6 billion this year, it will be \$6.9 billion next year and it will be \$7.3 billion the year after that—going up and up and up.'

'Commonwealth funding for independent schools was \$4.4 billion last year. It will be \$4.7 billion this year, it will be \$5.1 billion next year and it will be \$5.5 billion the year after—going up and up and up.'

'From 2017 to 2027, Commonwealth funding to state schools will grow by 86 per cent.'

'This is very important, and I'm sure the House will be very interested in this: according to the Productivity Commission, since 2006, on a per student basis, Commonwealth funding to state schools has increased by 78.5 per cent. This is compared to a 7.7 per cent increase in the contribution from state and territory governments. We are doing our bit when it comes to funding state schools.'

'All up, the government is providing nearly \$310 billion between 2018 and 2029 to all schools,' the Minister told the House.

'How are we able to do this? We're able to do this because we have created a strong economy, with 1.1 million jobs created since we came to office. There are two important things that that does. It increases tax receipts so we can make sure we can pay for it. The second part is that it means our welfare payments are less. As a matter of fact, our welfare

payments are at their lowest levels in the last 30 years. That is what we've been able to achieve,' said the Minister.

Source: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=chamber/hansardr/fee5ebd4-ede8-446d-b197-e482bb2e9a33/&sid=0000



Education Minister Dan Tehan

Labor confirms \$14 billion extra for government schools

Labor has confirmed they plan to provide \$14 billion over 10 years in additional funding for government schools if elected to government, in an announcement made in October 2018.

Their media release, which focuses on what that would mean in terms of additional teachers and teaching aides, provides state by state details of the distribution over the first three years and confirms the additional funding had been costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office.

Making this announcement, Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bill Shorten MP said: 'Labor can pay for better public schools because unlike the Liberals, we're closing tax loopholes for the top end of town and making multinationals pay their fair share.'

'As a condition of this funding, a Shorten Labor Government will require states and territories to invest strongly in their schools too. States and territories will also have to sign up to a national plan to improve schools with clear and ambitious goals and targets.'

'Australian schools should be the best in the world, and every Australian child deserves the best start in life. Labor

believes that for parents to have real choice about where they send their kids, governments have a responsibility to make sure our public schools are second to none.

'Our extra investment will transform public schools across Australia and give all children the opportunity to reach their full potential – no matter where they live, or how much their parents earn. It will ensure public schools have the funding they need to give students more individual attention, and more help with the basics such as reading, writing, maths, and science.'

'It will allow public schools to offer a broader range of subjects including languages, coding, the arts, and vocational education. Labor wants every public school to reach 100 per cent of its fair funding level, and we will work with the states and territories to achieve this.'

Commenting on the announcement, Public Service Association General Secretary, Stewart Little, focussed on the important role teachers' aides play in providing individual help, especially to disadvantaged children.

'Parents with kids at public schools

understand how important the work of teachers' aides and

school support staff is. They understand that current funding levels are simply insufficient to

adequately support these vital staff.

'Stronger investment in teachers' aides will enable public school students to get the individual attention they need. This will help boost their skills with the basics – like reading, writing, maths, and science – as well as their soft skills.'

'Teachers' aides are vital in making sure kids who need extra help don't get left behind. Given 82 per cent of the poorest children and 74 per cent of children with disabilities attend public school, this funding is desperately needed.'

Source: http://www.billshorten.com.au/public_schools_in_every_state_and_territory_to_benefit_from_labor_s_investment_thursday_11_october_2018

PSA Media release 10 October 2018 psa.asn.au

STATE	3 YEAR FUNDING	EQUIVALENT No. OF TEACHERS	EQUIVALENT No. OF TEACHER AIDES
ACT	\$57m	144	247
NSW	\$917m	2,312	3,978
NT	\$41m	103	178
QLD	647m	1,631	2,807
SA	\$256m	131	226
TAS	\$52m	131	226
VIC	\$804m	2,027	3,488
WA	\$501m	1,263	2,173
	3.3 Billion	8,257	14,207

‘Two steps forward – one step back’ – funding overview

Federal Labor has announced that in government they plan to provide an extra \$14.1 billion for government schools, bringing them closer to funding 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard for every government student over the next decade.

Dr Peter Goss, school education program director at the Grattan Institute’s reaction to the announcement was broadly positive. He described it as a ‘step forward’, although he described the progress of funding reform in Australia as ‘two steps forward – one step back’ in the ‘march towards fair funding’ outcomes for all school students.

He said: ‘I recently tweeted that Australia needs to get school funding right – and then get it off the front pages. It’s the right sentiment but of course it is a little more complex than that.’

‘Whether you care about students or about consistent policy, federal Labor’s announcement on Wednesday of an extra \$14.1 billion for government schools should be welcomed, albeit with some details still to be resolved. The biggest open issue is how to ensure that the money will improve outcomes.’

‘So let’s put it in context. Reading the papers, it’s easy to get despondent. The school funding wars seem never-ending. But in fact, school funding is in a better place than it was two years ago and a much better place than 10 years ago.’

‘The original Gonski report in 2011 laid the groundwork for a consistent needs-based funding model. Labor implemented much of it but also built in some deep flaws.’

‘The Coalition improved on Labor’s model in 2017, most notably by reversing the idea that no school could ever lose a dollar.’

‘Education Minister Simon Birmingham also made federal funding consistent across states, via the Commonwealth’s “80:20” model. Under this model, the Commonwealth should provide funding to non-government schools to 80 per cent of their funding targets, with the rest met by state governments. And for government schools, the Commonwealth should contribute 20 per cent and the states 80 per cent.’

‘Consistency in federal policy is a good thing. But in practice, unless the states

come to the party, the new 80:20 rule will mean most government schools are likely to be short-changed.’

‘The recent Chaney review showed how pre-tax income could be used to gauge how much parents can afford to pay if they send their children to non-government schools. New Education Minister Dan Tehan rightly adopted Chaney’s recommendations, but then undercut himself with a \$1.2 billion slush fund based on ill-defined notions of choice and affordability.’

‘Two steps forward, one step back. Over and over. But it’s better than never moving.’

‘Labor’s new policy is another step forward. Rather than going back to Labor’s 2011 funding model, with all its flaws, opposition education spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek is taking advantage of the Coalition’s hard decisions in 2017 and building on them.’

‘Plibersek’s extra \$14 billion of funding would move all schools closer to being fully funded – reaching 100 per cent of their Schooling Resource Standard over the next decade, a formula that incorporates student need and parental capacity to contribute. Under Labor, Commonwealth funding for public schools would rise to 22.2 per cent of the school funding target for each state and territory. This focus on government schools is appropriate: they educate by far the largest proportion of disadvantaged students and they are typically further below their funding targets than non-government schools.’

‘Importantly, Labor has adopted the Coalition principle of consistency in Commonwealth contributions across states. The one exception to this consistency under the new ALP announcement is to increase funding faster for schools in the Northern Territory, which has much higher levels of disadvantage than any other jurisdiction. Even here, this is hopefully just a temporary discrepancy.’

‘Labor’s announcement does leave unanswered questions about funding for non-government schools. Labor should formally commit to the Chaney recommendations and it should reject the Coalition’s \$1.2 billion slush fund, which makes some schools more equal than others.’

‘The biggest risk, as always, is that the extra money will not have its intended

impact. Labor’s announcement signals that states will be required to sign up to new targets for school completion and improved outcomes. This sounds attractive but painful experience shows that targets can backfire, driving bureaucratic “tick-the-box” exercises that detract from real change.’

‘The other big risk is about language. Labor’s announcement is couched very much in terms of extra teachers – no doubt something that warms hearts in the education union. But the Vegemite approach – spread the money thin – has not succeeded in the past and will not succeed this time. Teaching practice needs to improve, school by school, and subject by subject. This requires new ways of working, not just more teachers doing the same things.’

‘School funding is a journey, not a destination. The goal is not actually to get it right but to keep improving it. It will get off the front pages when it is good enough. Labor’s announcement is another step in that direction.’

Source: <https://grattan.edu.au/news/two-steps-forward-one-step-back-in-march-towards-fair-outcome-for-schools/>



Dr Peter Goss, Grattan Institute

Education Council meets

The Education Council decided a number of actions at their meeting on 13 December 2018.

Review of the goals for schooling

Education ministers agreed to undertake a review of the 2008 Melbourne Declaration, which sets out the educational goals for young Australians based on equity and excellence and describes the eight target areas to support these goals. The review process commences in February 2019 with a forum for consultation in collaboration with key stakeholder groups.

APC wants to ensure that the first target area - developing stronger partnerships - is maintained in any new declaration, and keeps the recognition of the role of parents and carers, which in the current declaration defines as 'parents, carers and families are recognised as the first and most important influence in a child's life, instilling the attitudes and values that will support young people to participate in schooling and contribute to broader local and global communities'.

Review of the National Quality Framework

Ministers also endorsed terms of reference for a 2019 review of the National Quality Framework (NQF) to consider a number of issues impacting

the early childhood education and care sector, including recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as they relate to the NQF. National consultations begin early in 2019.

Implementation of National School Reform Agreement

The Education Council agreed on a program of work to support the implementation of the eight national policy initiatives set out in the National School Reform Agreement. This agreement, between the Commonwealth and all states and territories, outlines strategic reforms in areas where national collaboration will have the greatest impact on driving improved student outcomes. The agreement will operate from 2019 to 2023. Each initiative will be jointly developed by all Australian governments with reporting to council throughout 2019.

Ministers discussed the central role of teachers and school leaders in implementation of the reforms, and that there will be early and close consultation and collaboration particularly to inform the design and development of classroom resources that are teacher-led, easy to use and will support student learning.

Other Issues

Council received updates on the implementation of education related recommendations concerning the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and on the 2018 work on the STEM Strategy.

Ministers noted the Review of NAPLAN Data Presentation Interim Report and requested further advice from ACARA for consideration of reporting 2018 NAPLAN data on the My School website, at Education Council's next meeting in February 2019. Tony Abbott MP, Special Envoy for Indigenous Affairs addressed the council on the challenges and opportunities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. He outlined his views on a range of reforms and initiatives to promote greater school attendance and improve student outcomes.

Sources: <http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au>
https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/national_school_reform_agreement_8.pdf
http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/national_declaration_on_the_educational_goals_for_young_australians.pdf

National School Reform Agreement. What are the agreed reform initiatives?

The eight national policy initiatives are:

1. Enhancing the Australian Curriculum to support teacher assessment of student attainment and growth against clear descriptors
2. Assisting teachers monitor individual student progress and identify student learning needs through opt-in online and on demand student learning assessment tools with links to student learning resources, prioritising early years foundation skills
3. Reviewing senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training
4. Reviewing teacher workforce needs of the future to attract and retain the best and brightest to the teaching profession and attract teachers to areas of need
5. Strengthening the initial teacher education accreditation system
6. Implementing a national unique student identifier (USI) that meets national privacy requirements (USI) in order to support better understanding of student progression and improve the national evidence base
7. Establishing an independent national evidence institute to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development
8. Improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development.

Perceptions of parenting matter

Given that parenting has the greatest impact on the long-term health and wellbeing of children, what makes parenting effective and supportive? Is it a naturally acquired skill or, as parenting experts advise, should it be helped by access to evidence based strategies which support parents in raising children.

Research commissioned by the Parenting Research Centre and conducted by the Frameworks Institute showed that cultural models of parenting make Australians resistant to thinking about parenting as a conscious, skill-based practice that can be intentionally improved. It identified gaps in understanding between public and expert views of effective parenting and offered recommendations for those communicating about parenting, as well as the need for a comprehensive effective-parenting communication strategy.

The views of the experts were gathered from interviews with researchers, practitioners and policy experts, from relevant academic literature and in-person expert feedback. The public view was amassed from an analysis of 50 in-depth two-hour interviews with people in three locations in Australia.

Happiness is a central concept in public thinking about parenting. Raising a happy child is assumed to be the goal of parenting, and the happiness of the parent is assumed to be a vital

means of achieving good parenting, as happy, 'normal' people are thought to have a natural capacity to care for children. The public view equates good parenting with 'just caring about your child'. People assume that this naturally and automatically flows from being a normal and moral individual. Parenting is not thought to require intentional or conscious effort, but rather happens 'naturally' and unconsciously.

Experts, on the other hand, say that while there are diverse ways to be an effective parent, it requires skills and capacities on the part of parents to guide children and scaffold children's activities, to respond to their individual and changing needs and to set predictable and secure boundaries and expectations for children's behaviour.

According to the experts, effective parents strive to meet their children's biological, cognitive and emotional needs, and to nurture and stimulate their children so they develop into skilled, self-reliant and empathetic individuals, who can relate well to others.

Gaps in understanding

The research says that analysis revealed a number of major gaps between expert and public understandings of effective parenting.

• **Effective Parenting: Skills and Practices v. Natural Caring.**

Experts emphasise that effective

parenting requires specific skills and involves particular practices, whereas the public assume that good parenting flows naturally and automatically from simply having a concern for children.

• **Goal of Parenting: Capacity Building v. Happiness.**

Experts emphasise the goal of cultivating in children a range of physical, emotional, mental, linguistic and social capacities, while the public equate parenting success with raising a happy child.

• **Early Years: Critical Focus v. Out of Mind.**

While experts stress the vital importance of parenting in the early years of childhood, the public consistently age up when thinking about parenting, disregarding the earliest years of child development.

• **Influences: Interplay of Factors v. Parenting History.**

Both experts and the public recognise that how people parent is influenced by how they were parented, but this factor dominates public thinking while, for experts, it is merely one factor alongside many others.

• **Characteristics of the Child: Part of the Story v. Off the Radar.**

Experts note that the characteristics of children can influence parenting behaviour, but this possibility is not part of people's default understandings or thinking about parenting.

• **Outcomes: Collective v. Individual.**

Experts emphasise that parenting impacts on society as a whole, yet the public think about parenting outcomes almost exclusively in terms of outcomes for individual children.

• **Support for Parents: Systemic v. Interpersonal.**

Both experts and the public recognise the need for support for parents, but experts think of support in systemic terms, such as the need for better community services and more supportive public policies, while the public think of support almost exclusively in interpersonal terms, as individuals supporting one another.

• **Improving Parenting: Possible v. Impossible.**

While experts outline specific steps that can be taken to improve parenting, both within Australian society generally and within disadvantaged populations in particular, the public are fatalistic and assume that, in many cases, nothing can be done to improve parenting. This



fatalism is especially pronounced in public thinking about disadvantaged communities.

Policy Solutions: Central v. Absent.

Public policies play a central role in expert thinking about solutions, while they are largely absent from public thinking.' (Pages 8-9)

The report generates a number of recommendations for communicating

with the public about parenting. Amongst these are:

- advancing the idea of parenting as a set of skills that can be acquired and improved through experience
- the idea that good parenting is about modelling behaviours
- encouraging discussions of the importance of parenting for early childhood development

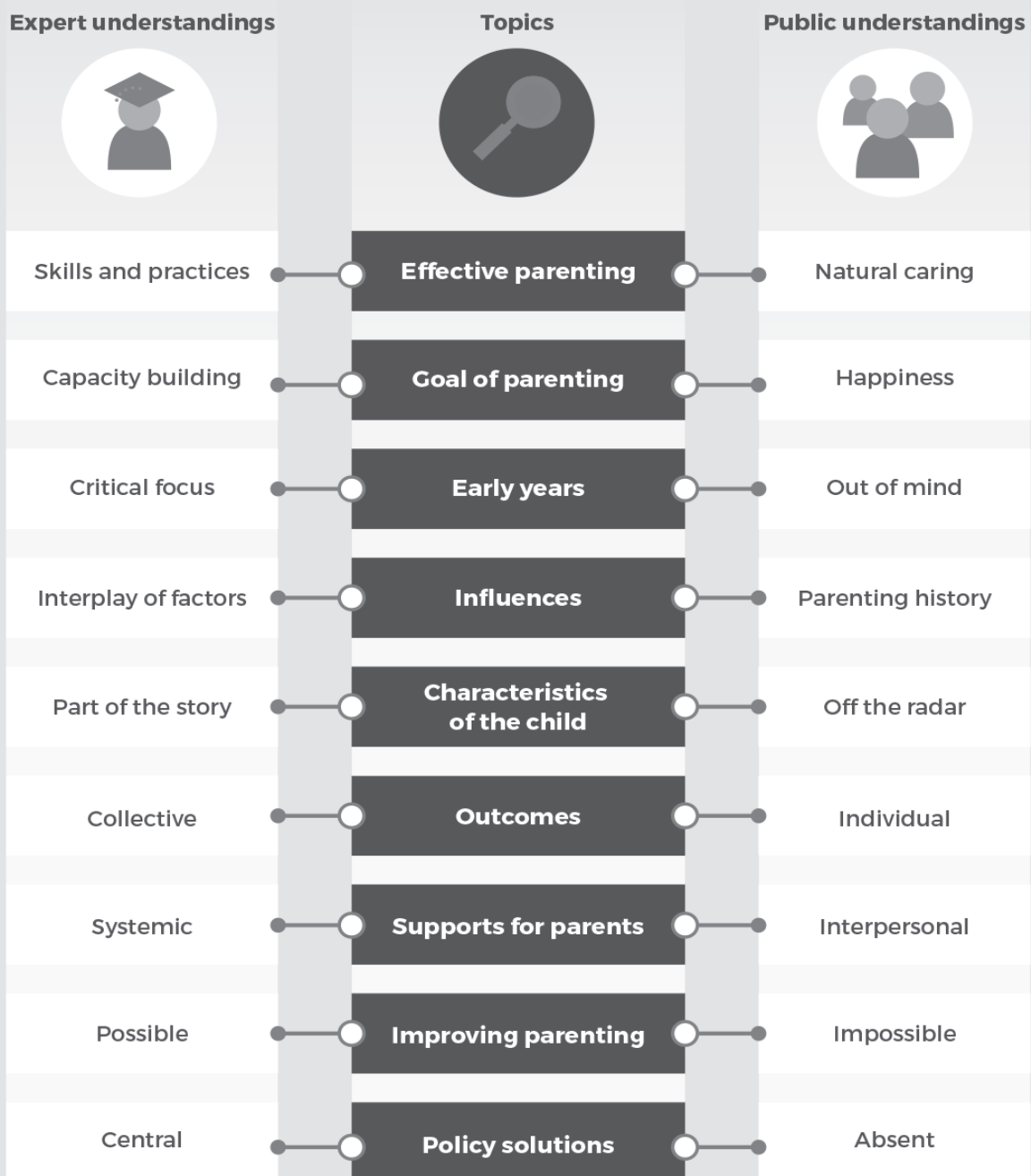
- access to parenting programs framed as a resource for parents to use, rather than as instruction of parents.

The report concludes that communicators will need tools that help people understand how programs and policies can, in fact, disrupt cycles of ineffective parenting and improve outcomes.

Sources: *parentingrc.org.au*

Perceptions of Parenting

This research – commissioned by the Parenting Research Centre and conducted by the FrameWorks Institute – maps the gaps between expert and public understandings of effective parenting in Australia.



Read the full and free report: www.parentingrc.org.au/perceptions

Ruddock religious freedom review recommends new legislation

Australians enjoy a high degree of religious freedom and basic protections are in place in Australian law, in the Australian Constitution and in Commonwealth, State and Territory laws, according to the long-awaited report of Phillip Ruddock's Religious Freedom Review, which was released by the Morrison government on 13 December 2018.

The review concluded, however, that in the absence of any specific and comprehensive law dealing with freedom of religion, there is an opportunity to further protect, and better promote the right to freedom of religion in law and in the public sphere both through amendments to Commonwealth, state and territory legislation, and non-legislative measures, and through the drafting and adoption of a new federal Religious Freedom Act or a Human Rights Act.

The review was charged with examining and reporting on whether Australian law (Commonwealth, State and Territory) adequately protects the human right to freedom of religion. It considered fifteen thousand submissions, conducting numerous consultations and a careful review of discrimination laws, local and international.

Fifteen of the review's 20 recommendations concerned ways in which the Commonwealth and the states and territories could strengthen the fundamental human right of freedom of religion through legislative, administrative and educational means.

The remaining five recommendations, 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8, concerned reviewing, amending and considering the retention of the current exemptions from discrimination laws for religious bodies and schools. The panel view was that exceptions for religious bodies may be required in order to safeguard other aspects of the right to freedom of religion or belief. They said that careful consideration of appropriate exceptions would be required in the development of this legislative protection.

Frank Brennan SJ AO, a member of the Ruddock Review panel, commented on calls for the repeal of the current exemptions for religious bodies on 17 December saying:

'Both sides of politics are agreed that the repeal of this provision should not be permitted to work any interference with the right of religious institutions to teach their doctrine in good faith. The

Labor Party has agreed to specify that 'nothing in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 renders it unlawful to engage in teaching activity if that activity: (a) is in good faith in accordance with the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings of a particular religion or creed; and (b) is done by, or with the authority of, an educational institution that is conducted in accordance with those doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings.

'The government is prepared to put such a statement in legislation. Let's hope all members of parliament after Christmas can agree to the insertion of such a clause in the legislation providing assurance to religious educators that they can continue to teach their doctrine in good faith while assuring all students and their families that they will not suffer any detriment while sitting at the feet of religious educators. Even with an election in the wings, it should not be too much to expect that our elected leaders commit to a Religious Discrimination Act, enhance the role of the Australian Human Rights Commission, and get some uniformity in the states and territories when it comes to selection criteria for students and staff in religious schools.'

Government Response to the Review

The government released its detailed response to the Review and its recommendations along with the report, accepting either directly or in principle, 15 of the 20 recommendations. It intends to refer the remaining five recommendations, which concern current discrimination exemptions, to the Australian Law Reform Commission for inquiry and report.

In his accompanying media release Prime Minister Scott Morrison said: 'Our response to the Religious Freedom Review, chaired by the Hon. Philip Ruddock, is about protecting every Australian from discrimination.

'The review concluded there is an opportunity to further protect and better promote freedom of religion under Australian law and in the community. We have accepted 15 of the 20 recommendations, and we will consult with the States and Territories on the terms of a potential reference to the Australian Law Reform Commission on the remaining five recommendations. Those recommendations deal with current exemptions to anti-discrimination provisions in Commonwealth, State and Territory law.'

The Prime Minister said that the government intends to bring forward a package of legislation as soon as possible, that will:

- establish religion as a protected attribute in a new Religious Discrimination Act, rendering discrimination on this basis unlawful
- establish a new statutory position of Freedom of Religion Commissioner in the Australian Human Rights Commission
- develop a Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill for introduction into Parliament as soon as practicable, implementing a range of amendments recommended by the Ruddock Review
- support the Australian Human Rights Commission to increase community awareness of the importance of freedom of religion.

Organisational Responses

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) welcomed the Review and the government's response and said that the proposal to legislate for religious freedom rather than relying on exemptions could offer a way forward for religious schools to celebrate and practice their religious heritage while maintaining inclusive practices.

Chief Executive Officer, Miss Beth Blackwood said: 'Public debate on the status of religious freedom in Australia and how it may best be protected was not served well by media coverage of leaks from the Ruddock Review report. Australians now have the opportunity to read the full report and, in due course, consider carefully the implications of new and amended legislation.

'The Government's intended program of review and consultation offers the opportunity for informed public debate. We should resist any attempt to derail that opportunity.'

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) said it supports enshrining the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief in legislation, ideally in a broader human rights act. However, this right must not be exercised in a way that denies others their rights.

'ACOSS supports removing the existing exemptions from anti-discrimination laws in the provision of education, employment, goods and services that religious organisations currently hold, and replacing them with more limited

exemptions to enable them to organise and conduct affairs closely connected to religious worship, observance, practice and teaching.

'ACOSS will carefully review any proposed legislation to ensure that it doesn't further entrench the discrimination that LGBTIQ people, including children, already face in education, employment, and provision of goods and services by religious organisations.

The Equality Project, a new national advocacy organisation for LGBTIQ people and allies across the social justice movement, says that Australia needs to legislate for equality not religious exceptionalism.

Anna Brown, incoming Chief Executive of Equality Australia and Director of Legal Advocacy at the Human Rights Law Centre, said that the release of the report has prompted Australia's first LGBTIQ+ legal advocacy group, Equality Australia, to call for stronger federal protections from discrimination for LGBTIQ+ people.

'Attempts to protect religious freedom

should not undermine the right to equality for other groups in society,' she said.

'No one should be turned away or mistreated because of their faith. However, we remain deeply concerned that attempts to legislate to protect religious freedom will come at the expense of equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.'

'We will be carefully considering the detail of the Government's response, but remain concerned that future legislation will enshrine state sanctioned discrimination against LGBT children and impunity for church leaders who cause harm,' said Ms Brown.

Sources: <https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Documents/religious-freedom-review-expert-panel-report-2018.pdf>

<https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Pages/Freedom-of-Religion.aspx>

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/government-response-religious-freedom-review>

<https://www.ahisa.edu.au>

<http://equality.org.au>

<http://www.eurekastreet.com.au> Religious Freedom | Secular Australia



Philip Ruddock Chair of the Religious Freedom Review

Inquiry into status of the teaching profession

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training is holding an inquiry into the status of the teaching profession.

According to the terms of reference, the committee is examining and will report on the status of the teaching profession, and will consider opportunities to improve outcomes in a range of areas including:

Increasing the attractiveness of the profession for teachers and principals, including workplace conditions, and career and leadership structures

Provision of appropriate support platforms for teachers, including human and IT resources

Identifying ways in which the burden of out-of-hours, at-home work can be reduced

Investigating ways to increase retention rates for the teaching profession and avoid 'burn out' among early-career teachers.

Committee Chair, Mr Andrew Laming MP, commented when announcing the inquiry: 'Although there are more teachers in Australia than ever, the attrition rate from the profession is rising.

'This inquiry will examine ways to

develop proper career structures and pathways for teachers to ensure that the profession remains fulfilling and rewarding for educators. In addition, the inquiry will examine how teachers can be better supported within classrooms and schools more generally, to minimise the amount of time that is spent undertaking out-of-hours work'.

Andrew Laming MP, Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training State and territory said that reforms will be considered along with outcomes from two key reports:

- *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*
- *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers.*

'In particular, the Committee wants to look at ways to overcome current constraints to deliver the best school education model for Australia.

'Some of those constraints include: inflexible curriculum delivery; periodic reporting and assessment practices; a lack of evidenced-based research; an absence of readily-available class room applications; time pressures for teachers and principals; and a lack of support for

school principals to develop professional autonomy,' said Mr Laming.

Submissions to the committee closed on 21 December 2018.

Sources: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/TeachingProfession/Media_Releases

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/TeachingProfession/Terms_of_Reference



Andrew Laming MP, Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training

‘Teacher time should be spent in learning development, liaising with students and parents and providing quality assessment and feedback for learning.’



APC submission calls for more training and support for teachers

APC emphasised how highly quality teaching is valued by parents, and included a number of strategies for improving the status and experience of teachers, in its December 2018 submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession.

‘In fact, APC’s national survey of parents found parents consider it the most important education issue. APC supports the current focus on evaluating and implementing evidence-based and innovative practice and believe it has the potential to serve our children’s education well, today and into the future,’ it stated. The submission addressed four main areas.

1. *Increasing the attractiveness of the profession for teachers and principals, including workplace conditions, and career and leadership structures*

Suggestions included:

Developing a sense of stability and clarity in education for principals, teachers, parents and students. Better remuneration and reward over career progression and a greater voice in decisions around curriculum, assessment and reporting.

Developing more respect for the

profession within communities and the broader Australian culture. ‘Positive and supportive parent/teacher relationships are key and to this end, we have consistently called for a National Parent Engagement Day to promote the collaboration between schools, teachers and families, and the opportunities and increased educational outcomes that arise when there is a genuine partnership between home and school. This should be enhanced by a campaign to improve communication channels and the language used in the public when talking about teachers.’

Better support and training for teachers to develop relationships with parents. Teacher professional development based on specialist units in engagement and partnership in APC’s Certificate IV in Parent, Family and Community Engagement, (developed with specialist education provider, Lee Hecht Harrison) was given as an example of further support for the profession. This will be offered for the first time in 2019.

‘Teachers would benefit from increased understanding of parent engagement practices particularly in pre-service teacher programs.’

2. *Provision of appropriate support platforms for teachers, including human and IT resources.*

‘Teacher time should be spent in learning development, liaising with students and parents and providing quality assessment and feedback for learning.’

Suggestions included:

Rationalising workloads and reducing the administration and non-specialist work currently undertaken by teachers and principals, providing more IT support and increasing teaching aide capacity so teachers can concentrate on their core work.

Reduction in the number of teachers teaching outside their discipline specialty especially in regional, rural and remote schools. This could be achieved with better use of ICT and digital technology industries, work experience opportunities, mentoring and ongoing industry connections for teachers, for example, by identifying and better utilising the skills, knowledge and connections of industry leaders.

3. *Identifying ways in which the burden of out-of-hours, at-home work can be reduced.*

‘Parents want quality teachers who are healthy, prepared and enthusiastic about their work! We recognise that teachers enter the profession motivated by their passion for developing students and supporting their learning. This must be protected by allowing them the time

and space to undertake their core work.’

Suggestions included:

Streamlining teachers’ roles in school hours, respecting their area of specialisation recognising that quality teaching and learning is underpinned by quality preparation which takes time.

Exploring beyond the traditional education model – flexible school days, shared teaching roles and more support for teachers to have the opportunity to work collaboratively with peers and plan highly effective learning experiences for students.

4. *Investigating ways to increase retention rates for the teaching*

profession, and avoid ‘burn out’ among early-career teachers.

Suggestions included:

Additional preparation time and support for early career teachers to develop strong practical foundations in their field/ specialisation

Increasing mentoring programs

Investigating ways to move towards a very different approach to parent-teacher collaboration that would support early career teachers and increase the retention of all teachers, based on the child’s learning as the centre of the mutual conversation. Debbie Pushor’s work on ‘teacher knowledge’ and ‘parent

knowledge’ should be considered in this context [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Debbie_Pushor]. Another interesting paper on this approach is written by Janet Goodall (2018), Learning-centred parental engagement: Freire reimagined in the Educational Review, 70:5, 603-621.

The full submission is available on APC’s website: www.austparents.edu.au/news/submissions/

Principles of research and practice for building family and community engagement

The Global Family Research Project has identified a number of principles as part of its Engaging Families to Transform Education <https://globalfrp.org/project/>:

- Families matter when it comes to children’s development and learning, from birth into and throughout adolescence.
- Family engagement is a shared responsibility among families, schools, and communities, and is an essential ingredient - along with leadership, coherent instructional systems, professional learning efforts, and student-centred learning climates - in any effort to ensure the success of low-income children.
- Family engagement pathways must begin early, persist across time, and transform according to age and context.
- Family engagement takes place across a variety of settings, including homes, schools, and community spaces, as well as libraries, after-school programs and museums.
- Family engagement builds on families’ strengths and culture and creates equity.
- Family engagement interventions, when part of a larger, comprehensive initiative, can make a difference for children and families.
- Family engagement recognizes that families play multiple roles in students’ development and learning.
- Family engagement is most effective when it brings families, educators and communities together to co-create strategies that achieve mutually agreed upon outcomes for children, families, schools and communities.
- Family engagement requires shifts in the mindsets of families, teachers, and others who work with children, changes in organizational policies, and broader public understanding of the importance of family engagement and what it entails in their community.

Global Family Research Project is an independent, entrepreneurial non-profit organisation that supports effective engagement practices and policies so that “all children find success in and out of school.” Its work is “scientifically based, cutting edge, accessible, and practical” and includes:

- Research and Analysis
- Policy
- Professional Learning
- Evaluation

Engaging Families to Transform Education is intended to spark a conversation around the power of family, school, and community engagement.

Parent attitudes to NAPLAN online

Over half of parents believe that NAPLAN online will be an overall improvement on pen and paper assessments, although many parents are unfamiliar with the new format, according to research commissioned by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

ACARA plans to roll out NAPLAN online to 50-70% of schools in 2019.

The survey of 1200 parents, across Australia, with children in government, Catholic and independent schools found that in general, parents accept the move to NAPLAN online.

- It is perceived as part of a broader trend to an online format in general, and in school work specifically.
- In addition, there is awareness that some school tests are already conducted online.

The perceived main benefit of conducting it online is that results will be available faster allowing teachers and parents to assist with child's literacy and numeracy skills earlier in the year. The majority of parents believe NAPLAN online will be more engaging for students.

Parents identified a range of potential advantages to moving NAPLAN online, including:

- Students will find it easier and/or less stressful to complete the tests as they are comfortable and proficient in an online environment
- Results will be provided to both teachers and parents more quickly, enabling earlier intervention if required
- Easier to read and mark than handwriting so students whose

"Makes no difference... most lessons are online, so I just assumed it would be anyway" Sydney, Public

"More and more of what they do in school is online, so surely it's logical that this particular thing is following that" Perth, Public

"They're so young but so immersed in all these technologies that have come about much later in our lives... the way things seem to be going" Canberra, Public

"It seems inevitable" Ballarat, Private

handwriting is less clear will not be disadvantaged

- Saves paper/the environment
- Easier for students with (some) disabilities.

Parents identified a range of concerns around NAPLAN online, including:

- Availability of appropriate technology
- Variations in computer literacy and typing speed
- Potential loss of network connection
- Security issues
- Comparability of paper vs online results and impact on standardisation
- Ability to show working for maths questions.

Parents with children who have already completed NAPLAN online expressed few concerns.

The research found that parents' knowledge of the purpose and logistics of NAPLAN is often limited. Information about NAPLAN online provided from schools generally focuses on timing and practical requirements e.g. device requirements.

- In some cases, schools informed parents via newsletter or email.
- Although some schools had sent links to further details about NAPLAN online, parents had not sought additional information.
- Online testing had elicited few comments from students or conversations between parents and their children.

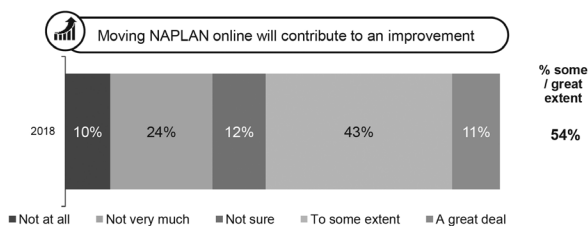
The research was carried out last year by Colmar Brunton. Researchers conducted 16 x 90 minute focus group discussions. All participants had at least one child in year 2, 3, 5, 7 or 9. In each group participants represented a mix of gender and income levels.

Information for parents on NAPLAN online, including sample tests, is available on the ACARA website www.nap.edu.au/naplan/parent-carer-support.

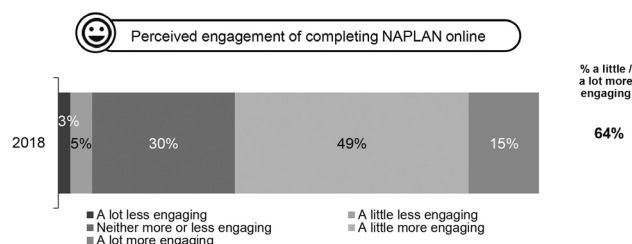
ACARA has also launched a new parent newsletter to keep parents informed of developments in NAPLAN, My School and the Australian curriculum. Subscribe via <https://confirmsubscription.com/h/j/0EF4811A90ACFBC1>.

Source: ACARA.

Over half of parents believe that moving NAPLAN online will contribute to an overall improvement in NAPLAN.



The majority of parents believe that completing NAPLAN online will be a more engaging experience for students.



VET info-graphics for parents

APC has developed new resources for parents designed to raise awareness of the opportunities offered by Vocational Educational and Training (VET).

The free, downloadable info-graphics challenge many common misconceptions about VET. They are the first information resource aimed directly at parents and were developed in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Education and Training as part of the Real

Skills for Real Careers initiative.

APC President, Shelly Hill said 'Many parents don't realise that VET provides training to meet the needs of tomorrow's workplaces and are surprised by the breadth of qualifications and careers that VET includes. It is important that they understand the real advantages of the flexible, work-focused learning offered by VET, and how highly valued it is by employers.'

'Parents are also not aware that the world of work is changing faster than ever. Today's 15-year-olds are likely to have 5 different careers and are going to have to up to date skills throughout our lives and VET is the main way of doing that.'

'For example, in-demand sectors include care and community, hospitality and services industries according to the Department of Jobs and Small Business

Not sure what you want to do when you leave school?

Keep your options open with VET

It gives you real insight into different careers, and makes you more employable. It can even count towards your degree if you decide to go to Uni.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do till I tried it, then I fell in love with it."

James Schifferle
IT Tutor/Demonstrator and VET graduate



Explore all the opportunities
Vocational Education and Training offers
at myskills.gov.au

real skills for
real careers
myskills.gov.au

2017 Industry Employment Projections, which can all be accessed via VET. In fact, VET qualifications cover all 10 industry subgroups predicted to see the largest employment gains by 2020, and nine out of ten jobs expected to see fastest growth in demand.

'Parents influence the work and study choices young people make, so the info-graphics aim to make parents are aware of what's really going on so they can help young people make smart choices,' said Shelley Hill.

The info-graphics can be downloaded from APC's website austparents.edu.au/information-and-advice/vet-infographics/ and can also be used by schools, careers counsellors, teachers, employers and community groups.

There are 3 series:

- 1. Mythbusters** aim to challenge what you think you know about VET.
- 2. Did you know?** This series is full of surprising information about the world of possibilities opened up by VET and is packed full of interesting and unexpected facts.
- 3. How did I get here?** Interesting and inspirational VET graduates tell their career story and share their insights and advice.

State and territory funding deals fail government schools

The new bilateral funding deals between the Commonwealth and states change the calculation of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) effectively reducing the extra funding that states would otherwise have to provide for public schools.

These deals include not only the net recurrent per student income needed to achieve improved student outcomes in the SRS calculation, but also other schooling related expenditure like school transport, depreciation and administrative costs.

This allows state governments to boost their share of the mandated state contribution to the SRS by up to 4% of the total, without providing additional funds to public schools.

The potential loss to the government school sector is significant and particularly ironic given the states' outrage over the federal government's additional \$4.6 billion funding over 10 years for Catholic and independent schools. NSW Minister for Education, Rob Stokes accused the federal government of "playing favourites" by not providing additional funding for government schools.

Rob Stokes later signed NSW up to their agreement with the Commonwealth, but only after negotiating changes in the calculation of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) to include up to 4% of the total SRS it spends on the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and capital depreciation. These are items of education-related expenditure, but hardly part of a net income calculation.

The swindle is implemented by selectively changing the rules on what is included...

South Australia signed their bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth with a 4% proportion of the total SRS permitted to be spent on direct school transport costs and depreciation on assets, effectively boosting their SRS contribution without additional state funding. Similar provisions apply in agreements signed with other states and territories with the exception of Victoria, where negotiations are ongoing.

Effect of the Changes

Trevor Cobbold from Save our Schools says that NSW and South Australian public schools will be 'swindled' by about \$7.5 billion over the next decade as a result of these changes to the calculation of the SRS, and by about \$16.5 billion across Australia over the next ten years if the same happens in the other states and territories.

'The swindle is implemented by selectively changing the rules on what is included in the measure of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) for public schools. The SRS is calculated as the net recurrent income needed by schools to achieve successful education outcomes, taking account of a range of factors influencing those outcomes. It has been the key parameter in determining government funding of schools since the introduction of the Gonski funding model. Under Gonski 2.0, state governments are expected to contribute at least 75% of the SRS of public schools by 2023.

'Until now, the SRS has been used as a nationally consistent funding measure accepted by all governments. However, what is included in its measure has been selectively changed in the bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth, and this change has major implications for the future funding of public schools.

'The bilateral agreements permit the governments to artificially boost their share of funding public schools by claiming expenditures such as depreciation, school transport and other items in their share of funding the SRS for public schools up to 4% of the total SRS. These items are in fact explicitly excluded from the net recurrent income measure of the SRS as developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

'The sleight of hand means that the state governments do not have to increase recurrent funding for public schools by

as much to achieve their 75% target shares because they can claim the additional expenditures up to 4% of the value of the SRS. The gap between their 2017 funding and the SRS target can thereby be reduced by four percentage points so that less recurrent funding is required to get to the SRS target. This amounts to a loss of funding for public schools that states would otherwise be required to provide.

'The inclusion of additional expenditure items in the SRS as a measure of progress towards the 75% target undermines national consistency in the SRS and further undermines the integrity of the current funding model. It is contradictory to measure progress towards the SRS target by including items in the measure of state funding that are excluded from the national measure of the SRS.

'The new bilateral agreements continue the tradition of special funding deals made by Labor and Coalition governments that undermine the integrity of the principle of needs-based funding. The Gonski 2.0 funding arrangements have been debased by special deals that advantage private schools. Public schools are doubly disadvantaged by the special deals that provide non-needs-based funding increases to private schools and smaller increases in state government funding than required under the national measure of the SRS.'

Sources:

<http://www.saveourschools.com.au/funding/public-schools-are-swindled-by-billions-under-new-education-agreements>

<https://www.education.gov.au/national-school-reform-agreement-0>

