



THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS

The national voice of parents of children in Australia's public schools and their school communities

FUNDING ADVANCE OUTRAGEOUS

"It is with extreme disappointment that the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) receive news of yet another special funding deal for the non-government sector. The funding advance offered by the Federal Government and forcing the non-government sector to open by June 1 is nothing short of outrageous" claimed ACSSO President, Andrew Bidwell.

ACSSO has always demanded that the funding agreements in education be fair, simple and transparent and that no system be afforded special deals.

"If we have learnt nothing else from the COVID-19 pandemic it is that Australia's education systems are absolutely riddled with inequities and that these inequities are for the most part supported by funding from State/Territory and Federal Governments.

Yesterday's deal raises numerous questions around these inequities and further indicts the Federal Government in exacerbating them" he continued.

ACSSO is deeply concerned about the following:

- Regardless of special deals, it is the parents, in this time of uncertainty, that make the decision in regard to their child's attendance at school. Parents should not be pressured into this decision by their school being able to access a special funding deal. This special deal not afforded to the public sector could be seen as a "back - handed way" of putting pressure on public schools to do same for fear that their students will "fall behind" – the equity gap to be further widened, disadvantaging Year 12s
- The Federal Government through its funding policies has fuelled massive expansion in the innate cost base of private sector schooling. A sector that has now come to want and expect additional government funding to subsidise the cost of maintaining and operating ever growing campus's with facilities
- Most would have received this year's allocation and additionally much of this year's school fees
- Principle 4 of the COVID-19 National Principles for School Education, as agreed upon by the National Cabinet, says "State and Territory Governments and non-government sector authorities are responsible for managing and making operational decisions for their school systems respectively, subject to compliance with relevant funding agreements with the Commonwealth.". This deal undermines their responsibility
- Most non-government schools are highly resourced – particularly with technology and are able to meet the needs of student learning from home

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- Non-government schools are eligible, unlike Public Schools, to access the JobKeeper arrangements to assist in maintaining staff and therefore should not have the desperate need to receive this advance.

Most of the funding for public schools is dependent on State and Territory Government as part of the 80/20% split with the Federal Government. Sadly, most State and Territory Governments only fund to 75% - leaving public schools with no ability to reach 100% of the School Resourcing Standard (SRS). The current environment has also highlighted that:

- Government schools are stretched to capacity and those that have students returning are in the position of needing to hire casual placements to cover staff that are “at risk” and remain working from home
- Government schools and / or parents are expending additional monies to ensure students have appropriate technology and connectivity
- Government schools are also expending additional funds in supplying students without technology to access hard copy materials.

All this without opportunity for additional funding support from the State/Territory or Federal Government.

“However, the biggest unanswered questions are - what happens next year? Will the non-government sector be happy with only 75% of their funding or will the Federal Government bow to the additional pressure to fill a perceived funding shortfall of its own making?” Mr Bidwell concluded.

For further comment:

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