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Submission by the NSW Primary Principals' Association (NSWPPA) to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment

4th March 2016

Terms of Reference

On 4 February 2016, the Senate resolved to establish the Select Committee on School Funding Investment. The committee is to inquire on the effect of reduced Commonwealth funding for state and territory provided schools, with particular reference to:

- a. the impact of the cuts announced in the 2014-15 Budget and confirmed in the 2015-16 Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook;
- b. the impact on schools and students in regional, rural and remote areas;
- c. the impact on students acquiring the job skills of the future, including science, technology, engineering, arts and maths; and
- d. any related matter.

Submission from the NSW Primary Principals' Association

Introduction

The NSW Primary Principals' Association (NSWPPA) represents students in over 1,700 public primary education environments (primary schools, central schools, community schools, special schools, hospital schools, and environmental education centres) providing an education to approximately 486,000 students. The Association welcomes the opportunity to put forward a submission regarding the future funding for state and territory provided schools.

The Gonski review of school funding (2011), commissioned by the Australian Government, was conducted by a non-partisan expert panel formed to conduct a comprehensive review of school funding - the first in more than three decades. The review recommended a level of funding to ensure each student was provided the opportunity to realise their potential and bring about their best contribution to our nation. It recommended a sector-blind funding model to ensure that **ALL** students in Australian schools are afforded this opportunity i.e. for the first time, provide students in all sectors with an equitable level of funding for their education.

The model and level of funding recommended by the Gonski Review has since been widely accepted by the Australian community and all education sectors in all Australian States and Territories. In NSW, the State Government has committed to both fund schools in the manner and to the level recommended by the Gonski Review.

Any failure by the Commonwealth Government to continue to provide its financial contribution to the level recommended by the Gonski Review, would severely compromise learning outcomes for NSW students – outcomes that would otherwise be achieved under the full and fair funding recommended by the Review.

Cuts to education funding from the Commonwealth, as itemised in the 2014-15 Budget and confirmed in the 2015-16 Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, will impact most severely on public schools as they educate all comers. This inclusivity within public schools places a heavy demand on their resources, both human and financial.

The impact will be to compromise:

- education programs for all students through a diminution of professional learning for teachers and leadership development for aspiring and current school leaders, including school principals – this includes support for teachers and principals in achieving the Australian Standards and gaining accreditation;
- each school's capacity to deliver personalised learning, targeting the specific needs of each student;
- student wellbeing programs, particularly for students presenting with mental health problems;
- programs which address the needs of students who demonstrate academic strength, sporting strength or higher level capacity in cultural and artistic domains;
- improved learning opportunities in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics;
- the use of technology in schools when insufficient funding results in a failure to keep pace with the ongoing and constant development of technology in every field of learning;

- the provision of equitable learning opportunities to students from families and communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage;
- the capacity of schools to provide equitable learning opportunities to students of indigenous background and restricting the capacity of teachers to achieve the targets aspired to in 'Closing the Gap';
- the provision of equitable learning opportunities to students in rural and remote communities;
- the provision of equitable learning opportunities to students of non-English speaking backgrounds or who use English as a second language, including refugees.

The NSWPPA has compiled and collated actual examples of the enhanced learning opportunities that schools have incorporated into their curriculum delivery, teacher professional learning and leadership development, since the combined Commonwealth and NSW State Government Gonski model was adopted in this State.

The NSWPPA submits to the Senate Inquiry the following examples of actual programs of support for NSW students, currently funded through the National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) between the Commonwealth and NSW State Governments i.e. utilising Gonski resources. Should the Commonwealth not provide its share of funding under NERA, the future of these programs will be severely comprised.

What Students and Schools Stand to Lose

- employment of student wellbeing officer to run tailored wellbeing programs across the school
- Introduction of new teaching and learning programs: Quicksmart
- Introduction of new teaching and learning programs: Multi-Lit
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- Performing arts program - employing drama teacher day/week with specific expertise
- Extension programs in literacy for stage 1 students
- Commenced a playgroup and school readiness program
- Introduced an innovative combined schools project working with an internationally renowned educator
- Extra staff employed for Literacy K-2
- Commenced Parent English Group to empower non-English speaking parents to participate in the learning process
- Commenced a Toddler Reading program, providing literacy lessons, fine motor activities and modelling for toddlers and their parents
- Equity in use of Technology
- Employment of an Instructional Leader to lead the development of high quality staff learning in the teaching of literacy and numeracy

- Focus on quality teacher professional learning through mentoring and coaching
- Provision of additional staff time for the writing of individual learning programs for students needing adjustments in learning arrangements and, for indigenous students' personal learning programs
- Occupational therapy, speech and kinesiology support for students
- Making adjustments and differentiating the teaching and learning programs, working in partnerships with families
- Implementing the 'Focus on Reading' program and 'Targeted Early Numeracy program; investigating the Taking Off With Numeracy' program; employment of additional school learning support officers (aides) to assist with students with additional needs; supporting professional learning through mentoring, implementing the principles of Quality Teaching in our work with the children
- Upgrading a talented teacher to Assistant Principal Teaching and Learning to provide stronger and focussed leadership on the quality of our teaching and learning programs
- Employment of an additional Aboriginal school learning support officer (aide) in our preschool
- Employment of additional Aboriginal tutors for literacy and oral language development
- Commenced operation of a kitchen garden program to promote healthy eating and students taking responsibility for their diet
- Commenced operation of a kitchen garden program for refugee students to learn English through cooking
- We have introduced the Kitchen Garden program with a combination of Stephanie Alexander and Gonski funding to start it up - achieving some of the best parent attendance as volunteers to set up garden beds and plant in my three and a half years at the school.
- Employment of a teacher to provide additional learning and support time for students with identified needs
- Employment of an English as an Additional Language or Dialect teacher to provide additional day for students with a language background other than English
- Employment of a school counsellor for an additional day a week to better support identification of student learning needs
- Employment of an additional teacher to enable team teaching with each stage determining focus and curriculum area
- Implementation of the Positive Behaviour for Learning program
- Implementing the 'Language, Learning and Literacy' program
- Employment of additional teacher time to improve support for students with learning needs and students achieving at higher academic levels
- Joint funding with community services to employ a family referral service worker in schools
- Operate Life skills program for Aboriginal Students
- Provide opportunities for teachers collaborate on the implementation of PLAN and the Australian Curriculum
- Operate a breakfast program

- Adjust the playground environment to ensure zones of play are safe, calm and engaging
- Employ Community Liaison Officers and School Learning Support Officers (aides) to provide support to the community in first language, engage in classrooms, explain notes, and support the enrolment process
- Enhance learning through technology through the acquisition of additional iPads to support innovative and engaging learning
- Employed a speech pathologist one day a week to work with students and teachers
- Employed an additional full time teacher to improve student-teacher ratios and decrease class sizes
- Improved the school's IT wireless infrastructure and hardware
- Operated a student leadership program through the Environmental Education Centre and a Sydney conference
- Offered woodwork projects to improve student engagement
- Offered extra-curricular experiences including music tuition and dance
- Offered gender specific support and an improved learning environment for boys in the school
- Operated the Quick Smart Literacy & Numeracy programs which required 3 trained school learning support officers and two coordinating teachers
- Improved the quality of school executive leadership by increasing available time
- Developed an award program for students operating from Year 2 to 12 which enables students to develop personal qualities and confidence through experiences in expeditions, outdoor education challenges, volunteering, cultural understanding self-esteem development, investigation and development of leadership qualities, academic goal setting challenges, environmental education, physical challenges, personal fitness development, innovation and public speaking. The award has components as students move through their school life and are recorded as 'competencies achieved'.
- Developed a school diary for use with students from Years 5 to 12 to enhance student personal organisation, productive use of life time and home-school communication
- Markedly improved student access to quality music education through instrument acquisition and tutorial support
- Employed a Community Liaison Officer 3 days per week to link parents and staff in activities, promote amongst parents strategies for being involved in their child's education, and improve school-home communication
- Improved transition programs for students entering Kinder and Year 7
- Improved the student awards scheme positively rewarding good application, attitude and conduct
- Student assistance for uniforms, equipment, excursion attendance
- Employment of Technical Support Officer to support use of iPads and notepads in teaching & learning programs
- Employment of Technical Assistant to ensure school LAN, related software and peripherals are operational

- Operate oral presentation program where students give presentation to a panel of 3 (staff member, community member, student a year younger) reflecting on their progress in an area of learning. Whole year group involved over a 3 day program.
- Operate feature day focussed upon student well-being, cultures of the world, anti-racism, anti-bullying (including cyber-bullying), sexual health, personal organisation
- Support acquisition of software enabling tracking of student contact details, IEPs, reports, well-being, attendance, activities, school rosters, teacher professional learning, teacher markbooks, student progress on learning continuum, timetables for students, staff and rooms
- Support teacher professional learning through Stronger Smarter program
- Acquisition of library learning and reference resources
- Provision of basic school requisites: paper, SAO time, PSSA & CHS affiliation, minor equipment, award certificates, annual presentation assembly
- Installation of sound field amplification systems in all classes preschool to Year 6
- Establishment of Aboriginal Community Yarn Up processes to improve engagement of Aboriginal parents and carers
- Professional learning, collegial support and in-class support through release of executive from class duties to mentor teaching and support staff
- Early career teacher program operating throughout the year
- Establishment of engaging and flexible outdoor learning spaces including preschool (contributed to successful external evaluation and the centre ranked as "Exceeding National Standards")
- Establishment of comprehensive Preschool to Year 6 Science and Technology Program
- Kindergarten Transition Project involving weekly visits by pairs of year 5 students to our two local preschools. Whilst there, our children help the pre-schoolers with tasks and answer questions about "big school". They are also developing friendships with the pre-schoolers who will find the transition to Kindergarten at our school next year, much less stressful. In term 3, the pre-schoolers will visit our school for a series of lessons that reflect the Kindergarten Syllabuses. In term 4, pre-schoolers will visit classrooms completing activities from key learning areas with all K-2 teachers.
- Fund whole staff professional learning focusing on personal development, team development leading to developing a positive school culture (Steven Covey training and Steve Francis workshops)
- Increasing the educational and aspirational outcomes of students in a low SES community by teaching students and parents how to learn (metalearning) through our "Learning How to Learn" program via instructional teaching lessons, staff meetings, teacher professional learning, parent workshops and students teaching parents.
- Replaced the IWBs that were no longer able to be calibrated with interactive TVs in classrooms and on Assembly. Students no longer have to look at IWBs that are not rectangles, we can get rid of the old curtains

to darken classrooms and teachers can update their IT skills. We haven't had the training yet but have booked it in a few weeks. Everyone is very excited as our IWBs were given to us second-hand from Macquarie ICT. We never had any funds to buy or replace anything substantial.

- Employ a school learning support officer (aide) to run Quicksmart. The Quicksmart program students significantly outperform the test case cohort in growth rate each year.
- We have written, resourced and implemented a K-6 writing program called WOW (We're Outstanding Writers) to improve our writing results
- We have significantly resourced our home reading program
- We have resourced Science units for the Australian Curriculum
- In response to student need, a specialist science teacher is employed one day a week to work with students who are academically strong in Science, Technology and Mathematics
- Operated a Community of Schools 'Coaching & Mentoring PL program building capacity in Assistant Principals'
- Creation of two "Alternate Learning Classes" for students in years 2-6 with behavioural and learning difficulties or confirmed disabilities. Each class is supported by a full time SLSO and additional teacher during "formal learning time" (9-11am) each day. The students are supported to engage in hands on activities including woodwork, gardening, art, tae kwon do, music etc. to engage and keep them in school.
- Created an alternate playground for students who need play space that is less restricted - higher risk. This caters (primarily) for Stage 3 boys.
- Employment of a teacher and 2 AEW's in the school, three days per week to deliver locally supported, culturally significant Aboriginal Education programs. This includes Ngargins (young kids) Yarn Up - Aboriginal cultural groups that research both personal and local history to share with family and the greater community; Ngargin Doctors - a health and leadership program for Stage 2 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children run in conjunction with the Malpa Foundation, focussing on reconciliation.
- Supported the operation of experiential learning - subsidised excursions and programs that enhance syllabus outcomes.
- Introduced extra-curricular activities - teacher created activities that change each term and provide students with access to learning that supports the development of the "whole child". These include languages, cooking, drama, music, bike riding, environmental education, charity, martial arts, woodwork, photography, Lego etc.
- Subsidised Surf awareness and Swimming Scheme programs (we are a school near the beach).
- Community reconciliation projects, including family excursions and joint projects with local NGO's to bring knowledge and understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

- Community Kids Weekend - open school where the most disadvantaged children are invited to remain at school for the weekend and participate in safe play, special meals, and generally rest from their (often traumatised) home life.
- Creation of a Student Engagement team including an off class Assistant Principal and SAO to support student and parent welfare and engagement needs within the school.
- Professional learning for teachers in wellbeing and mindfulness practices including trauma training, protective behaviours training and specific disabilities and difficulties with experts in the field.
- To run school-based teacher professional learning for K-6 staff: Once Early Action for Success (EAfS) was rolled out (and successful) we decided to use the additional funding to replicate the EAfS program in Stages 2 and 3. Our Assistant Principal for professional learning is now focused on the Year 3-6 needs and students at risk of not reaching the appropriate outcomes by the end of the year being supported by a literacy and a numeracy interventionist in the same manner as the Early Action for Success (EA4S) program. K-6 students' results are all being plotted on PLAN software and end of term data is monitored.
- Added extra hours to our chaplaincy program to employ a male teacher to work with identified, disengaged boys in the garden (maths) and through a photography unit of work – 'Birds in the Backyard' encouraging research and Literacy skills in a hands on environment.
- Employed a School Attendance Co-ordinator to address improvements need in student school attendance
- Operated a Band Program
- Breakfast and Lunch program for students at need
- Offered Environmental Programs
- Additional funding to add to Norta Norta funding to assist learning outcomes for indigenous students
- Operated Positive Parenting Programs
- Supported the implementation of Quality Teaching Rounds
- At our school students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities from Kindergarten to Year 12 all have a personalised goal to support their development of communication skills. The Language Proficiency (Gonski) funding is used to engage a speech therapist to provide quality consultation to staff about effective communication goals and strategies. Parents have participated in two workshops to learn about communication and to make relevant resource specific to their child's need for home. A School Learning Support Officer assists this program by developing resources for students and assisting parents to use current technology such as iPads and Apps for student communication. A valuable and effective program which is supporting students, families and staff in their efforts to provide quality learning opportunities for students.

Recommendations

The Gonski resources are already making a positive impact on the learning outcomes for students in NSW public schools, as evidenced by the actual examples provided in this Submission. Provision of the joint Commonwealth and State funding, recommended by the Gonski Review, is directly leading to NSW students realising their potential and consequently being better placed to make their contribution to a smart, well-educated and innovative Australia. Needs-based, sector-blind joint funding, that is directly targeted at students, is an investment in the future of our nation.

To achieve the intent of a funding model for schooling which meets the criteria identified in the Gonski Review of School Funding, the NSWPPA urgently calls for the following actions to be undertaken and endorsed by all political parties:

- **Commit to a fully resourced, needs-based funding model which meets the criteria set by the Gonski Review**
- **Commit to long-term funding certainty for schools into the future to enable contextual solutions to address local needs**
- **Commit to a bipartisan approach to education funding at all levels of government which recognises the importance of education in building this nation's future.**

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**Thank you for this opportunity to confirm our strong support for the full delivery of the Gonski
recommendations.**

Geoff Scott

NSWPPA President (on behalf of the Association)