



15 October 2024

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

By email to: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

SA Unions is pleased to make the following submission to the Senate Education and Employment Committee (**Committee**) inquiry into the *Better and Fairer Schools (Funding and Reform) Bill 2024* (Cth) (**Bill**).

1. SA Unions represents twenty-five (25) affiliated Unions and more than 160,000 union members from across a wide spectrum of industries, sectors, professions and occupations across South Australia.
2. SA Unions was founded as the United Trades and Labour Council of South Australia in 1884 and is the peak body for Unions in South Australia. Even back in the 1800s, unions weren't just concerned with workplace conditions. Unions built community, we constructed trades halls for working people to get an education, we chipped in to help families out when people got laid off. We pursued accessibility of art and culture for working people. Unions concerned themselves with what sort of society we wanted to live in. Unions were integral to institutionalising these things, ensuring that government and our broader society would carry on these pursuits, so that the burden wouldn't be borne by working people alone.
3. So it's with that in mind that we turn our attention to the future of public education.
4. SA Unions welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee and we are grateful to the Honourable Members for their participation in this important Committee.
5. It is impossible to overstate the need for secure and ongoing "full funding" for public schools.
6. Right now, only 1.3% of Australian public schools are receiving full funding.¹
7. 98.7% of public schools are resourced below the Schooling Resource Standard (**SRS**) – the minimum level required to meet the needs of every child.
8. Australian teachers and students are being short changed.

¹ Australian Education Union (2024), For Every Child report, *Their Future – Made In Australia*
https://assets.nationbuilder.com/aeu/pages/4145/attachments/original/1724131499/WEB_AEU288_TheirFuture_MadeInAust_A4.pdf?1724131499



9. For students, full funding means smaller class sizes, more support for children with additional needs and better results. It's the only way to ensure every Australian child receives the opportunities they need to succeed.
10. For teachers, full funding means more support in the classroom and more time for lesson planning and collaboration; desperately needed to address unsustainable workloads and the growing teacher shortage. Right now, Australian teachers are being asked to do too much with too little.
11. SA Unions is strongly supportive of full funding for Australian public schools. And it is clear that the Federal Labor Government is, too. At the last election, the Labor Party promised *"to work with all states and territories to get all public schools on a path to 100 per cent of the SRS."*²
12. While SA Unions acknowledges the Federal Labor Government's current funding offer of 22.5% of the SRS, two (2) primary difficulties remain, as follows.
 - 12.1. Firstly, the current funding offer of 22.5% of the SRS is below the amount required to fully fund Australian public schools.
 - 12.2. Secondly, the proposal in the Bill to set the minimum funding contribution at only 20% means that a future government could revert to the 20% funding contribution, resulting in funding cuts to Australian public schools.
13. The Bill is a step in the right direction, but it's not enough. A funding gap remains.
14. SA Unions submits that the Bill must set the Federal Government's minimum funding contribution at 25% of the SRS, rather than 20%.
15. Fully funded Australian public schools will change lives for the better; for students, for teachers and for our broader society.

SA Unions is grateful of the opportunity to make a submission to this important Committee, and we would be very pleased to send representatives to appear before the Committee and expand upon the content of this submission or other such issues at the request of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Dale Beasley
Secretary, SA Unions

² <https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/second-reading-speech-better-and-fairer-schools-funding-and-reform-bill-2024>