

Education and Employment Committee - Australian Education Amendment Bill - ACSSO Response to questions on notice posed by Senator Collins following the public hearing of the 2nd June, 2017 in Melbourne

1. *ACSSO's submission notes concerns about an underfunded public system. Is ACSSO concerned that under the Government's new proposal less than 50% of funding will go to the public system, which teaches 70 per cent of Australian students, and the vast majority of disadvantaged kids?*

Responded in public session

2. *What is the level of need in the public school sector? What are kids currently missing out on as a result of inadequate funding?*

Responded in public session

3. *Are you concerned that under the announced package more than 50% of the extra funding goes to private schools, as stated in the PM and Minister's media release on the day of the announcement?*

Responded in public session

4. *ACSSO's submission notes your member's concern about the capability and will of state and territory governments to provide their share. Are you concerned that the Government's funding proposal does not lock states and territories in to providing funding increases to get public schools to their SRS?*

Responded in public session and the response to question nine also covers this point

5. *What is ACSSO's view of the Bill locking in 80% of SRS funding for non-government schools but 20% of SRS for Government schools?*

It appears to offer a defined breakdown of the respective share from the Commonwealth and the states and territories that reflects the expected balance of contribution. In a perfect world it could be interesting to explore the concept discussed in the COAG Federation Reform White Paper, suggesting what could be defined as the principal of subsidiarity by delegating all education funding distribution decisions, of both government and non-government schools, to the states and territories. This would allow a local level decision making possibility that could address a state or territories defined priorities and remove the tension that exists between Federal and state and territory jurisdictions over education funding – maybe one for future consideration.

6. *Does ACSSO consider that 20% of the SRS is the appropriate level of funding for the Commonwealth to provide to public schools?*

ACSSO does not have a view on the defined percentage other than to ensure that public schools receive an overall suite of resources and support, including funding, from combined government input that allows a high quality learning environment to flourish across the nation. The loadings

that are in place to address disadvantage are perhaps more worthy of consideration, to ensure that the formulae and methodology underpinning the needs based principles are appropriate in a possible single national model. This is an essential consideration as the burgeoning enrolments in public schools are testament to the active choices that parents are making in selecting public education as the best option for their family's future.

7. *In Figure 8 of the Grattan Institute submission it shows that by 2027 under the Government's proposed arrangements NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, TAS and NT public schools will all be under their SRS. Yet their Figure 9 shows that almost all non-government schools will be at or above their SRS level. What is ACSSO's view on the fact that the vast majority of non-government schools will reach their total SRS, but only a minority of public schools?*

What is of greatest concern is that currently 25% of independent schools are at 100%+ of their SRS whilst only just over 1% of government schools are at this level of funding provision. If the suggested level of funding goals for government schools is to be 95% of SRS then perhaps this should apply across all sectors with the co-contributions of both Commonwealth and state and territory governments co-dependently indexed to reach this level. The scale-back mechanism described in the response to question nine could also apply to this point

8. *ACSSO's media release from 2 May states 'Government funding of education must go where there is true need'. Given that the Northern Territory public schools have the highest concentration of education [sic] educational disadvantage in the country, but the lowest rate of indexation for any government system (1.3% each year over 10 years). What is ACSSO's view about the indexation rate for the NT and their level of need?*

ACSSO fully appreciates that need is a relative term and has suggested in its submission and the public hearing that the current formulae surrounding the loadings that address disadvantage may need to be explored to establish if they are appropriate for a proposed single national model.

It is to be noted that the Quality Schools funding table on page 30 of Budget 2017-18: Federal Financial Relations Budget Paper no. 3 2017-18 indicates additional funding through note (b) 'Includes funding for the NT to accelerate evidence based reforms to improve student outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children' as part of the Commonwealth's intended Quality Schools funding for government schools in the NT. ACSSO has brought this to the attention of a number of stakeholders and is seeking clarification on the exact figure. Whilst we understand that the Commonwealth's contribution to the NT projected SRS is 23% with the move to a national rate of 20% ACSSO will be seeking to understand if the funding in note (b) is intended as an additional payment to reflect the obvious additional needs in the NT whilst allowing a move to a nationally consistent 20%.

9. *Is ACSSO aware that in the Government's announced funding package only 10% of funds will be provided in the next four years, and 90% of the funding will not commence until 2022. What is ACSSO's view about this funding profile?*

I spoke to this in the live session and a point that bears repetition – ACSSO supports the point raised by ASPA and the Grattan Institute in their submissions, that is also mirrored in ACSSO's submission, to significantly reduce the 10 year transition and thus accelerate the funding distribution with an emphasis on weighting the additional funding to those schools in greatest

need of essential resources. We are conscious of a state or territory's obligation to fund its additional demand and support the recommendations to allow the Commonwealth to scale back its contribution on a pro-rata basis. ACSSO further suggests that a contribution scale-back clause applies equally across sectors in a co-dependent formula that would allow all sectors to be treated fairly and without favour or prejudice. It would also allow cross-sector representation to unite in common purpose in lobbying a state or territory government to commit its share if there were to be the prospect of scale-back through an unwillingness to contribute its share.

10. *What is ACSSO's view of the fact that under the Government's plan there are a number of non-government schools that are currently above 100% of SRS, but are under 80% of Commonwealth SRS, so will receive funding increases? (eg. Scotch College WA, Methodist Ladies College WA, Kincoppal Rosebay NSW)*

It suggests that there is considerable disparity in the negotiated funding agreements across the nation that is perhaps symptomatic of individual schools, systems and sectors abilities to influence funding agreement negotiations at all levels. The original Gonski review indicated the need to redistribute funding to where there is greatest need. The review's overarching caveat that no school should lose a dollar as a result of its work could be said to have been an unfair and unreasonable constraint.

There are other examples of currently overfunded schools whose levels of funding were locked in with the enactment of the current 2013 Education Act and coupled with a level of corrective indexing that could have taken over 150 years to reach the determined SRS level. The Grattan's 2016 New Compact Model report suggests excess funding in nearly 300 schools amounting to \$215m – excess government funding that could have an impact on our most disadvantaged schools of any sector.

What is to be hoped is that the proposed model's transition arrangements will allow a rebalancing of contributions from all levels of government to reflect what is fair and defined in a jurisdiction's expected co-contribution. If a state or territory chooses to put in more than its expected share into funding a non-government school or system then that is perhaps a matter for the electorate of that jurisdiction to consider in its due process.

11. *Should schools currently receiving more than 100% of the SRS be eligible for Commonwealth funding increases?*

The response to question 10 may have some bearing on this with the additional point that if we are talking about a government school then it is a matter for that jurisdiction to define its intended funding level for one of its own schools – if it chooses to fund a public school so that it is above 100% of its SRS then that is possibly a point for them alone to consider. However, if the Commonwealth's current contribution is below that of its legislated responsibility and that circumstance warrants an increase according to law, then that must occur.

Phillip Spratt

President, Australian Council of State School Organisations