

Dear Committee Secretary

As the Chair of Central Highlands Group Training, trading as BGT Jobs & Training (BGT), I am writing to express my concern regarding the Better and Fairer Schools (funding reform) Bill 2024, the potential impact it may have on the community we serve at BGT and why we believe the Commonwealth should lift its funding contribution to a minimum of 25% of the School Resource Standard (SRS).

As an organisation that works with people who have often disconnected from education before completing Year 12 we have seen first hand the problems that the current underfunding of public schools creates for students who require additional support.

It is our view that the Commonwealth should lift its share of public school funding to at least 25% SRS. This would close the \$1,000 per student gap that would persist if the proposed 20% “floor” contribution was adopted. While the Commonwealth has proposed to the states that it will lift its contribution to 22.5% none of those Commonwealth agreements would actually deliver the full SRS during this generation of student’s time at school.

We work with the full range of employers in and around the Ballarat district, so we know how important a good primary and secondary school education is for people to be able to take up further education, training, employment and apprenticeships. The current system is not delivering for students or their potential future employers, with many students coming to us disconnected from learning and having fallen through the ever growing cracks in the public system.

Many of the students we see who disconnect from learning come from low income backgrounds, have been unable to fully participate in activities due to cost barriers and are not in a position to fund the gap in resources created by the current funding arrangements. While the Better and Fairer Schools (funding reform) Bill 2024 is clearly an attempt to address some of these issues it will lock in underfunding for another generation which will only worsen the situation.

We hold the view that the Commonwealth has the capacity and the public support to lift its contribution to 25% of the SRS and in doing so will help close the gaps that we see in the system, improve student outcomes and improve the long term economic prospects of regions like Ballarat, that need an increasingly diverse range of skills to meet the needs of a growing population and increasingly complex economy.

Sincerely

Ben Davison

Chair

BGT Jobs & Training