

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (*commit to implementation of the NPSI*)

The committee believes that the significant consensus achieved from the Gonski Review and the agreements negotiated under the National Plan for School Improvement (NPSI) must not be lost with the current government's harmful and confusing changes. The committee recommends the Australian Government honour its pre-election commitments to fully implement the national needs-based, sector-blind funding model incorporated in the NPSI to improve equity across Australian schools. In particular, the Australian Government should commit to the following elements of the NPSI:

- the six year transition to a nationally consistent Schooling Resource Standard;
- maintain the commitments made under the National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) and bilateral agreements with participating states and territories, in particular the five areas of the NPSI:
 - quality teaching
 - quality learning
 - empowered school leadership
 - meeting student need
 - greater transparency and accountability; and
- conduct reviews prescribed under the NERA and strive for equitable funding for schools most in need.

Recommendation 2 (*non-participating states*)

The committee recommends that the government work with non-participating states and territories to:

- maintain the existing education spending of all non-participating states and territories;
- ensure appropriate indexation of education spending for all non-participating states and territories;
- ensure that adequate co-contribution arrangements are agreed by all non-participating states and territories to establish a national School Resource Standard; and
- achieve agreement with non-participating states and territories to the national funding model and NPSI established under the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

Recommendation 3 (*disability loading*)

The committee recommends that the government moves, as a matter of urgency, to a disability loading based on actual student need. To this end, the committee recommends that data collection and decisions about the loading for students with a disability should be expedited so as to provide certainty around a needs-based disability loading to replace the temporary arrangements in 2015. This must happen in close consultation with advocacy groups, the various school sectors and states and territories.

Recommendation 4 (*disability loading*)

The committee recommends the Federal Government honours its election commitment for increased funding to cover unmet need for students with a disability.

Further, the committee recommends that the government works with all states, territories and advocacy groups to clarify the interaction between the disability loading and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Recommendation 5 (*disability loading*)

The committee recommends that information assisting parents and carers of students with a disability be produced and distributed as soon as possible.

Recommendation 6 (*federal-state relations and accountability*)

The committee recommends that the Department of Education produce an annual 'report card' detailing the breakdown of school funding including:

- **funding provided to states and territories (participating and non-participating) and non-government schools by sector;**
- **comparable information contributed by state and territory governments about their school funding;**
- **the extent to which these arrangements are achieving equitable funding to schools and students in most need; and**
- **funding broken down to a school level.**

Recommendation 7 (*indexation rate post 2017*)

The committee recommends that the Australian Government should reinstate an appropriate indexation rate for school funding. The government should ensure that Commonwealth school funding is not cut in real terms by adopting a more realistic indexation rate that ensures annual indexation is not below actual cost pressures. The committee notes that the previously agreed rates increased Commonwealth funding at 4.7 per cent per annum and states' contributions at 3 per cent per annum.

Recommendation 8 (*ongoing scrutiny*)

The committee recommends the Senate pay particular regard to:

- any further cuts to Commonwealth or state education funding;
- the effect on Commonwealth-state relations with any further cuts or changes, particularly the effect on states' ability to adequately fund schools; and
- any reviews conducted or amendments proposed to the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

The committee also recommends that the Senate refer any amendments proposed to the *Australian Education Act 2013* to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee for inquiry and report.