

Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee on School Funding
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Submission to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding

My name is Robyn Parker and I have been a teacher for the past 27 years. I am currently not teaching. My experience in teaching has been nearly all in country schools having had experience in working with indigenous, special needs, and low ability students. I have also taught talented and gifted students. I have two adult children each of which have been educated in the Public School system, in Country Schools.

The extra funding that was offered by the previous government would have made a significant impact on the ability of schools to address literacy, numeracy, behaviour and mental health issues. I am aware that there is conflicting research about the value of smaller class sizes however having worked with illiterate students and as a Student Services Manager working with staff to develop behaviour management programs to assist students with either severe behaviour problems or mental health issues the very thing that makes the difference is having the time to spend working one-on-one with these students. As a teacher and manager of teachers I have an understanding of the complexity of the work that is involved in impacting on students behaviour to achieve improvement in academic and social behaviour. The education process for both is extensive. By the time the child has reached Secondary education they have developed a number of behaviours that have helped them move through the system either undetected or in a manner that allows them to avoid engagement in learning. To address this requires the development of programs by the teacher in consultation with experts and parents. Obviously this takes time - a commodity that schools without sufficient funding do not have.

Teachers do the best that they can with what resources they have and this must impact on the quality of what can be offered or quality is provided at the expense of the health and well being or and the cost of family time to address individual students needs. If extra funding was provided it would enable resources to be put into schools to allow for time to enable the ability to improve the careful and deliberate planning that goes into the development of these plans to address individual student needs. It must also be stated at this point that the number and type of plans are diverse; behaviour, special needs, below benchmark, students at educational risk, talented and gifted and indigenous students. These plans once developed need to be shared with all teachers in a secondary environment that either teach or interact with the student and where appropriate all staff that interact with the student. This is important to ensure that all understand and agree on the implementation of the plan and are consistent in its application - a process that also requires monitoring and ongoing review. While the Department makes such plans a requirement their development and implementation is not resourced. There development is an 'add on' to the everyday task of managing and developing student behaviour.

It is however important work as I believe it can have significant impact on students' attitude to learning, application to learning and general academic outcomes. These are important factors when we consider the impact on our community of students that leave the system without the ability to achieve employment or success (depending upon what that means to various individuals).

I urge the enquiry to consider the fact that what we put into the development of our students today will determine the nature of the society we have tomorrow. Is it not prudent to invest some now to avoid larger investments being required in health, crime, financial support tomorrow.

Submitted by Robyn Parker, Teacher and Community Member

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