

**RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOLS OF AUSTRALIA**  
An Association Incorporated in South Australia

**SUBMISSION TO THE**  
**SENATE EMPLOYMENT WORKPLACE RELATIONS, SMALL BUSINESS AND**  
**EDUCATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**  
**ON THE**  
**STATES GRANTS (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ASSISTANCE) BILL 2000.**

*Rudolf Steiner Schools of Australia represents some thirty schools, located in every State and Territory.*

*RSSA participated in the Review of the Education Resources Index, as well as in the SES Simulation Project mounted by DETYA in 1999.*

*RSSA believes that the funding model proposed in the present Bill properly reflects the clear outcomes of both of these initiatives, as well as the independent reviews of the former ERI system by KPMG in 1996. The new model provides an equitable basis for the allocation of educational funding, based, like other distributions from the public purse, on the needs of the taxpaying families who are its beneficiaries.*

*RSSA strongly supports the Bill. In view of the urgent need for schools to have planning certainty in the finalising of budgets for the coming year, we urge the Committee to expedite the process of consideration, to ensure the speedy passage of the legislation.*

**KEY ISSUES**

1. The legislation continues to recognise the basic entitlement of all children to educational support. The addition to that basic entitlement of a needs based component is in keeping with contemporary approaches to the distribution of funds in other areas.
2. The ERI model attempted to define the needs of schools as a basis for funding allocation. The KMPG study found it to fail nearly every test of a fair and transparent funding model. The SES model accurately portrays the circumstances of the families attending schools, and fairly apportions funding according to the real needs of families.
3. Thus the SES model provides fairer support to families using non-government schools, while still allowing for savings to the public purse compared to the full cost of educating students at government schools.
4. The SES model is transparent, and demonstrably objective. SES indicators as a measure of need are extensively and effectively used in many areas of funding allocation, for example the distribution of capital grants. The source of the data used is neutral, and the statistical method comprehensible – unlike its predecessor.
5. The SES model removes the disincentive to additional private contributions, eg through fundraising, placing non-government school communities on the same basis in this regard as their counterparts in government schools, and encouraging rather

than penalising effort.

6. The funding maintenance provisions of the Bill will provide stability across the non-government sector while redressing previous inequities. This has clearly been important in developing consensus on the changes. The consensus developed on this legislation across the non-government sector is extraordinarily broad, and results in no small part from the exemplary consultative process conducted by DETYA. The legislation clearly meets the requirements of the stakeholders.
7. The Bill provides for some restructuring of the targeted programs for non-government schools. The proposals tend towards both greater efficiency and greater flexibility in the application of targeted funds.
8. The provision of a per capita rate of assistance for students with disabilities, together with maintenance of funding for those presently receiving larger amounts, is a first step towards an appropriate manner of support for these children. RSSA hopes that this will be the beginning of a more far-reaching change in the provisions for these most needy students, who are still massively disadvantaged if they choose non-government schools.
9. Accountability requirements are strengthened under the Bill, with particular emphasis on reporting of educational outcomes. RSSA recognises the appropriateness of the National Benchmark Standards in Literacy and Numeracy. The present Administrative Guidelines recognise the importance of specific pedagogical considerations in guiding the choice of assessment methods. The Association expects this flexibility to continue under the new legislation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present Bill, and particularly the new SES based funding mechanism, provides much fairer, simpler and clearer funding arrangements for students at non-government schools.

Very extensive consultation has ensured that the Bill has strong support from all the very diverse stakeholders within the non-government schools sector, which provides education to a third of all Australian students.

RSSA strongly supports the early passage of the Bill through the Parliament.