
SCHOOL FUNDING DIVERSION IGNORES THE FACTS

National Catholic Education Commission executive director Ross Fox says the Australian Education Union's diversion on school funding today ignores the reality of school enrolment and students' needs.

"This apparent attempt to turn school funding discussions into a battle between school sectors will do nothing to support students or teachers," Mr Fox said.

Mr Fox said today's analysis and the subsequent media reports ignore the reality of school funding.

"The simple reality is that, on average across Australia, non-government schools receive about 77 per cent of the government funding available to students at government schools," he said.

"The fact is that changes in school funding, over time, reflect the needs of schools. Enrolments of disadvantaged students, students with disability, Indigenous students and students outside metropolitan areas, as well as the balance between secondary and primary students, are all factors in determining funding for all schools, including Catholic schools."

In recent years, Catholic schools have seen a significant increase in the number of students with additional needs.

"Over the past decade, the number of students in Catholic schools who attract additional funding to support their education has increased significantly," he said. "The number of students with disability and the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Catholic schools have doubled over that time.

"Catholic schools are also significant education providers in regional and rural Australia and in some communities are the only school serving local students."

Mr Fox said the AEU is undermining an excellent opportunity to have the country discuss students' learning and the important role of teachers and school leaders.

"During the first week of the election campaign, there has been a strong focus on school education and the importance of Commonwealth education policy in supporting the education of students in all schools," Mr Fox said.

"The AEU is distracting from that important debate by pitting sector against sector – something that all major political parties have denounced as unhelpful. It is a return to a divisive and unnecessary debate.

"There are disadvantaged students in all schools and all sectors, just as there are advantaged students in all schools and all sectors."

Mr Fox said Commonwealth school funding data shows that, in proportional terms, government schools have been the major benefactors of increases in federal funding in recent years.

"In the 10 years to 2013-14, government schools have seen their per-student Commonwealth funding increase by 66 per cent, in real terms, while non-government school funding has increased by 18 per cent," Mr Fox said, while acknowledging that Commonwealth funding for non-government schools started from a much higher base because the Commonwealth is the primary government funder for non-government schools.

“Catholic education is a vocal advocate of needs-based funding, but we’re also a very strong supporter of school funding debates that reflect realities,” Mr Fox said.

“It appears that some commentators have an agenda to undermine the legitimacy of government funding for students in non-government schools.

“Thankfully Australia’s political leaders recognise that every student across the country, in every school across the country, is entitled to a level of government support for their learning that reflects their needs.”

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