

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Press Release 1033

Finally, a win for the Public School Lobby

The gross overfunding of private schools throughout Australia, coupled with the equally gross underfunding of the public sector led the Labor Party to promise full funding of public education under the Gonski formula before the last federal election.

It did not happen . But a federal election is on the horizon and the Labor Party are in trouble. They will need that public school vote.

So - in the last week, on Friday 24 January, the constant protests of the teachers, parents and supporters of the public school interest bore fruit.

[South Australia and Victoria have now signed on to the government's school funding agreement.](#)

This agreement will see the Commonwealth lift its share of public school funding to 25 per cent from 20 per cent.

If all the states and territories agree to the deal it would see public schools finally reach minimum funding levels recommended by the Gonski review in 2012.

This new 10-year funding agreement will define the future of the nation's 10,000 schools and could ameliorate the gross inequalities in Australian education after Victoria and South Australia signed on 24 January 2025.

What is in the Agreement ?

Under the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* (BFSA) the Commonwealth has agreed to lift its share of public school funding to 25 per cent, up from 20 per cent.

States would also be required to lift their share of funding to 75 per cent, meaning all public schools would finally be on track to reach the full amount of funding recommended by the Gonski review in 2012.

Western Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory (where the Commonwealth will pay 40 per cent of costs) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) have already signed on, leaving Queensland and New South Wales as the only states yet to agree.

Both states are said to be considering the government's new proposal.

Currently, public schools across all states and territories, except for the ACT, are billions of dollars short of the funding needed to meet minimum standards.

Funding is contingent on results

Under the new deal, states will also have to end an accounting loophole that allowed them to claim 4 per cent of their spend on non-school costs such as capital works.

The Australian Education Union (AEU), the Greens and public education advocates have long argued for this clause, negotiated during the Morrison government, to be scrapped.

"Importantly, this new agreement means accounting practices — like capital depreciation — can no longer be counted as education investment.

Together with the extra money from the Commonwealth, the new requirements on the states could result in billions flowing to public schools in 2025, with the deal running until 2034. The new money would be contingent on the states expanding phonics and numeracy checks as well as improving NAPLAN results.

[Negotiations have been long and tortured](#) with state education ministers breaking party unity to call on federal Labor to honour an aspiration it took to the last election to fully fund public schools.

The federal government had initially offered to increase its share to 22.5 per cent, but has doubled the offer after criticism from South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

[Independent and Catholic schools have received full funding for some time](#) — with an estimated 40 per cent of these schools actually receiving more than the amounts recommended by the Gonski review.

These over-funded private schools will be weaned off the extra money by 2029.

The Labor Party is looking to glean public school votes,

Meanwhile, the Greens have upped the ante. Public school fees have steadily increased over time, with the Parliamentary Budget Office now estimating a cost of about \$500 a year per child, [but the Greens are promising to abolish State school fees altogether!](#)

The devil may well be in the detail and no doubt in time Trevor Cobbold from Save our Schools will enlighten us all, but

Congratulations are due to the public Teacher Unions and Save our Schools for their constant and strong advocacy on behalf of public schools in the last four years. The Public school vote which represents the majority of Australian parents and children is finally on the political map.

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