



Victorian Principals Association

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Victorian Principals' Association (VPA)

Submission to the Schools Funding Review

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The Victorian Principals' Association (VPA) is the professional association representing over 900 Principals of Primary, P- 9, and Special Schools across Victoria.

At national level, the Association is an active affiliate of the Australian Government Primary Principals' Association (AGPPA) and the cross-sectoral Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA).

At State level, the VPA is the peak advisory body on Primary Education to the Victorian Secretary, Deputy Secretaries and the Ministers for Education, the Minister for Early Childhood Development and the Minister for Teaching

This submission reflects responses provided by members of the VPA.

Preamble

The Victorian Principals' Association (VPA) believes that the following elements should underpin any new funding model.

- The foundation of any democratic society should be equal educational provision for all – one where **all** educational institutions are inclusive, comprehensive, well resourced and staffed by the best quality teachers. The role of the Government is to ensure that every local community in Australia is provided with publicly funded government schools with these characteristics. They should be the benchmark.
- Schools in receipt of public funds should be serving public purposes. As a society we need to be clear about what these purposes are and be sure that we spell out the implications of these purposes - in more than rhetoric - to ensure that schools are not operating in ways that contradict them. For example, if schools should be available to all, it would not be appropriate for a school to exclude certain students because they did not suit the school's 'profile'.
- Note should be taken that currently non-government schools receive all their government funding from the sector with the most money (Commonwealth Government) and that government schools receive the vast majority of their funding from the sector with the least amount of money (State & Territory Governments). This imbalance needs to be redressed.
- Any funding model should not lead, by itself, to the proliferation of faith-based schools and/or 'for profit' educational organisations, at the expense of quality public schools.
- When assessing the total resources available to schools, these resources should include fees and contributions made by parents and the school community.
- Non-government schools in the top echelon, which are financially independent, should not continue to draw government money away from communities with greater need.
- The overarching rationale for a funding model should be that all schools have available to them adequate funding to make achieving the National Goals for

Schooling a realistic objective for every student. Funding should also be adequate to make the COAG targets achievable (including the 'Closing the Gap' target).

- The full range of factors that impact on a school's ability to adequately meet the National Goals should be considered, particularly where there is a direct link between the factor and resourcing needs. This full range would include:
 - Schools serving students from lower socio-economic backgrounds
 - The impact of concentrations of student disadvantage which is demonstrated by research to be a significant factor, above any individual student need.
 - The number of students with disability and the range of those disabilities
 - Students with the need for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction
 - Refugee students
 - The number and proportion of Aboriginal students in the school
 - Single parent households not living with either parent
 - Student mobility
 - High levels of teacher turnover
 - Geographic area
 - Level of parental education

- Indicators such as NAPLAN, teacher judgements assessed against learning standards and the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) should be included in the evidence base when establishing where resources are required in order to meet the National Goals and COAG targets.

- The review should consider any unique additional costs of the public provision of schooling such as the requirement to provide universal access, including the costs of providing quality teachers in all geographic areas and in all subjects.

- It should be recognised that years 3 -6 are the lowest funded in Australia. It has already been recognised that early and sustained intervention in primary students results in better result in secondary school.

- Given that primary teachers are required to teach all subject areas , they require at least an equal level of curriculum leadership and support as secondary teachers

Terms of Reference for the Review of Funding for Schooling

Supporting educational outcomes

1. The role of funding arrangements in supporting improved educational outcomes, including:

- a) links between school resourcing and educational outcomes; and
- b) funding allocation mechanisms that address current barriers to educational achievement such as English language proficiency, indigeneity, location, disability and special needs, and other disadvantaged groups such as low socio-economic areas and other concentrations of disadvantage.

2. The roles of families, parents, communities and other institutions in providing or supporting educational partnerships with schools.

VPA Submission on 'Supporting educational outcomes'

- **Government recurrent funding of schools should be tied to student need and should be sufficient to assist all students to reach the National Goals of Schooling.**
 - Important factors determining student need should encompass the school/community profile including; attendance, mobility, indigenous population, students requiring English as a second language (ESL) instruction, refugees, socio-economic status, level of parental education, isolation and students with disabilities, teacher turnover, as well as the number of beginning teachers.
 - Non-government schools wishing to access government funding should be required to meet the obligations government schools guarantee - to provide the same universal access to quality schooling for all students and have the same accountabilities.
 - Access to government funding requires a commitment for schools to provide properly accredited teachers and an appropriate teacher student ratio.
 - Augmented funding for disadvantaged schools should take into account their inability to raise further funds due to a number of factors which may include isolation, children with refugee status and the socio-economic circumstances within the community.
- **Any funding under a new model should be confined to providing quality education for students.**
 - Building and maintaining facilities should be the responsibility of the sector to which those facilities belong.
 - National funding should not be used to establish new schools. This should remain the responsibility of the sector that will own the facility

Allocation of funding

3. The roles of the Australian and state and territory governments in providing funding for schooling.

4. The baseline level and allocation of funding for schools, including:

- a) costs of ensuring all students have access to a world-class education;
- b) factors influencing growth in costs and whether current indexation arrangements are appropriate;
- c) supply and demand considerations including the likely growth and distribution of demand and student need, based on current student enrolment trends and projections;
- d) cost drivers of school funding, including teaching, capital, technology and other costs of schooling;
- e) place of voluntary and private contributions and other income sources in school funding arrangements for government and non-government schools; and
- f) role of government funding in providing parents with choice among diverse schools.

VPA Submission on 'Allocation of funding'

- **Any funding model should take into account all funding available from both Commonwealth and State governments, and the capacity of the school to raise funds privately**
 - Following full financial disclosure, schools that are able to fund their staffing requirements through their own sources should be quarantined from any government funding.
 - There should be equal recurrent funding for students irrespective of age/grade or whether the students are in the primary or secondary years of schooling.
 - With the exception of those non-government schools in the top echelon, any changes to the funding model should ensure that funding is not less than current funding in order for schools to meet the national resourcing standards.
- **Funding should be used to ensure the viability of quality schools in all communities.**
 - The funding model should acknowledge that because of cost or viability, the government sector is the only system able to establish and maintain the system of small schools, including those that serve rural & isolated communities. Funding should be sufficient to ensure that a quality government school serves each community. It should have equality and fairness.

Funding mechanisms

5. The most effective means of distributing funding for schooling, including:

- a) the different funding models used in States and Territories and relevant overseas examples, especially in high performing school systems, and how these may link to outcomes in their respective education systems;*
- b) the best funding mechanism(s) for delivering optimal educational outcomes, financial efficiency and sustainability, including whether a basic entitlement for every student is required and how this could be defined and determined;*
- c) ways to increase the simplicity, transparency and effectiveness of school funding arrangements, including the forms of school and system-level autonomy within those arrangements that best support improved educational outcomes; and*
- d) the transitional assistance that should be offered to schools in making the transition to any new system.*

VPA Submission on 'Funding mechanisms'

- ***Schools accessing government funding should fully comply with government policy and obligation.***
 - All schools should be required to report on their enrolment/admission policies.
 - If the funding levels are to be fully transparent they should reflect the needs of all students. Full disclosure should be made by all schools of the needs of students the school is catering for and how this funding is applied to the needs of those students.
 - When consideration is given to whether a 'basic entitlement' is required for every student, account must be taken of the significant demands placed on government schools by the policy of universal access (ABS data 2008-09):
 - Indigenous students: Government schools = 85%
 - Students with Disabilities & Special Needs: Government schools = 79%
 - Students with language backgrounds other than English: Government schools = 60%
 - Rural/remote: Government schools = more than twice the percentage in non-Government schools
 - Students 'at risk' (MCEECDYA Schools Resourcing Taskforce): Government schools = 79%

Accountability and regulation

6. What forms of accountability, transparency and regulation are necessary to promote high standards of delivery and probity among schools receiving public funding, and the data required to monitor and assess these standards of delivery and educational outcomes.

VPA Submission on ‘Accountability and regulation’

- ***An independently appointed national body representing all sectors, should oversee all funding arrangements; review from time to time the efficacy of the funding model and commission appropriate research into school funding to ensure the core funding principles are occurring.***