

Submission to the Review of Funding for Schooling

Paper on Commissioned Research

The Australian Federation of Graduate Women [AFGW] is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Review of Funding for Schooling.

Assessment of current process for targeting of schools funding to disadvantaged students – Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)

1. Comments on ACER's "Assessment of current process for targeting of schools funding to disadvantaged students" research report

AFGW strongly supports the recommendation of the ACER report to provide standard disabilities entitlements across all school sectors. Students with disabilities (and the schools they attend) should have the same opportunities, facilities, resources and support they need. The ACER's focus on low socio-economic status students is to be commended. The suggestion for targeted investment strategies over an extended period (10 years) should be adopted as it provides assurance to schools that there will be longer term impact on students and that efforts to address issues will be sustainable.

However, ACER limited the study to students with disabilities, students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, students in remote locations, Indigenous students and students with English language proficiency issues. There are other groups worth considering for targeted funding, such as those students whose school education is derailed by teenage pregnancy. AFGW would like the Review Panel to re-examine the submission made by The Australian Young, Pregnant and Parenting Network (AYPPN) to emerging issues phase of this review:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/ReviewofFunding/SubEip/AtoF/Pages/AtoF.aspx#A>

Assessing existing funding models for schooling in Australia – Deloitte Access Economics

2. Comments on Deloitte Access Economics' "Assessing existing funding models for schooling in Australia" research report

AFGW is pleased to note the comment in the report by Deloitte Access Economics that "the overarching objective of Australia's schooling system is to deliver a high quality education for Australian students": we would add that that the objective should be to deliver a high quality education to *all* Australian students and that this will mean providing additional assistance to those school and communities which lack significant financial reserves that can be used to pay for quality education.

AFGW commends Deloitte Access Economics for identifying the characteristics of an optimal funding model for schools and for recognising the complexity of designing such a model. However, AFGW contends that the current funding model is far from optimal. Directing public funding towards already well-resourced schools possessing substantial assets and with the capacity to draw on the support of affluent communities means that other schools in greater need of support must do with

less; this is not acceptable if equity of educational opportunity, access, and outcomes are the goals. Moreover, the **paper recognises that** recurrent costs must be met, but it does not appear to allow for contingency funds for unforeseen expenditure; this issue needs further attention.

Feasibility of a national schooling recurrent resource standard – The Allen Consulting Group

3. Comments on The Allen Consulting Group’s “Feasibility of a national schooling recurrent resource standard” research report

AFGW supports the proposal to develop and implement a National Schooling Recurrent Resource Standard (NSRRS). Having studied the report by ACER, we concur with the suggested way in which a NSRRS could be used to fund Australian schools, provided that the Standard was used in conjunction with loadings for specific purposes as outlined in the model.

However, AFGW notes that the effective implementation of this model relies on data provided to My School and on NAPLAN results. Questions have been raised regarding the reliability and validity of both data sources in recent years and we would hope that care would be taken to monitor the ways in which schools’ resources were identified and reported and the NAPLAN tests were administered. It is also pleasing to note that this report acknowledges that a NSRRS should be based on much more than NAPLAN results – “those outcomes are not appropriate as the basis for an outcomes based funding system across schools” (p13).

Schooling challenges and opportunities– The Nous Group

4. Comments on The Nous Group’s “Schooling challenges and opportunities” research report

AFGW commends the Nous Group’s focus on investing in underperforming schools where there are concentrations of disadvantage. Doing so will contribute to the desired “comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable” education system that all Australians want and deserve.

AFGW also strongly supports the recommendation to focus also on school leadership, in upskilling teachers for the current and future demands of effective schooling, and directing funding to enable teacher education programs to do likewise in preparing the next generations of teachers.

The Nous Group’s recommendation that funding needs to be redirected from already well-resourced for which there is little “value-add” (since their students already excel) to underperforming schools and students is to be applauded.

AFGW also supports the recommendation for targeted investment in infrastructure to support data-driven, and we add “research-led”, educational innovation and the concomitant amenities, particularly where there are concentrations in disadvantage.

Nevertheless, the report could emphasise the need for strong sense of collegiality within schools. In the drive to attract and retain better teachers, it is important to recognize that within a subject area, input from several teachers adds value to a student’s performance, even within one year. The building of a cohesive faculty is important in achieving optimal student outcomes. The suggestion of rewarding selected teachers with bonuses, not directly referred to here, but espoused by the

government, is fraught with problems as it would militate against this.

Supplementary comments

5. Other comments on the Review of Funding for Schooling commissioned research

AFGW has identified several commonalities in the reports that must be taken into consideration when reviewing funding for schooling in Australia:

1. The targeting of funding to schools with the combination of underperforming students and concentrations of disadvantage
2. The redirection of funding from already well-resourced and high performing schools that do no "value-add" to 1. above

In addition, the need to consider the strong research evidence that high quality teachers make a difference, but that the difference is negated if the schools in which they work are inadequate with respect to resources, amenities, and appropriate human capital support , and the students in those schools are from backgrounds of multiple disadvantage. Thus funding support for teacher professional development and pre-service teacher education programs that are consistent with the directions of schooling demand into the future are crucial.

Submitted on behalf of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women.

Dr Jane Baker, President, AFGW Inc

This submission was prepared by Associate Professor Helen Forgasz, Federal Education Convener Schools and Dr Madeleine Laming, Federal Education Convener Higher Education with the assistance of Ms Cassandra Allan, NSW Education Convener.

28 September, 2011.



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042

www.afgw.org.au