

**Our Children Our Schools
Submission into Government School Funding in Victoria
(Bracks Review)**

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Our Children Our Schools

Submission into Government School Funding in Victoria

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Introduction

Our Children Our Schools (OCOS) is an alliance of Victorian community education campaigns. Twenty-one, grass-roots, parent run community campaigns form part of our alliance. At the heart of all campaigns is the core belief:

‘Every child in Victoria should have access to high quality state primary and secondary education in their local community.’

The Alliance advocates for the establishment of a properly government funded essential infrastructure of government school provision which must serve the purpose of social cohesion, be highly attractive to all sections of the community and be accessible and affordable to all.

Every child in Victoria should have enforceable access to a high quality state primary and secondary school reflective of and connected to their local community. This means that these schools must be proactively planned for and built, well-maintained, staffed and funded appropriately. Their aim is to produce high educational outcomes based on high quality curriculum, including curriculum choices, pedagogy and assessment as well as high equity within and amongst schools and between identifiable groups of students.

Victorians introduced the social innovation of free, secular, and compulsory public schools in 1872, it is now time to celebrate this milestone by properly regulating its provision and defining education, including equity of access, opportunity and condition for all Victorian children.

Methodology

This submission does not seek to be an academic or expert review into funding.

It is provided from the viewpoint of parents who have children in the public school system. As such, it is parents who can see at a local level the implications that the current funding regime has - both in terms of the effect on the school that their children attend, and also the effect on their child and/or their children's friends.

As such, our campaign alliance has 21 campaign alliances both in metropolitan and rural Victoria. Many of whom have had an opportunity to have input into this document.

Our submission to the funding review: context and preliminary remarks

Our Children Our Schools fully supports the findings of the Gonski review conducted by the panel under the direction of the Australian Federal Labor Government in 2011. Chaired by David Gonski. In doing so, we would direct the Reviewer's attention to the findings and recommendations contained therein in regard to school funding. The recommendations that we draw particular attention to are attached as Appendix A.

We accept and acknowledge that these recommendations were aimed at the COAG and Federal Government level, however, much of the logic and recommendations for improvement can be imported and adapted to the State system where possible. The most obvious one being a base funding per student and needs based funding in addition - such as equity or disability loading or location loading (e.g. it's more expensive to deliver quality curriculum in non-urban settings).

A fundamental underpinning of any review process would be the information the VAGO 'Additional School costs for Families'¹ report has called for, namely, that DET establishes what it actually costs to educate a child in a public school. Unless this information can be used as a basis for decision making, the review could lack credibility and miss a historic opportunity to address school funding comprehensively.

It would also have to support a guarantee of free instruction. For example, DET routinely encourages parents to subsidise or outright purchase IT equipment such as laptop or tablet programs. Arguably, such cost shifting to parents has become endemic and furthermore programs such as this are essentially unfunded policy (NAPLAN testing is meant to be delivered online, how does an unfunded policy work in this case?). OCOS believes that if a child has to have access or own something to participate in free instruction curriculum (i.e. without discrimination) parents should not be asked to subsidise the costs in any way.

The School Funding Review Terms of Reference need to be widened and accompanied by transparency and public information sharing. For example, the "School Funding at a glance" is a one page information sheet. It has hardly any facts in it. This is disappointing. There is also no specific mention of either equity funding or disability funding. Presumably, Victoria wants to keep its international education export industry growing or at least not shrinking, what is the plan for improving the school funding system so our performance is lifted across equity groups, location, gender etc?

Current levels of funding are clearly allowing the achievement gap to grow, rather than diminish.

The school funding review could also consider the context of government school funding. For example, what degree of resource and facility sharing among government and non-government schools would be sensible given they both received tax dollars? Will funding be needs-based and sector-neutral and compare like schools?

¹ <http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20150211-School-costs/20150211-School-costs.pdf>

A School funding review should also make curriculum access and equity visible. Which students have access to which instruction? Music? Languages? PE and other specialist teachers? Why are public health measures excluded? A whole of child approach might consider the provision of warm and healthy school meals and more PE teachers as part of a funding review.

The broader context of the school funding review should also be spelt out. Which are the anticipated non-monetary gains that could be achieved if pedagogy, curriculum and assessment innovation were mobilised? Which issues could and will be addressed with spending measures, which will not be? What data are we missing? What reforms will make sure that funding is value for money and evidence-based? Which oversights are necessary, including school governance and an Ombudsman introduction? How will the Department report against spending?

Specific funding review terms of reference

Provided herein are specific submissions on the questions proposed for the purposes of the Bracks review:

1. How clear and transparent is government school funding to principals, school councillors, teachers, parents and others?

The short answer is not clear and transparent enough. The recent IBAC Ord enquiry here in Victoria into alleged corruption into the Department of Education, schools and Principals, was a revelation. What it showed, was that after many years of a highly devolved model around school management relating to funding, that checks and balances in the system were clearly wanting.

There were cases of school councils who were duped into approving spending, who had no idea of what the funding was for. Yet school councils, elected to represent the school community were trusting of the school leadership. In some instances the school leadership was under direction from senior bureaucrats in the case of 'banker schools'. Others were directing funding to family members or spending public money on spurious overseas trips and the like.

Our organisation suspects that these developments have been a long time in the making and potentially having their genesis in the Kennett era, where a strong privatisation agenda was fostered and encouraged.

But where transparency and accountability is wanting, corruption can flourish. These most recent corruption allegations now mean that parental confidence in the system is at an all time low. Much work must be done to inject trust and confidence back into the public education system, and particularly the department and schools as a bureaucracy which are charged with administering public education both at a state level and locally at public schools.

Consequently, OCOS calls for:

- a. The Auditor General to have follow the dollar powers. This would enable the states auditor to properly audit the spending of state money at a high level.
- b. Locally we would also call for each school, whether in the non-government sector or government sector to have their books and accounts externally audited by an appropriate auditor on an annual basis for submission to the Department of Education. Spending of government money must always have the hallmarks of transparency and accountability to ensure government resources are spent wisely and appropriately and to ensure the eradication of corruption.

2. How effective are the components of the SRP, including the base allocation, student need funding, school site costs, and allocation for curriculum programs?

OCOS reiterates the findings of the Gonski review in this instance. It is interesting to note that Victorian children are almost \$2000 worse off than other children in different states in Australia. Many experts will say that Victoria has the best SRP and per student spending, but when faced with the above fact, something is clearly wrong.

Consequently, the Gonski panel recommended that a new schooling resource standard would:

- form the basis for general recurrent funding for all students in all schooling sectors;
- consist of separate per student amounts for primary school students and secondary school students;
- provide loadings for the additional costs of meeting certain educational needs. These loadings would take into account socioeconomic background, disability, English language proficiency, the particular needs of Indigenous students, school size, and school location;
- be based on actual resources used by schools already achieving high educational outcomes for their students over a sustained period of time;
- recognise that schools with similar student populations require the same level of resources regardless of whether they are located in the government, Catholic or independent school sectors;
- be periodically reviewed every four years so that it continues to reflect community aspirations and, in between reviews, be indexed using a simple measure that is based on the actual increase in costs in schools already achieving the relevant high educational outcomes over a sustained period of time.

Ongoing responsibility for indexing and reviewing the resource standard should be entrusted to an independent and expert National Schools Resourcing Body.

OCOS believes that the creation of the National Schools Resourcing Body is an extremely important step in ensuring transparency and arms length deliberation to

ensure funding continues to flow on the basis of need, free from political interference. However, should the federal government not implement this aspect of National reform, this body could be replicated at a state level none-the-less.

3. How adequate are accountability mechanisms for the use of school funding?

Not very adequate at all. Here is one example of a problem.

OCOS, via its membership has been advised by parents of circumstances where funding that was allocated to children with additional needs to receive the assistance of an aid for example, was pooled. This meant that children who were meant to get an aid for themselves, had to share an aide. Funding was pooled for another purpose and was done as a management decision. This is very concerning. Full auditing of accounts would prevent this or highlight any irregularities when they occur.

It would improve the level of confidence and information sharing and reduce the ethical dilemmas Principals face when trying to help 'unfunded' children who clearly need help by withdrawing funding from 'funded children'. If such spending was explicitly monitored and unmet need as well, funding could eventually be adjusted to include more early intervention etc. At the moment, parents have to trust the Principal or potentially disturb a good relationship with a Principal because they don't have access to a minimum of accountability such as the hours of aid their child receives.

It is public knowledge that funding standards have dropped to two standard deviations below the norm and are based on quite fixed criteria which often do not adequately capture social and academic developments of children.

Apart from routine auditing of schools, especially in how they ensure free instruction, school charges need to be captured to see where cost-shifting is occurring. The Parent Payment policy needs to be observed through clear labelling of schools charges and levies and compliance and monitoring is needed.

The level of ability to attract additional funds also needs to be captured so that there are no default inequities in higher economic status areas compared to lower ones etc. OCOS strongly believes that an Education Ombudsman is required to maintain a standard of delivery of educational services and to strengthen consumer and parent voice across the educational systems. Complaints mechanisms are poor and are not routinely reported against standards of service delivery. A school funding review that doesn't strengthen reporting is a missed opportunity to improve the system on the whole. The public needs to know where it gets its value for money.

There should be a general rule that accountability means accountability across school systems so that tax payer money is no less accountable in some sectors than in others. Government schools should not be cumulatively disadvantaged by being subject to a higher degree of accountability and transparency to their local communities whilst other schools are not. A sector wide Ombudsman would make this type of reporting

and obligation a reality. The Education Sector, across all ages, including tertiary institutions, is the only sector that has no access to reliable, timely complaint processes for its consumers, yet, arguably we spend more on school fees and funding than on telephone bills, sometimes even more than on our mortgages when it comes to the non-government consumer.

There are also various other examples which have been highlighted by the IBAC Ord enquiry about where some Principals have been able to by-pass School Council scrutiny to pay for overseas trips and/or have inappropriate spending approved. This has sometimes also taken place on the basis of trusting school councils, who have placed great trust and faith in the integrity and honesty of the school Principal, and have been badly let down and/or deceived.

There may be other examples that may be under investigation through the Department. However, what the above circumstances demonstrate, is that where checks and balances in the system don't exist, there are opportunities for corruption to flourish. This must be rectified by increasing and improving transparency and accountability mechanisms.

4. How could the funding system be improved?

Refer to the recommendations of the Gonski review December 2011.

However, we particularly draw your attention to recommendation 30 set out below:

Recommendation 30

School Planning Authorities with government and non-government sector representation should be established within each jurisdiction and work to develop a coordinated approach to planning for new schools and school growth. The Australian Government should establish a School Growth Fund for new schools and major school expansions, with the School Planning Authorities solely responsible for the approval of funding to projects.

It is a strongly held view and objective of OCOS to see political interference removed from public education provision and funding. The implementation of an adapted form of recommendation 30 tailored for implementation at a State level is entirely appropriate and necessary.

Maintenance and upkeep of schools is vitally important, particularly when infrastructure is ageing. Many schools that were hastily built in the 1970's to respond to population boom had a life span of some 30-40 years. Many have exceeded their life span and are either in need of repair or serious maintenance spending. This has to be fully taken into account when funding is allocated to schools for maintenance.

5. What do you think are the most important questions for this Review?

Questions around strengthening accountability and transparency mechanisms are of extreme importance, especially in light of the IBAC Ord enquiry and VAGO reports.

Any review of funding must be connected to the question of equity. It is clear from the research that any inequitable funding arrangements amongst schools contributes to the widening gap of achievement between rural and regional kids and kids from a poor socio economic background or ATSI.

The funding review cannot be looked at in isolation in regards to impacts of inequity, and inequality of outcomes for all students in the public system.

Government school provision and maintenance processes are too slow and often dependent on activist parents and Principals. Data should be collected routinely, must be of high quality to monitor public school provision and include consultation with communities regularly on their needs in order to deliver timely and proactive long term public school provision, taking into account suburb lifecycles, migration and higher density living arrangements. Public schools are routinely used after hours and on the weekend as parks and playgrounds so it's not just school-aged children and their parents who benefit from their upkeep and playground and sporting oval size.

OCOS encourages the view that public schools are infrastructure and as such, Infrastructure Victoria could play a vital role in this setting.

Another important question for the review is to look at distribution of existing funds. OCOS understands that the issue of distribution of funds to the non-government sector is outside the scope of this review. However, the issue of the distribution of funding between the non-government and government sectors cannot be ignored - just because it is politically difficult for government.

OCOS draws your attention to a recently released report by Chris Bonnor and Bernie Shepherd called: "Private schools public cost - how school funding is closing the wrong gaps"².

In launching this report, Chris Bonnor, said:

"The report says state and federal governments could be funding private school students at a higher level than public schools by 2020. We have to fund schools according to need. Whether that means finding additional dollars or, what we are discovering opens the question of redistribution of existing dollars. If a lot of money is going to where it's not needed as much (regardless of sector) we have to look at the way we distribute of public funds to schools, government and non-government"³

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxK25rJrOw-eQ3dlZmZZRGNNV1k/view>

³ The Drum, 17 July 2015 ABC TV.

This report shows recent trends in school recurrent funding strongly suggests that over 40 per cent of students in Catholic schools next year will average as much, if not more, public funding than their peers in similar government schools. Two years further on an additional 40 per cent will most likely join them. Half the students in Independent schools are on track to get as much, if not more, than government school students by the end of the decade.

This finding emerges as one of the most significant to date from the authors' analysis of My School data. They have previously shown that changes in school funding in recent years – increasingly favouring students who are already advantaged – has done little for student achievement and nothing for equity. Earlier this year they pointed to a \$3 billion over-investment in better-off students, without any measurable gain in their achievement. Now they find that state and federal governments, within four years, will be funding the vast majority of private school students at levels higher than students in similar government schools. Concerns about funding equity should now be joined by concerns about effectiveness and efficiency in how we provide and fund schools.

This report shows how funding has changed and how familiar claims about the relative cost of schools have become obsolete and misleading. It addresses questions that arise about our schools: what is public, what is private, what should be the difference between them, what obligations do and should fully-funded schools have to the public which pays to run them? Such questions have to be answered if schooling is to provide access and equity combined with effectiveness and efficiency.

6. Do you have other comments to make?

OCOS thanks the Review Secretariat for reading our submission and looks forward to discussing these matters further when the opportunity arises.

APPENDIX 1
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GONSKI REVIEW DECEMBER 2011
EXTRACTED RECOMMENDATIONS ON FUNDING ONLY

Recommendation 1

The Australian Government and the states and territories, in consultation with the nongovernment sector, should develop and implement a schooling resource standard as the basis for general recurrent funding of government and non-government schools. The schooling resource standard should:

- reflect the agreed outcomes and goals of schooling and enable them to be achieved and improved over time
- be transparent, defensible and equitable and be capable of application across all sectors and systems
- include amounts per primary and secondary student, with adjustments for students and schools facing certain additional costs
- complement and help drive broader schooling reform to improve Australia's overall performance and reduce inequity of outcomes.

Recommendation 2

In a new model for funding non-government schools, the assessment of a non-government school's need for public funding should be based on the anticipated capacity of the parents enrolling their children in the school to contribute financially towards the school's resource requirements.

Recommendation 3

For the purposes of allocating public funding for non-government schools, the Australian Government should continue to use the existing area-based socioeconomic status (SES) measure, and as soon as possible develop, trial and implement a new measure for estimating the quantum of the anticipated private contribution for non-government schools in consultation with the states, territories and non-government sectors.

Recommendation 4

From 2014, non-government schools should be funded by the Australian Government on the basis of a common measure of need that is applied fairly and consistently to all.

Recommendation 5

The Australian Government and the states and territories, in consultation with the non-government school sector, should make reducing educational disadvantage a high priority in a new funding model. This will require resourcing to be targeted towards supporting the most disadvantaged students and should:

- capture variation in performance within categories of disadvantaged students
- significantly increase support to schools that enrol students who experience multiple factors of disadvantage
- significantly increase support to schools that have high concentrations of disadvantaged students.

Recommendation 6

In contributing towards the additional costs of educating disadvantaged students, governments should move away from funding targeted programs and focus on ensuring that the states and territories and the non-government sector are publicly accountable for the educational outcomes achieved by students from all sources of funding. Governments should continue to contribute towards the costs of educating disadvantaged students by providing recurrent funding that provides additional assistance for:

- students where the need for assistance is ongoing and reasonably predictable
- schools with the highest concentrations of students who need support to achieve improved educational outcomes.

Recommendation 7

Future funding arrangements and governance structures for schooling should aim for sustained improvements in the educational outcomes of disadvantaged students, as part of achieving better outcomes for all students. To achieve this, additional funding provided to schools to overcome disadvantage should be invested in strategies that:

- improve practices for teaching disadvantaged students
- strengthen leadership to drive school improvement
- focus on early intervention for students at risk of underperformance
- are flexibly implemented to address local needs
- encourage parent and community engagement
- are based on robust data and evidence that can inform decisions about educational effectiveness and student outcome.

Recommendation 8

The Australian Government, in collaboration with the states and territories and in consultation with the non-government sector, should develop and implement a new funding model for schools based on the principles of:

- fair, logical and practical allocation of public funds
- funding in response to need
- funding from all sources must be sufficient
- support for a diverse range of schools
- driving broader school reform
- partnership between governments and across sectors
- transparency and clarity
- value for money and accountability.

Recommendation 9

The Australian Government, in collaboration with the states and territories and in consultation with the non-government sector, should:

- initially base the per student component of the resource standard on an outcomes benchmark that at least 80 per cent of students in reference schools are achieving above the national minimum

standard, for their year level, in both reading and numeracy, across each of the three most recent years of NAPLAN results

- conduct additional research to validate the composition of the reference group used for setting the per student amounts to apply from 2014 onwards
- broaden over time the scope of student outcomes covered in the benchmark to include other nationally consistent, whole-of-cohort measures
- review regularly the scope, methodology and data required to set the student outcomes benchmark.

Recommendation 10

The schooling resource standard should:

- be a recurrent resource standard, which includes a provision for general maintenance and minor acquisitions below an established capitalisation threshold but does not include capital costs
- include the full costs of delivering schooling services regardless of whether these are delivered in an independent school or a systemic school
- exclude adjunct service costs.

Recommendation 11

The Australian Government should negotiate with state and territory governments and consult with the non-government sector with a view to implementing a national schooling resource standard that allows flexibility in how it is applied across jurisdictions. This process should be guided by the following principles:

- the states and territories should have an incentive to take part in new funding arrangements
- the states and territories and the Australian Government should share any efficiencies in the provision of education on the basis of the schooling resource standard
- no state or territory should be disadvantaged in relation to Commonwealth Grants Commission or GST allocations as a result of their cooperation with the Australian Government in implementing the schooling resource standard.

Recommendation 12

The schooling resource standard should be used by the Australian Government as the basis for determining its total recurrent funding for government and non-government systems and schools and for the allocation of that funding across systems and schools. It should also be adopted by the states and territories to guide their total recurrent funding for government and non-government schools and the allocation of that funding to individual non-government systems and schools.

Recommendation 13

The Australian Government should work with the states and territories and the non-government sector to further refine the indicative schooling resource standard amounts for primary and secondary students. This should occur by mid-2012 to facilitate negotiations over the implementation of the new funding arrangements for schools. This work should commence immediately with the National Schools Resourcing Body to take responsibility for progressing it as soon as it is established.

Recommendation 14

The schooling resource standard should include loadings for:

- school size and location
- the proportion of students in a school who are Indigenous or from low socioeconomic backgrounds, with loadings to increase for schools where the concentration of such students is higher
- the proportion of students in a school with limited English language proficiency.

Loadings for students with disability should be added as soon as possible once work underway on student numbers and adjustment levels is completed. The Australian Government should work with the states and territories and the non-government sector to develop and check specific proposed loadings by mid-2012.

Recommendation 15

Schooling resource standard per student amounts applying in 2014 should thereafter be indexed annually based on actual changes in the costs of schooling incurred by reference schools. Both the per student amounts and the loadings should be reviewed by the National Schools Resourcing Body before the commencement of each funding quadrennium. Indexation and review should occur within an institutional framework that ensures that the process is independent, transparent and rigorous.

Recommendation 16

Australian governments should fully publicly fund the recurrent costs of schooling for government schools as measured by the resource standard per student amounts and loadings.

Recommendation 17

Australian governments should base public funding for most non-government schools on the anticipation that the private contribution will be at least 10 per cent of the schooling resource standard per student amounts.

Recommendation 18

Australian governments should fully publicly fund the recurrent costs of schooling for non-government schools as measured by the resource standard per student amounts and loadings where the school:

- does not charge compulsory fees and has no real capacity to do so, or
- provides education to students with very high needs, such that without full public funding of the school's resource standard those needs would not be met.

The eligibility of particular non-government schools for full public funding should be determined by the National Schools Resourcing Body.

Recommendation 19

To meet the Australian Government's announcement that no school will lose a dollar per student as a result of this review, a minimum public contribution towards the cost of schooling should apply to non-government schools at a level between 20 to 25 per cent of the resource standard per student amounts without loadings.

Recommendation 20

For the purposes of allocating public funding for non-government schools and systems, all Australian governments should:

- adopt a common concept of need for public funding based on the capacity of the school or system to contribute towards its total resource requirements
- commence work as a priority to develop, trial and implement a better measure of the capacity of parents to contribute in consultation with the non-government sectors.

The Australian Government should continue using the existing area-based SES measure until this better measure is developed.

Recommendation 21

For the purposes of allocating public funding for non-government schools, the minimum private contribution should be anticipated for schools with SES scores in the lowest quarter of scores. The minimum public contribution should apply to schools with SES scores above around 130. The precise school SES scores and the shape of the anticipated private contribution between these two points should be set in a way that balances:

- minimising the extent and incidence of any differences between the schooling resource standard required by each non-government school and system and the resources currently available to it from all sources
- preserving reasonable incentives for an adequate private contribution towards the schooling resource standard across non-government schools with various capacities to contribute.

Recommendation 22

The Australian Government and the states and territories, in consultation with the non-government sector, should negotiate more balanced funding roles as part of the transition to a new funding model for all schools, with the Australian Government assuming a greater role in the funding of government schools and the states in relation to non-government schools. This should occur within a governance framework that gives certainty and stability around expected future funding levels for schools from all government sources and operational independence for non-government schools.

Recommendation 23

Given the primary responsibility of government and non-government system authorities for the funding and operation of their schools, public funding for systems should be assessed and calculated at system level provided that systems:

- are transparent about the basis on which they allocate any public and private funding to member schools and the purpose for which it is spent
- report publicly when the allocation of total resources to schools deviates significantly from the principles in the schooling resource standard
- continue to report income and expenditure from each source for individual member schools on the *My School* website.

Recommendation 24

In establishing a baseline level of existing funding for the schooling resource standard and loadings, the Australian Government should roll in, to the maximum possible extent, all general recurrent funding for schools as well as targeted funding programs for non-government schools and National Partnerships, subject to appropriate transitional arrangements.

Recommendation 25

In order to successfully implement the funding reforms in this report, the Australian Government should, in collaboration with state and territory governments and in consultation with the non-government sector, develop transitional arrangements that:

- provide certainty to systems and schools about funding during the implementation period, consistent with the Australian Government's announced commitments
- recognise the need for extensive negotiation involving all governments and non-government school authorities along with associated changes to agreements and legislation
- acknowledge the fiscal pressures on governments while moving to reap the benefits of a more outcomes-driven approach to funding as quickly as possible.

Recommendation 26

The Australian Government and state and territory governments, in consultation with the non-government sector, should, as a matter of priority, progress work on collecting nationally consistent data on students with disability and the level of educational adjustments provided to them to enable national data to be collected and reported from January 2013.

Recommendation 27

The National Schools Resourcing Body should work with the Australian Government and state and territory governments in consultation with the non-government sector to develop an initial range for a student with disability entitlement. The entitlement should be:

- provided in addition to the per student resource standard amounts
- set according to the level of reasonable educational adjustment required to allow the student to participate in schooling on the same basis as students without disability
- fully publicly funded and applied equally to students in all schooling sectors.

Recommendation 28

The National Schools Resourcing Body should undertake work to determine the resourcing needs of government and non-government special schools catering for students with disability.

Recommendation 29

Funding for capital purposes should be available to both government and non-government systems and schools outside of the framework of a recurrent schooling resource standard.

Recommendation 30

School Planning Authorities with government and non-government sector representation should be established within each jurisdiction and work to develop a coordinated approach to planning for new schools and school growth. The Australian Government should establish a School Growth Fund for new schools and major school expansions, with the School Planning Authorities solely responsible for the approval of funding to projects.

Recommendation 31

Australian Government investment in non-government school infrastructure should be maintained and continue to be provided in partnership with relevant Block Grant Authorities. The Australian Government should provide an additional amount of funding to support major works and infrastructure in existing government schools in each state and territory.

Recommendation 32

The National Schools Resourcing Body should develop a national definition of the maintenance and minor works responsibilities of schools and education authorities required to be addressed from recurrent funds. This definition should be considered and agreed by the Australian and state and territory governments as a basis for capital and recurrent funding arrangements.

Recommendation 33

The Australian and state and territory governments should, in consultation with the non-government sector, strengthen public accountability for the public funding of school capital projects.

Recommendation 34

School Infrastructure Development Grants and the School Growth Fund should be supplemented annually in line with movements in the Producer Price Index – Non-Residential Building Construction.

Recommendation 35

The Australian Government and state and territory governments should establish a National Schools Resourcing Body. This body would be made responsible for a range of tasks including:

- the ongoing maintenance and development of the schooling resource standard and loadings
- the annual indexation and periodic review of the schooling resource standard and loadings based on the latest available data
- ongoing research, analysis and data improvement to ensure continuous improvement within the schooling sector
- developing expected standards to which school buildings must be maintained and built.

Members would be appointed to the body on the basis of merit and expertise, and be independent of government. The body should be provided with a realistic operational budget funded by all governments to support the commissioning of research and data work as appropriate.

Recommendation 36

In establishing a National Schools Resourcing Body, the Australian Government and state and territory governments should also establish a representative advisory group to provide advice to the body on schooling matters. Membership should include representatives from both the government and non-government school sectors.

Recommendation 37

The current National Education Agreement should be revised to ensure that it meets the requirements of the new funding framework and reflects the renegotiated roles and responsibilities of funding partners. This should also include the development of state and territory based schedules attached to the revised agreement that reflect specific funding and educational requirements of that jurisdiction.

Recommendation 38

The Australian Government and state and territory governments should negotiate revised funding agreements with non-government system authorities and independent schools to reflect roles and additional conditions under the new funding framework and in line with a renegotiated National Education Agreement with state and territory based schedules.

Recommendation 39

The Australian Government and state and territory governments should legislate the proposed funding framework to ensure certainty and transparency of public funding for all systems and schools. Legislation at both levels of government should operate together to ensure that the total level of public funding is guaranteed for all systems and schools over a 12-year cycle.

Recommendation 40

The National Schools Resourcing Body should work with the states and territories, the non-government school authorities and the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to develop a more robust national data collection, consistent with the proposed funding framework, that allows for a deeper national understanding of schooling outcomes. The appropriateness of what data should be used should be jointly worked through by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, ACARA and the National Schools Resourcing Body.

Recommendation 41

The Australian Government should create a fund to provide national leadership in philanthropy in schooling, and to support schools in need of assistance to develop philanthropic partnerships.