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New Gonski Review panel hamstrung by narrow Government brief

The Australian Education Union has expressed serious concern about the Turnbull Government's move to prevent the new panel reviewing student outcomes from considering school funding allocation, urging the Government to immediately broaden the panel's mandate.

The panel members, announced today, will lead the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, but are being restricted to only examining strategies to improve educational outcomes. Australian Education Union President Correna Haythorpe said the Government's decision to limit the panel's purview demonstrates they are not interested in levelling the playing field and properly funding public schools.

"This panel cannot solve the problems facing our most vulnerable and disadvantaged students if it is explicitly prevented from considering school funding," said Ms Haythorpe.

"The Turnbull Government has gathered a panel of experts to look into improving education outcomes but forbids it from considering whether or not schools have enough funding to deliver for students.

"The Turnbull Government repeatedly stated it would not set funding first and seek to negotiate outcomes later, yet this is exactly what it is doing. The premise of this review is flawed. You cannot raise student outcomes without considering funding allocations.

"There is a direct link between the resources our schools receive and student outcomes – however this panel is only permitted to consider one side of this story.

"The initial Gonski Review provided a comprehensive analysis of schools funding and showed the way forward for our schools. By comparison, this review will simply tinker around the edges of the Government's flawed funding scheme.

"When it comes to allocating resources for our most vulnerable students, Malcolm Turnbull and Simon Birmingham have once again shown they are not genuinely interested in expert opinions, preferring to make funding decisions behind closed doors.

"The Government have already arbitrarily decided to limit Federal funding to 20 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard for public schools – meaning that whatever recommendations this panel makes, many of our schools will still be severely under resourced even after six years.

"Under the Government's plan, not only will schools in the areas of highest disadvantage, such as Northern Territory and Tasmania, receive the lowest increases in funding but they fall well short of what would be provided to some of the richest schools in the nation.

"Students with disabilities are already facing funding cuts under the Turnbull Government's plan. Funding for public schools in five states and territories is being cut – and this will have a terrible impact on the students who most need our support. This panel should be allowed to consider how we can make sure funding is going to our most vulnerable students so they are not being left behind.

"We will not close the gap in education achievement by cutting funding to schools and then conducting another review that looks at only one part of the issues. Children across Australia need and deserve an equitable education system that delivers the support, resources and teachers they need to thrive," said Ms Haythorpe.

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