

PRESIDENT WRITES

A SIMPLE MORAL CHOICE: SOME CHILDREN OR ALL CHILDREN?

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Our country is at a crossroads.

As a nation, we can decide to give our teachers in public schools the resources they need for the task at hand or we continue to advantage those private schools that are over-funded.

As a nation, we can decide to either improve the learning outcomes for millions of Australian children into the future or continue to privilege a minority of already advantaged students.

It is a simple moral choice: some children or all children?

The original Gonski review established a benchmark, the minimum level of recurrent funding and resources teachers in a particular school need in order to do their job. It is called the Schooling Resource Standard.

It recognised that in some schools the demands on teachers were more complex, more onerous, requiring greater resourcing, and so additional funding through equity loadings was to be delivered.

These resources started to arrive in early 2014 but only months later, in May, the then

Abbott Coalition Government cut a massive \$30 billion from schools in its first federal Budget, gutting the needs-based funding model.

Fast forward to 2017, and then-Treasurer Scott Morrison delivered a Budget that resulted in a \$14 billion funding shortfall for public schools.

It was his Budget that effectively tore up the signed funding agreements with state and territory governments.

This meant that public school teachers would never receive the resources they needed for the job.

Indeed, while almost every private school under the Morrison plan will be over the Schooling Resource Standard, 99 per cent of public schools will never reach it.

To exacerbate the enormous gap in resourcing of schools, last September the Morrison Government gifted an additional \$4.6 billion to private schools only.

But it is not only in the area of schools funding that this government's myopic vision for this nation's future is evident.

While its schools funding policy will limit the potential

of so many children in the early years of schooling, future training and education opportunities for these children have been compromised by a sustained assault on the TAFE system.

- There are now fewer Australians in training than when they took office.
- There are 140,000 fewer apprenticeships than when they took office.
- Funding to vocational education and training (VET) has been cut by \$3 billion since they took office.
- Morrison, as Treasurer in 2018, cut apprenticeships by \$270 million.
- The most recent federal Budget failed to even mention TAFE despite an enrolment loss of 24 per cent due to funding cuts.
- And despite VET FEE-HELP costing the Australian community more than \$5 billion, much of which was handed to dodgy for-profit providers, the Morrison Government continues with an agenda to privatise the VET sector.

Our two national campaigns, Fair Funding Now! and Stop TAFE Cuts, have reached millions of Australians.

The federal ALP has committed to restoring the \$14 billion lost to public schools. It will guarantee that at least two-thirds of public funding will go to TAFE. The Greens have also committed to the necessary lift in funding for public schools and guaranteed funding for TAFE.

Our work to secure these commitments must continue right up to the federal election.

The evidence is clear: the Morrison Government is refusing to fund our children's future. It is refusing to support public school teachers in the work that we do. It is a government that preferences privilege, private providers and the already advantaged.

This is a Federal Government that has no sense of a fair go. It is time for it to go.

Some children or all children?

The Morrison Government's answer is obvious, some.

As public educators the answer will always be, all.