

## Campaign goes on...



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President (2012-2019)  
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For decades, school funding has been an area of contested policy between governments. This year was to be the final year of the original “Gonski agreements”.

The Public Schools — For our Future, I give a Gonski and Fair Funding Now! campaigns have influenced all levels of government in the country. They have brought together communities and personified the very essence of public education and union campaigning.

Needs-based funding is now cemented in education lexicon and has become synonymous with the campaign objectives of education unions across the country.

An unchanged Gonski agreement would now be nearing the end of its originally intended funding rollout. While successive governments have ignored the very foundations of the review, millions of additional resources now exist in NSW schools as a result of our union’s continued commitment to the funding of public education.

The campaign to address school funding started in earnest 20 years ago when the Howard government was in power. Here’s a look at where we started, where we went and where we now are.

Howard’s funding scheme was called the SES (Socio-Economic Status) model and delivered extraordinary increases to wealthy private schools but not one dollar to any public school. But it took some 10 years for the campaign to gain traction.

Before the 2007 federal election, Labor committed to extending the SES model a further four years, from 2009 to 2012, but, in response to an Australian Education Union (AEU) campaign, agreed to hold an inquiry into school funding in its first term of office. This was the first significant breakthrough.

The then-education minister, Julia Gillard, announced in April 2010 the establishment of the Review of Funding for Schooling to be headed by businessman David Gonski.

For the next 18 months, the AEU organised a national campaign, called Public Schools — For Our Future, which ran over the duration of the Gonski inquiry.

The campaign resulted in the largest member and community mobilisation ever in support of a more equitable school funding scheme. As a result, the Gonski panel received more than 6000 submissions nationally from public schools, their teachers, parents and principals. The review received 7000 submissions



in total.

The campaign featured a national multimedia advertising campaign, with targeted action in marginal seats. A bus tour of east coast federal electorates in January and February 2012, between Brisbane and Geelong, was also conducted before the release of the report on 20 February, 2012.

The report recommended that a new sector-blind but needs-aware model should be introduced and funded as a matter of urgency.

In June 2012, the I Give a Gonski campaign was launched and a national day of action was held on 24 July to pressure the Labor government to adopt the recommendations of the Gonski review.

The campaign gathered national support for the recommendations of the review, with school communities, business, welfare, Indigenous, disability and community groups calling for action from the Gillard government.

By this stage more than 100,000 community members pledged their support for the Gonski recommendations on the I Give a Gonski website.

On 20 August, 2012, a sea of signed cardboard hands with the names of all 6700 public schools was placed outside Parliament House and the prime minister met Gonski supporters to discuss the government's response.

Finally, on 3 September, 2012, the federal government announced it would adopt most of the recommendations of the Gonski review and negotiate historic agreements with state and territory governments that would provide the money schools urgently required.

The race was on to get the states to sign up.

By early November 2012, more than 500,000 letters had been delivered to households across Australia calling for all governments to sign Gonski agreements. On 28 November, the legislation was introduced into federal Parliament.

In February 2013, an open letter in support of Gonski — signed by former Labor leaders and state premiers, as well as high-profile business and community leaders — was published and delivered to Julia Gillard.

NSW, in April 2013, became the first state to sign up to a deal that would mean an additional \$5 billion would be invested over six years. This was an historic moment. A conservative state government and an ALP federal government achieved bipartisan support for a fairer funding deal.

In May 2013, national campaign rallies were held in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory to ensure the other states signed up.

On 26 June, 2013, the Gonski legislation passed through Parliament, putting in place the landmark reforms to the ways schools were resourced.

The ACT, South Australian and Victorian governments followed NSW, signing agreements between May and August. On 2 August, after two years of opposition to the Gonski reforms, the federal Coalition pledged to honour them in government but only for four years. But within weeks of winning, the Abbott-led Coalition government attempted to tear up the Gonski agreements, stating it would renegotiate public school funding arrangements with every state and territory government, which would have to share a smaller pool of funding. Private schools were to receive their full share.

This announcement sparked a storm of protest and the Coalition reversed the decision six days later. It agreed to give states and territories federal Gonski funding but refused to enforce any requirement for them to spend the money on schools.

The campaign to secure the full six years of transition funding started in early 2014 with a national tour — four Gonski vans covered more than 22,500km and arrived in Canberra in March.

In the May 2014 Budget, the Abbott government confirmed it would not fund the final two years, a \$30 billion

cut to commonwealth spending on schools. This remained the federal Coalition's position before the July 2016 election.

At the start of the 2016 school year, Labor committed to provide the \$4.5 billion needed to fully fund the Gonski agreements it negotiated when last in office. The party also pledged, if it were elected, to reverse the \$30 billion reduction to school funding over the next decade as announced by the Coalition in its 2014 Budget.

The Coalition government, now with Malcolm Turnbull at the helm, announced a new school funding deal for private and public education providers in a plan it dubbed "Gonski 2.0" on 2 May, 2017.

A week later, Treasurer Scott Morrison reduced the size of the 2014 Budget cuts to \$22 billion over 10 years from 2018-27. In that year, the government unilaterally ended five signed state and territory agreements on school funding, refusing to deliver the final two years of funding (2018 and 2019).

Parliamentary Budget Office costings in 2018 showed that in 2018-19 the cut to public schools was \$1.9 billion (85 per cent of the cuts). Over 10 years, that meant public schools' share of the \$17 billion in cuts was more than \$14 billion.

Morrison claimed in 2017 there should be no special deals: "Now, there shouldn't be special deals. There should be one deal and it should be based on the needs of every single student."

As Prime Minister, on 20 September 2018, Morrison announced a special deal to deliver \$4.6 billion extra to private schools and nothing to public schools. The plan extended private school over-funding until 2029 and included a \$1.2 billion slush fund for private schools to spend any way they want.

The campaign to have our public schools fully funded and the individual learning needs of students met will be permanent. As teachers, unionists and members of society we owe it to future generations to ensure the institution of public education remains free, secular and accessible to all.

#### HOW WE GOT HERE

**DECEMBER 2008:** Melbourne Declaration agreed to by all Australian education ministers, sets goals for schooling for the next 10 years

**APRIL 15, 2010:** Minister for education Julia Gillard announces a comprehensive review of funding for schooling

**JUNE 24, 2010:** Julia Gillard takes over from Kevin Rudd as PM after leadership spill

**AUGUST 21, 2010:** Gillard wins election with a hung Parliament

**FEBRUARY 20, 2012:** Gonski Report released

**APRIL 14, 2013:** \$14.5bn and new funding model announced "The federal government is prepared to put in a 65 per cent share. I will be saying to the state premiers you must index at 3 per cent and must stop your cuts to education, no more taking money out of schools as we have seen across the country." Julia Gillard

**APRIL 23, 2013:** NSW signs up to Gonski model

**JUNE 26, 2013:** Kevin Rudd wins spill to become PM for second time

**AUGUST 2, 2013:** 'Dollar for dollar' "Our approach will provide schools and parents with the funding certainty they deserve. It means that the Coalition will match Labor dollar-for-dollar over the next four years." Christopher Pyne

**SEPTEMBER 7, 2013:** Coalition wins election, installing Tony Abbott as PM Soon after, the Gonski report is removed from the government website

**NOVEMBER 26, 2013:** New school funding model "In 2014 we will ensure that the new school funding model as proposed by Labor is implemented because it is too late to change that. Between now and sometime next year I will propose a new school funding model from the Commonwealth, which will be flatter and simpler, fair to all the states and territories and equitable between students." Christopher Pyne

**MAY 13, 2014:** Tony Abbott cuts \$30 billion in first Budget

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2015:** Malcom Turnbull defeats Abbott in leadership spill

**MAY 2, 2017:** Turnbull government announces a new school funding deal for private and public education providers in a plan it dubs "Gonski 2.0"

**MAY 9, 2017:** Budget cut reduced Treasurer Scott Morrison reduces size of cuts to \$22 billion over 10 years from 2018-27. The Federal Government in 2017 unilaterally ends five state and territory funding agreements, refusing to deliver the final two years of Gonski (2018 and 2019)

**FEBRUARY 2018:** Parliamentary Budget Office costings show that in 2018-19 the cut to public schools was \$1.9 billion (85 per cent). Over 10 years, public schools' share of the \$17 billion cuts is more than \$14 billion

**AUGUST 24, 2018:** Scott Morrison defeats Turnbull in spill to become PM

**SEPTEMBER 20, 2018:** \$4.6 billion special deal for private school In 2017, Morrison said there should be no special deals: "There should be one deal and it should be based on the needs of every single student." On 20 September, 2018, Morrison said he would deliver \$4.6 billion extra to private schools and nothing to public schools. The funding includes a \$1.2 billion slush fund for private schools to spend in any way they want

**LATE 2018:** Bilateral agreements for states and territories The Morrison Government coerces states into signing its bilateral agreements by threatening to withhold funding for 2019. An AEU analysis of the agreements show they will leave 99 per cent of public schools below the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2023 while 99 per cent of private schools will be funded at, or above, the SRS

**MAY 18, 2019:** Morrison Government wins election