

The Inquiry reveals “that in 1995/1996 direct Commonwealth expenditure on schools as a proportion of GDP was 0.65 per cent, public schools receiving 0.27 per cent and private schools 0.38 per cent. By 2000/2001, the total outlay had reached 0.75 per cent of GDP, with public school expenditure declining to 0.26 per cent and private school expenditure rising to 0.48 per cent.”

“Over the period 1995/1996 and 2005/2006 ... [there will be] an increase in funding for non-government schools by the Commonwealth of 128 per cent in real terms compared to an increase in Commonwealth funding to [government] schools of 50 per cent,” the report also states.

In terms of total Commonwealth and State government funding: “The percentage increase in per capita funding for students in non-government schools from 1996/1997 up to 2000/2001 has been 45.1 per cent, whereas the equivalent increase for students in government schools is 27.4 per cent.”

The Inquiry exposes that the NSW Government funds students at a rate far below the national average. If NSW primary aged students were funded at the national average it would require the immediate investment of an additional \$218 million. If secondary students were funded at the national average it would require an injection of an additional \$100 million.

It should also be noted that staff/student ratios in the primary sector in NSW are worse than in other states. Further, the staff/student ratios in other states are set to improve with the reduction of class sizes in the early years of schooling, which has commenced in all other states except NSW.

The Inquiry also shows that “expenditure on the education policy area as a percentage of all NSW Government expenditure declined from 28.4 per cent in 1989/1990 to 22.0 per cent in 2001/2002”.

Over a period of 12 years, education went from receiving almost one third of NSW government expenditure down to receiving approximately only one fifth.

The Inquiry has drawn to the attention of the Government where additional funding could be found. This could be achieved by re-directing \$116 million of current expenditure with a view to prioritising and allocating the money to address pressing educational demands.

This article appeared in the September 2002 edition of *Education*