

Public schools lose out again

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An independent report has revealed Australian public schools will miss out on \$19 billion in funding over the next four years as the sector was completely overlooked in Tuesday's federal Budget while private schools continue to be overfunded by \$1 billion.

In the face of such an extraordinary year due to COVID-19, public schools were ignored in the Budget in what Federation says can only be perceived as an insult to teachers, parents and students that are struggling under the most trying conditions.

The new report by economist Adam Rorris, former adviser to the Australian Government and World Bank, uses the government's own figures to show NSW public schools will be denied \$5.5 billion in funding over the same period, partly due to what he called a "segregated report".

President Angelo Gavrielatos said investing in public education provides funding to the students who need help the most.

"While private schools in NSW are overfunded to the tune of \$807 billion, public schools will be underfunded by \$5.5 billion," Mr Gavrielatos said.

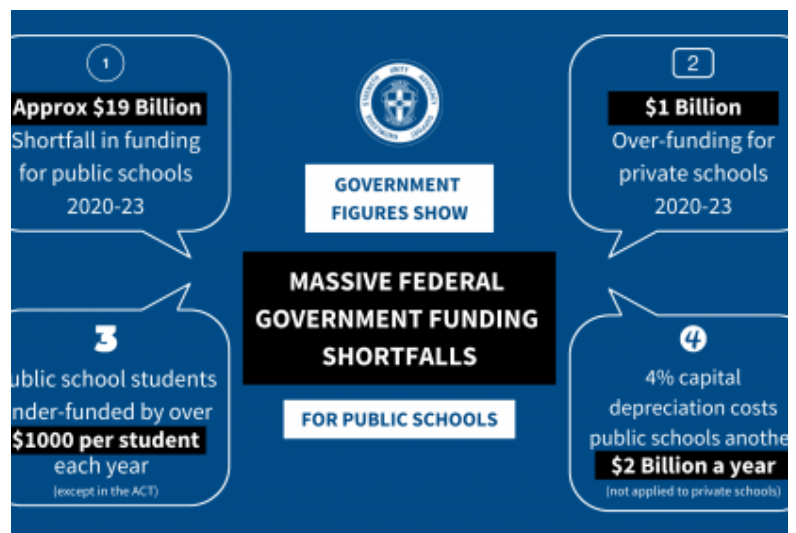
"On a student by student level, that means private school students are overfunded by \$816 while those in public schools are underfunded by \$1525 each. State and federal governments take a bow, it's a national disgrace."

Mr Gavrielatos also pointed out that TAFE didn't even rate a mention in the Treasurer's Budget speech, despite a recent Centre for Future Work report showing that TAFE-educated skilled workers return \$92.5 billion to the economy every year and the Government constantly stating TAFE was critical to the national recovery.

At the core of the public school shortfall is how the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) – the minimum funding that is required to meet a student's educational needs under the Gonski Review reforms – is funded by governments.

Under the 2018/19 bilateral agreements between states/territories and the Commonwealth for school funding, up to 4 per cent of the total SRS for the public sector each year is hived off to fund the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and counted as capital depreciation of the entire public system's assets.

NESA provides services to both public and private schools, yet are charged entirely as expenses for public schools only.



Mr Rorris calls this a “segregated rort against public schools” that deprives them of close to a further \$2 billion each per annum over the four years, which brings the combined funding shortfall to \$27 billion.

“It harms public schools primarily in that it allows state/territory governments to effectively reduce their cash allocations for public schools by inserting into their ‘contributions’ towards the SRS, the entirely notional figure for capital depreciation,” Mr Rorris said.

“This is an accrual-based allocation that does not touch the side of any real classroom or school. It is in effect a capital depreciation tax. No such tax is applied to the private sector.”