

## Ensuring the highest quality public education

July 05, 2022

Delegates have endorsed a plan for Senior Officers to develop a campaign to build support for a new bilateral agreement, which will include enough funding to ensure all public schools are funded at 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

The campaign plan will include the production of material and the use of various media platforms, as part of a broader education campaign to support engagement of the membership and wider community. It is to be presented to August Executive and Council.

President Angelo Gavrielatos said that along with securing the recurrent funding we need, Federation's efforts must include securing the funding needed for children to be educated in modern, well-equipped classrooms.

"A key focus of the union in the lead up to the State Election 2023 must be securing the funding we need through policy commitments by the major parties," he said.

"The fact that all NSW public schools are currently resourced at around 88 per cent of the SRS is to be condemned, and is an indictment on the former coalition government in Canberra, and its counterpart in NSW, who agreed to underfunding public schools in the current bilateral agreement. Effectively, this means 1 in 8 public school students go without funding.

"If NSW public schools were resourced at the full SRS this year, an additional \$2 billion would be invested in the education of our children. The funding shortfall between 2020 to 2023 is a staggering \$8 billion.

"The next bilateral funding agreement between NSW and the Commonwealth, due to be negotiated in the next 12 months, must include a joint commitment to have all public schools achieve 100% of the SRS by its conclusion.

"The agreement must also remove the loophole which allows the NSW Government to artificially inflate its SRS contribution by four per cent by including capital depreciation costs, along with the costs of NESA.

"These costs are applied only to public schools and not private schools, and it is a travesty that the former coalition government allowed their inclusion in the current bilateral agreement. NSW public schools are missing out on \$635 million this year due to this loophole and more than \$3.5 billion over the life of the current bilateral agreement.

"Incredibly, despite its greater revenue-raising capacity, the Commonwealth has not contributed a single dollar in capital funding for NSW public schools since 2017," said Mr Gavrielatos.



“By contrast, private schools have access to a national capital fund worth \$1.9 billion over a decade.

“In addition to this federal government capital funding, private schools across NSW have accessed more than \$514 million as part of the State government’s Building Grants Assistance Scheme for Non-Government Schools between the 2017/18 and 2021/22 financial years.

“Given the fact that public schools enrol two thirds of students and enrolments in NSW public schools are predicted to increase by 25 per cent within the next two decades, which include an increase of students with additional learning needs and disability, a far greater capital commitment will be required by the Commonwealth and NSW governments to public schools.

“An urgent investment is required not only to cater for growing enrolments, but to rebuild ageing schools and ensure all classrooms and facilities are of an appropriate standard for 21st century teaching and learning,” he said.

Delegates also condemned the NSW Government’s over-reliance on demountable buildings to deal with rising enrolments. Demountable numbers increased by 45 per cent between 2014 and 2020 and 12 per cent of all classrooms in 2020 were in demountable buildings.

Delegates recommended that Federation’s efforts must include securing the capital funding required for children to access a high-quality education in modern, well equipped classrooms.

Conference also endorsed the preparation of a State Election 2023 campaign kit to assist in lobbying efforts of all LNP, ALP, NSW Greens and SFF Members of State parliament and prospective major and minor party state election candidates.

The campaign kit will assist in prosecuting the arguments necessary to highlight the benefits of recurrent and capital funding investment for public school students, the teaching profession, and the community as a whole.