

NSW Education Minister speaks out for Gonski

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NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes will continue to fight “very, very strongly” for the Federal Government to honour its obligation to fund the final two years of the NSW Gonski agreement, ABC Radio reported today ahead of the Education Council meeting in Hobart.

Mr Stokes said: “We have a bi-lateral agreement and have met our obligations and we will be insisting the Commonwealth does likewise.”

Mr Stokes stated that NSW would lose \$1.3 billion in 2018-2019 if the Federal Government did not fund its contribution to the NSW Gonski agreement. This works out to a \$1400 cut in Commonwealth support for each public school student and \$500 for each non-government school student.

“Because it’s a needs-based agreement it means that the largest impact will be on the most disadvantaged students,” Mr Stokes said, going to the heart of the problem facing public schools in NSW.



These students face the abrupt withdrawal of support services “that have been generating great educational results”, Mr Stokes said, referring to resources such as literacy and numeracy learning assistance, specialist services, speech pathologists and community liaison officers who bolster important links between schools and parents and the wider community.

“It’s a minute to midnight,” Mr Stokes said, in reference to the threatened announcement at the June Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting that federal funding of Gonski would be cut.

He said the uncertainty over funding was making NSW schools “very anxious” as they were struggling to finalise budgets and know how many teachers they could engage.

“The idea of providing for consistency and predictability in terms of school funding is what we signed up for,” Mr Stokes said, in an admonishment to the federal government.

Mr. Stokes’ statements underpin the importance of the Gonski campaign, and why parents, citizens, principals and teachers around Australia are campaigning hard to secure the full Gonski funding, said Federation President Maurie Mulheron.

“This is not only about additional funding,” Mr. Mulheron said, “it’s about equitable resourcing to help the most disadvantaged in our society, and Minister Stokes’ comments once again highlight the callousness of the federal government to even consider pulling back on this much-needed funding model.”