

## Gonski-rich Parkes seat hears Federation's message

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Splashes of green across the state's north and central west marked Federation action in support of continued Gonski funding as members turned out from the Dubbo, Nyngan, Bourke and Walgett Teachers Associations to harness community support for the needs-based funding.

Dubbo, Walgett, Bourke and Nyngan fall within the Parkes electorate, held by MP Mark Coulton of the National Party. It gets a huge portion of Gonski funding (\$29 million from 2014-17, more than any other NSW seat) but the federal Nationals are making no real attempt to reverse the Coalition's plan to end full funding of Gonski – a fact worrying local residents who have been listening over past days to Federation members showing what local schools will lose if Gonski funding is turned off.



In Dubbo, members gathered outside NSW National MP Troy Grant's office on Saturday March 11 and then marched along the main street, handing out leaflets to crowds of morning shoppers showing how Dubbo schools have been able to build up student achievement because of Gonski funding.

Organiser Duncan McDonald said it was good to watch how effective local members were in starting Gonski conversations.

In Nyngan on the same day, members gathered at the local landmark, the Big Bogan, and walked along the main street distributing leaflets showing Gonski gains in their area.

Teachers in Bourke spread out in residential streets, placing leaflets in mailboxes, before heading to popular coffee shop, Diggers, where they were sure to meet a good crowd of locals enjoying their Saturday morning socialising over a cuppa – fertile ground to plant the Gonski message.

In Walgett, members chose a different tack, holding a Saturday morning barbecue at the Lightning Ridge swimming pool and handing out Gonski flyers to those who rolled up, enticed by the scent of frying snags and onions. Members then distributed more leaflets down the main street and engaged residents in conversations about the benefits that Gonski funding had brought to Lightning Ridge Central School.

"Teachers were able to engage really well with local parents and grandparents," Organiser Duncan McDonald said.

"The conversations went straight to how Gonski funding was being spent in each school and people were interested and wanted to know more about the different programs and learning aids that were available for

the kids solely as a result of the extra needs-based funding provided through Gonski. We were able to talk to them in detail about the value of keeping this funding for the full term.”