

## Education heads up campaign issues

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There was large public support for candidates' promises to reintroduce the needs-based schools funding model at a public forum during the New England by-election.

Federation President Maurie Mulheron reminded voters at the forum: "The government is ripping \$26 million out of New England schools over the next two years." Nationals candidate Barnaby Joyce was curiously absent from the panel, where most other candidates agreed that country schools need more funding.

Independent Rob Taber said: "Education is one of the most important things we need to fund ... and looking at Tamworth, \$21 million is being pulled from schools over the next two years."

Independent Jeff Madden agreed, declaring "political gains at the expense of ... our children, needs to stop". Animal Justice Party candidate Skyla Wagstaff declared the Turnbull Government to be "discriminating against rural children".

During the Bennelong by-election campaign, Labor candidate Kristina Keneally echoed the sentiments of her New England peers, telling voters: "Mr Turnbull's cuts to schools are hurting families."

The launch of the Fair Schools Funding mobile billboard at Marsden High School in the Bennelong electorate, continued to focus voter attention on the plight of public schools under the Coalition. In the face of \$11 million cuts in Bennelong, Mr Mulheron asked voters: "If Mr Turnbull won't support our children, why should we support him?"

— **Kim Richards**

