

Policy core threat to public schools

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In the lead up to the March 2019 NSW election, Federation will continue to expose the Department's Local Schools, Local Decisions policy as the single greatest threat to teacher permanency and high-quality, high-equity public schooling for all students.

From the outset, Local Schools, Local Decisions' key priority has been to convert permanent positions to a cash amount in school budgets. This would establish the pre-conditions for cutting jobs and denying schools a guaranteed staffing allocation based on student numbers and need.

To date, the worst of Local Schools, Local Decisions has been held back because the union has successfully negotiated a staffing agreement that protects teacher permanency, maintains a statewide teacher transfer system and protects class sizes.

The success of the Gonski campaign has been an additional element to protect permanency. More than \$1.4 billion in additional recurrent funding to NSW public schools has created the means for additional permanent and temporary teacher positions to be established.



However, recent moves by the Department to diminish school staffing entitlements determined by student numbers and need, are a cause for concern for all public school communities.

Federation successfully delayed for a year the Department's attempt to remove the Secondary Priority School Funding Scheme teacher allocation from high school staffing entitlements. Such a move by the Department would have resulted in a cut to the number of permanent teachers, a reduction in head teacher positions and the consequent undermining of teaching and learning, which is best served by a stable, permanent workforce.

Review of staffing entitlements

The Department has announced a school staffing entitlement review. Federation has not been provided with any detail and is seeking urgent discussions with the Department.

For as long as Local Schools, Local Decisions threatens to cash in permanent teacher positions, Federation members must maintain a collective vigilance ensuring all permanent vacancies are filled including classroom, executive and specialist positions such as careers advisers and teacher-librarians.

Support for compliance

Federation recently provided a staffing kit, *Staffing NSW Public Schools*, to all members. The union hopes this will aid schools to comply with the Staffing Agreement.

The kit is a fundamental step in protecting staffing entitlements from the threat of the Department's Local Schools, Local Decisions policy.

As part of Federation's broader state election platform and priority demands on all political parties, the union will also campaign to establish adequate statewide systems support for schools and additional permanent positions across all equity areas (Aboriginal, socioeconomic status, disability and English language proficiency).

Local Schools, Local Decisions is the antithesis to a well-resourced Department and public school system with the capacity to provide quality and timely support for schools. Local Schools, Local Decisions has gutted that support.

Principals and teachers are left to fend for themselves in times of need, often to be told by the Department the support they need can be found somewhere in their Resource Allocation Model (RAM) funding or via a Google search.

The department must have, at its core, the reliable, statewide provision of the necessary resources, teaching expertise, curriculum and professional learning so desperately needed by schools.

Consistent with this approach, Federation will also pursue improved statewide support and additional permanent positions across all equity areas. Overall, funding has increased due to the success of the Gonski campaign and Federation will seek greater accountability and purpose from the Department in the use of such funds.

Federation will investigate the provision of executive staffing for primary and secondary support classes and Intensive English Centres with a view to seeking improvements to this allocation in line with other settings.

English proficiency

The number of NSW public school students requiring support to attain English language proficiency has grown from 145,000 in 2015 to 173,000 in 2018. Despite this significant growth in student need and the \$25 million extra funding available for this loading, the statewide staffing entitlement of 896 full-time equivalent English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) teaching positions has remained unchanged.

This is another example of the Department's attempts to diminish the proportion of permanent positions for the sake of flexible funding in school budgets. Schools deserve their rightful entitlement of permanent staff based on student need and the provision of qualified EAL/D teachers and well-resourced programs to meet the English Language Proficiency needs of these targeted students. To deny schools these resources is to deny access to curriculum and long-term education outcomes for migrant and refugee students.

This is an unacceptable position for the Department to maintain. Federation will continue its demand for an increase in EAL/D staffing entitlements.

Staffing of Schools for Specific Purposes

Federation remains concerned at the inequitable distribution of funding to Schools for Specific Purposes compared with other public schools, which fails to provide the higher level of resourcing for intensive interventions and equity that students with disability have a right to receive.

Current formulae that allocate baseload funding to SSPs fail to take into account the greater learning needs of students with disability, factors of need and multiple diagnoses. The Department's formulae are based on actual enrolments instead of a notional enrolment that reflects greater student need and primary and secondary student numbers.

The anomaly of SSPs being staffed on a primary school formula has been a long-term issue, well known to successive state governments and the Department, which has entrenched inequity for those students with the most complex needs. The staffing of SSPs, based upon the primary school staffing formula, denies those settings with secondary enrolments the equivalent classroom teacher and executive release time, executive staffing entitlement and access to secondary curriculum options that would usually apply to a high school.

The needs of students with disability has been grossly neglected by the Turnbull Government in their failure

to honour its funding share of the NSW National Education Reform Agreement and its lack of commitment to fully fund the Students with Disability Loading that continues to affect those students and their teachers.

Protecting and enhancing school staffing entitlements will be an important priority campaign issue within Federation's broader state election platform.