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PRINCIPALS SLAM MINISTER'S READING VOUCHER

A peak meeting of Australian school principals has condemned the government's plan for literacy "vouchers", and called on the Minister for a major re-think.

The Australian Education Union National Principals Committee (NPC) strongly supported additional resourcing for the support of students' literacy development. However the NPC, meeting in Melbourne this week, condemned the "voucher" concept currently being proposed by Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson.

"Principals believe that the most beneficial way to support improved literacy outcomes is to provide adequate funding to schools so that current programs based on knowledge of individual students and best practice can be fully implemented," said Committee chair, Neil Free.

"There are a number of successful literacy programs using intensive one-on-one tuition, such as Reading Recovery, that can be provided when appropriate funding is available to schools.

"Under Minister Nelson's proposal, not only is there a risk that the \$700 "voucher" will produce minimal, if any, improved literacy outcomes, but the potential use of unqualified tutors without knowledge of the student's other learning program, and no accountability, may actually negatively impact on learning, and could put student welfare at risk," Free said.

"We urge Nelson to reconsider this proposal, and examine options for adequately funding public schools so that the learning needs of all students can be fully addressed."

The AEU National Principals Committee represents principals, deputy and assistant principals from government schools in all states and territories.

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