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Abbott Would Cut Public School Funding Share

The election of an Abbott Government would see windfall funding increases for private schools and a cut in the share of money going to public schools, new research has revealed.

Undertaken by funding expert, Dr Jim McMorrow, the research found private schools would get a \$2.3 billion increase in Commonwealth general recurrent funding between 2012 and 2016 – enough to pay for 8,300 new teachers.

That would be almost four times higher than the increase for public schools (\$652 million or 1,670 teachers).

This funding disparity, combined with cuts to education programs worth \$3.1 billion that have been announced by the Coalition, would see the public school share of funding fall to 34 percent and below.

AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos said the research was commissioned after the Coalition announced it would keep the discredited SES funding model for schools for another four years (2013-2016).

“This research shows that by 2016 private schools would be getting \$9.5 billion in Commonwealth general recurrent funding a year, compared to \$3.1 billion for public schools,” he said.

“The Labor Government has begun a much-needed review of this flawed school funding system which puts private schools first and funds schools regardless of their income or resources.

“But the Coalition has pledged to not only keep this flawed funding system but to enhance it. It is clear from this research that an Abbott Government would widen the resources gap between public and private schools.

“Under Tony Abbott public schools which teach more than two thirds of students would receive only one third of the funding. The needs of public school students would again be ignored.

“It is clear Mr Abbott wants to privatise education. Along with delivering windfall increases to private schools, he plans to make their fees tax deductible and make cuts worth \$3.1 billion in education that will disproportionately affect public schools.”

The McMorrow report warns that continuing the current funding system beyond 2012 will “extend the inequities and injustices that are embedded in its structure and operations”.

Those inequities include the fact that more than 50 percent of private schools receive more than they are entitled to under the SES funding model due to political agreements reached by the former Howard Government.

Those special agreements cost taxpayers \$800 million a year and that would rise to \$1 billion a year by 2016 if they remain in place.

The report states: *“The current review of schools funding provides the best opportunity for decades to take stock of the ways that public funding for all schools, from all sources, can best support quality schooling for all.*

“It would be helpful if both sides of politics supported the review process, and resisted the temptation to pre-empt or subvert its outcomes with hastily-conceived pre-election commitments.”

The report can be found at:

www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2010/Schoolfundfutures.pdf

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