

Resourcing the National Goals for Schooling

An Agreed Framework of Principles for Funding Schools



MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION,
EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Preamble

Funding for school education in Australia should be on the basis of clear and agreed policy principles for achieving effectiveness, efficiency, equity and a socially and culturally cohesive society.

On the basis of these principles a national framework for funding schools will be supported by complementary State and Commonwealth models for funding government and non-government schools.

The framework of the five principles should be read as a whole.

The principles do not prescribe a funding policy for individual governments or systems. Together they represent a direction for complementary Commonwealth and State funding approaches that:

- ✦ recognise the relative weight of different cost factors across school sectors;
- ✦ recognise the specific needs and cost burdens of different levels of schooling;
- ✦ provide a basis for government support to meet the growing costs of schooling over time.

FRAMEWORK OF PRINCIPLES

Commonwealth and State governments will work cooperatively and pro-actively to ensure that:

 The total level of resources available for schooling is adequate so that achievement of the National Goals for Schooling is a realistic objective for all students.

 Public funding across different schools and sectors is distributed fairly and equitably through a consistent approach to assessing student needs and through having regard to the total level of resources available for students.

 The total level of funding for government schooling is adequate to ensure access to high quality government schooling for all, and all governments' funding policies recognise this as a national priority.

 Public funding for schooling supports the right of families to choose non-government schooling and supports non-government schools on the basis of need, within the context of promoting a socially and culturally cohesive society and the effective use of public funds.

 Resourcing for all students is adequate for meeting the National Goals, notwithstanding the school or school sector they attend.

The total level of resources available for schooling is adequate so that achievement of the National Goals for Schooling is a realistic objective for all students.

Expectations of schooling are changing dramatically and increasing costs are being borne by other institutions as well as schools. Teacher training is now generally on the basis of at least four years of pre-service training and continuing in-service training compared to two or three years of pre-service training in the 1960s. New demands are being placed on capital and recurrent costs arising from developments in areas such as Information and Communication Technologies, vocational education in schools, behaviour management and teacher professional development.

At the same time other fundamental elements in the provision of quality schooling remain. The costs are increasing for supporting all students to complete school, to develop essential literacy and numeracy skills and to achieve the other National Goals for schooling. It is important to analyse and understand these costs as well as to report on outcomes.

All students do not have the same level of need. Variable levels of resourcing can help ensure that there is equitable opportunity for all students to achieve common educational objectives.

Public funding across different schools and sectors is distributed fairly and equitably through a consistent approach to assessing student needs and through having regard to the total level of resources available for students.

The costs of providing equitably for all students are borne unevenly across and within sectors.

Government school systems overall carry particular costs due to their responsibility for providing universal access to quality school education.

The distribution of total public funding across sectors should recognise the different costs to schools and sectors of ensuring universal access to quality school education and equitable opportunity for all students.

For all students to have an equitable opportunity to achieve the National Goals, the distribution of government funding overall should recognise the level of resources available through schools to support student achievement of the National Goals.

The total level of funding for government schooling is adequate to ensure access to high quality government schooling for all, and all governments' funding policies recognise this as a national priority.

The provision of government school education is a direct responsibility of State and Territory governments, while the Commonwealth also carries responsibilities and objectives arising from its overall responsibility for protecting and promoting the interests and welfare of all students.

The States and Territories provide the majority of funding for government schools. Commonwealth funding is an integral component of government schools funding and is necessary to ensure the objective of quality government schooling.

One of the most essential features of a democracy is that no student is excluded from quality schooling on the basis of needing to contribute financially. Universal access to quality government schooling ensures that families' wealth does not determine access to quality education and therefore to life's opportunities.

Real choice in schooling cannot exist without effective and socially diverse government school systems. The absence of effective and socially diverse government school systems would not be in the interests of any sector or of the community as a whole. Quality government schooling is important for ensuring a socially and culturally cohesive society.

Cooperative national approaches to school resourcing that recognise the shared and particular objectives and roles of each level of government for government schooling are necessary to ensure universal access to quality schooling.

For all students to be in a position to achieve the National Goals for Schooling, national and cooperative approaches to funding must recognise the national imperative of ensuring quality government schools and systems.

Public funding for schooling supports the right of families to choose non-government schooling and supports non-government schools on the basis of need, within the context of promoting a socially and culturally cohesive society and the effective use of public funds.

When non-government schooling is recognised by government and meets the particular requirements of individuals, families and communities, government funding should support this schooling on the basis of need.

This is within the context of governments' broader responsibility for ensuring effective and equitable educational opportunities for all. Governments are responsible for the welfare of all students and must ensure the efficacy of school education as a whole so that the interests of all citizens and society generally are promoted.

Government is responsible for ensuring that the provision of schooling overall enables a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations while safeguarding the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promoting the effective use of public resources, and upholding the contribution of schooling to a socially and culturally cohesive society.

Resourcing for all students is adequate for meeting the National Goals, notwithstanding the school or school sector they attend.

Students are the primary focus of good school education policy. Governments together share responsibility for ensuring that total resources available to all students are adequate for achieving the National Goals notwithstanding a school's ownership and governance.

Private contributions are important for ensuring the viability and quality of non-government schooling and funding policies should recognise this. In the interests of students and the community, schools should be viable before governments accept responsibility for supporting student needs. Public funding carries with it commensurate responsibilities for reporting and accountability for all schools.

Overall, government funding policies must ensure that no student is left without access to adequate resources to meet the expectations held for other students. In government schools, public funding must ensure that the level of resourcing is appropriate for meeting the national goals. For schooling generally, funding policy must seek to ensure that whatever the combination of public and private funding for a school, no student, in whatever sector, is left without the opportunity to achieve their potential in schooling through a lack of resources.



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