

Education Policy Brief

The Coalition Has Sabotaged Gonski

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January 2014

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Summary

The 2013 school year ended with the near-complete sabotage of Labor's Gonski funding plan by the Coalition Government. It has sabotaged implementation of Gonski in three key ways.

First, it refused to commit to the full Federal funding increase of \$10.3 billion over the next six years promised under Labor's Better Schools plan. It only committed to Labor's increase of \$2.8 billion over four years, of which only \$0.9 billion is new money. This leaves a funding shortfall of \$7.5 billion, the major share of which would have gone to government schools.

Second, it will not require state and territory governments to increase their own funding as a condition of Federal funding. They will be free to decide whether to increase their funding, substitute Federal funding for their own funding or cut their funding. This threatens the loss of the small increase in Federal funding for government schools and of \$5.6 billion in state and territory funding over the next six years, the very large part of which also would have gone to government schools.

Third, it will not require state and territory governments or private school systems to implement the Gonski funding loadings for disadvantaged students. There is also no requirement that state and territory governments distribute Federal funding to disadvantaged schools according to the Gonski model.

All that is left of Gonski after this sabotage is a small net increase in Federal Government funding and implementation of the Gonski disadvantage loadings for non-systemic private schools. Almost all the possible funding loss of over \$13 billion will be borne by government schools who enrol the vast majority of disadvantaged students. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the Gonski loadings will ever be fully or even partially implemented.

The outcome of the sabotage is clear: guaranteed funding increases for private schools but not for government schools. Private schools are guaranteed a funding increase under the federal legislation which will be delivered directly to schools or private school authorities. Government schools are not guaranteed any funding increase because it is being left to state and territory governments to decide. There is no guarantee that funding for disadvantaged government schools will be increased to any substantial extent.

The Government claims it is respecting states' rights in not setting conditions for Federal funding. But, it seems that affirming states' rights is just a convenient way to subvert Gonski. It contradicts the whole approach of the Howard Government which systematically introduced conditions for Federal education funding. It contradicts the Coalition's approach to keep conditions for other education funding programs and in other policy areas.

The Coalition's selective support for states' rights undermines the key feature of the Gonski approach, increased funding for disadvantaged students which delivers much larger funding increases to government schools than to private schools.

Reducing inequity in education is simply not a priority for a government that says supporting private schools is "in our DNA" as the Prime Minister has put it. The Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, even denies that there is an equity problem in Australia despite the

overwhelming evidence presented in the Gonski report and the latest international and national test results.

However, the battle for Gonski is not over. There is a window of opportunity to save the Better Schools funding model and, if possible, strengthen it. The Coalition will not be able to change the federal legislation until after 30 June when the new Senate takes its place in the Parliament and state and territory budgets will not be brought down until mid-year.

A campaign and lobbying effort directed at both the Federal and state and territory governments must be raised by public school organisations and community organisations representing disadvantaged families.

At the federal level, the campaign goal should be to stick to the National Education Reform Agreements that state and territory governments increase funding for government schools and fully implement the Gonski funding loadings. The campaign should also press for the \$10.3 billion increase in Federal funding that Labor promised for the next six years.

State-based campaigns should pressure state and territory governments to increase their funding by \$5.6 billion as planned under the education reform agreements and to distribute the funding to schools according to the Gonski funding model.

Abbott and Pyne want to stop an historic turn from funding school choice to reducing disadvantage in education. We must ensure that they do not succeed.

The Coalition has Sabotaged Gonski and Government Schools Will Bear the Cost

A tumultuous 2013 school year ended with the Coalition Government sabotaging implementation of the Gonski funding plan. In fact, it has ripped the heart out of the Gonski plan and it is government schools and disadvantaged students who will suffer the loss.

While a public outcry forced the Coalition to keep the small Federal funding increase provided under Labor's Better Schools plan over the next four years it has ditched two key features. State and territory governments will not be required to increase their school funding. Nor will they be required to implement the Gonski funding model to provide schools with more funding for disadvantaged students.

The Coalition's refusal to require state and territory governments to contribute their share of Labor's plan threatens \$5.6 billion in additional funding from these governments over the next six years. This potential loss adds to the \$7.5 billion that the Coalition has already refused to support for the last two years of Labor's planned six year transition period to the Gonski funding model. The Coalition is only committed to meeting Labor's funding increase of \$2.8 billion over the next four years, of which only \$0.9 billion is new money, the rest being funding rolled over from existing programs.

Having already lost out from the refusal to commit Federal funding beyond the next four years, government schools will lose out even more now from releasing state and territory governments from any future funding commitments, because these governments are largely responsible for funding government schools. They will be free now to do whatever they wish – they can substitute Federal funding for their own funding or even reduce their own funding effort. As well, they can choose whether or to what extent they implement the Gonski funding loadings for disadvantaged students, the very large majority of whom attend government schools. In contrast, private schools with a more advantaged student profile on average are guaranteed funding increases under Federal legislation.

The essence of the Gonski model is to increase funding for disadvantaged students. The Gonski report said that Australia “must prioritise support for its lowest performing students” and it recommended new funding arrangements “aimed at achieving an internationally competitive high standard of schooling where outcomes are not determined by socioeconomic status or the type of school a student attends” [xiv]. To this end, the report said:

The panel believes that a significant increase in funding is required across all schooling sectors, with the largest part of this increase flowing to the government school sector due to the significant numbers and greater concentration of disadvantaged students attending government schools. [xv]

Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne never accepted the Gonski model. As the [Editor-at-large of *The Australian*, Paul Kelly](#), has pointed out:

Abbott and Pyne refused to endorse Gonski the way they endorsed the National Disability Insurance Scheme. They tried to suffocate the policy at birth. They pressured the states not to sign.

One Coalition Government front bencher has admitted that [“Pyne has always hated it”](#).

The reason is that Abbott and Pyne have a different policy priority to Gonski. Their policy priority is to increase choice as a means of increasing funding for private schools rather than reduce inequity. Their problem with the Gonski report is that it provided a significant re-distribution of funding in favour of government schools which enrol the vast proportion of disadvantaged students.

Abbott says it is a priority of the Liberal Party to fund Independent and Catholic schools. [“It’s in our DNA”](#) and [“we want to protect them”](#) and see them “continue to flourish”. He proudly told a national forum of Independent schools that “we increased school funding by almost 80 per cent in real terms over the life of the Howard Government”. He cited his credentials as a patron of Independent schools:

I stand before you as a proud Australian, as a product of the independent school system, as someone who believes that I can say with deep conviction that I am a friend of the independent schools of Australia. I know them intimately. I am a friend of the independent schools of Australia and I think that you can judge me by my deeds and not simply by my words.

He went so far as to claim that Independent schools are subject to an “injustice” because their proportion of government funding is less than their enrolment proportion. He said: “...there is no question of injustice to public schools here. If anything, the injustice is the other way”. For him, it is irrelevant that Independent schools enrol only a tiny proportion of disadvantaged students compared to government schools.

Abbott was quite explicit about his concerns for Independent schools following the release of the Gonski report. [He said](#) that “there are some recommendations in the Gonski report that pose a real threat to independent schools if implemented” and that Independent schools would lose out. [He told the national forum of Independent schools](#): “The risk from the Gonski process is that greater Commonwealth funding for public schools might mean less Commonwealth funding for independent schools”. Pyne claimed that private schools [“would be worse off”](#) as a result of the Gonski review, that “school fees will have to rise” and “some schools will have to close”.

Pyne also says that choice is a fundamental priority for the Coalition: [“Choice is very much at the heart of the Coalition's approach to school-based education”](#). Equity does not have the same priority. In fact, Pyne dismisses concerns about inequity in education. He has repeatedly claimed that Australia does not have an equity problem despite national and international test results that show huge gaps of two to five years of learning between advantaged students and various categories of disadvantaged students. For example, he told Steve Cannane on [ABC Lateline in July 2012](#) that “...there isn't actually an issue in Australian schools that revolves around equity” and he denied that socio-economic background is a major factor contributing to poor school outcomes. In another [Lateline interview in November 2013](#) with Cannane he said: “I don't believe there is an equity problem in Australia”. He even denied that the Gonski report was about achieving greater equity in education:

Steve, you're the first person who has described the Gonski report as being all about equity. The Gonski report was about a new school funding model. It was supposed to

be about high-quality outcomes for our students. If it was all about equity then that is news to most people.

Abbott and Pyne were always wedded to the iniquitous SES model introduced by the Howard Government that provided much larger funding increases to private schools than to government schools. Abbott said that the existing system was “not broken” [[here](#) and [here](#)] and that “[we are better fine-tuning the existing system rather than trying to turn the whole thing on its head](#)”. He said [there was nothing in the Gonski model that would improve on the SES model](#):

I've got to say that so far there is nothing substantial, nothing concrete, that we have seen that we are confident would be an improvement on the SES funding model that the Howard Government put in place.

Pyne also said that the then current system is not broken: “[The current funding model does work, it's not a broken model](#)”. He also said that “[the status quo is a better model than what the government is offering](#)” was “[fairer](#)” and “[more transparent](#)” than the Gonski model. Yet, the Gonski report found that it was decidedly broken because it lacked coherence, transparency, consistency, balance, integrity and fairness [xiv, 48-49, 52-53, 85].

However, the Federal election forced the Coalition's hand. [After initially saying](#) it would only honour Labor's Better Schools package for one year while it negotiated a new model for 2015, the Coalition announced that it was on a “[unity ticket](#)” with Labor on school funding. But, the unity ticket was strictly limited - it promised to support the \$2.8 billion funding increase over the next four years. It refused to commit to Labor's planned funding increase of \$10.3 billion over six years. Abbott and Pyne declared that schools would get the same amount of funding for four years under a Coalition Government as under Labor's plan. Pyne said in a joint press conference with Abbott and the NSW Premier that: “...you can vote Liberal or Labor and you'll [get exactly the same amount of funding for your school](#).” Abbott said: “[We will make sure that no school is worse off](#).”

Pyne also said that a Coalition government would “[dismantle all the central command and control features of the model from Canberra](#)” which referred to the conditions attached to Federal funding for state and territory governments. Abbott stated that “Under the Coalition, you'll get the funding but [you won't get the strings attached](#).” [Pyne made it clear that state and territory governments would not be held to their agreement](#) to increase funding:

It will be up to the States to decide whether they spend their money or not because they are sovereign Governments and should be treated like adults....
The Commonwealth will pay its share and it will be up to the States and Territories whether they pay their shares....

The Coalition had been quite clear on this all along. For example, in April 2013, [Abbott spelled out its problems with the Gonski funding plan](#) that required the states to allocate funds according to the formula and it increase funding:

Problem No. 1 is this change requires the states to surrender a large measure of their authority over public schools. Second, it's requiring the states to commit large, large sums of money which they don't have, essentially to follow the Commonwealth's agenda not their own.

Since the election, the Coalition Government has worked on sabotaging Labor's legislated plan agreed to by the NSW, Victorian, South Australian, Tasmanian and ACT governments. In late November, Pyne announced that he would dump the Gonski funding formula and go back to the drawing board. [He told Sky News](#):

I have to go back to the drawing board essentially and try and create a funding model that can be implemented. The funding itself is not at risk. What we need to change is the way the model will be delivered.

He said that the Better Schools model "[is inequitable and utterly incomprehensible](#)" and "I will renegotiate all funding agreements with the signatory and non-signatory jurisdictions, as well as the Catholics and the independents". He announced that "[After 2014 we will have to have a new school funding model that works](#)", that will be a "flatter and simpler" model and "a no strings attached school funding model".

I made it very clear before the election that I didn't buy up to the Labor Party model. We said that we would have the same funding envelope and we will. But, I also made it very clear that I didn't support the central command and control features that were coming from Canberra and I won't have that in the model.

He said that the Howard Government's SES model "is a good starting point for a school funding model" as it is also a needs-based funding scheme [\[also here\]](#). [As the NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli said](#), Pyne is "The only person I've ever heard say that the SES model is a good model".

Pyne's announcement created a furore. First, he claimed that because Labor had cut the funding increase over the Budget forward estimates from \$2.8 billion to \$1.6 billion this was now the Government's funding commitment because it had only agreed to match Labor's increase. He said that the Labor Government had returned \$1.2 billion initially planned for Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory to consolidated revenue because they did not sign up to the Better Schools package and the funding was no longer available. He said "the funding envelope that Labor left us at one-point-six billion dollar is our funding envelope".

This step should not have been the surprise it was to many. [Pyne clearly stated just before the election](#) that the Coalition's commitment had been reduced following the budget update released at the end of August. The update removed the \$1.2 billion over the next four years that had been set aside to boost schools funding in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory had their governments reached agreement with the federal government.

Pyne's only commitment post-election was to stick with the \$1.6 billion for the signatory states over four years and provide \$230 million to the non-signatory states in 2014 while a new funding model was developed for implementation in 2015.

The second, and consequent, issue was that Pyne said that schools would only get the same amount of funding as promised by Labor and the Coalition in 2014, but "[not over four years](#)" as promised in before the election. Pyne refused to re-affirm the Coalition's pre-election promise that no school would be worse off under the Coalition Government over the four years. [Abbott also insisted](#) that the pre-election promise to match Labor's funding did not apply to each individual school but to schools "plural".

Well I think Christopher said schools would get the same amount of money and schools - plural - will get the same amount of money. The quantum will be the same.... But Andrew, we are going to keep our promise. We are going to keep the promise that we actually made, not the promise that some people thought that we made or the promise that some people might have liked us to make.

This duplicity brought to mind [Abbott's notorious *mea culpa* on the 7.30 Report in 2010](#) that he should not be judged on everything he says and that the statements from him "that need to be taken absolutely as gospel truth [are] those carefully prepared scripted remarks". This time, however, it was the "carefully prepared scripted remarks" before the election that could not be trusted.

Within a few days, the Government was forced to back down by the public outcry. Abbott and Pyne announced that the Federal Government had reached an [agreement with the Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory](#) governments (who were non-signatories to the Labor plan) to join the national school funding arrangements and that the \$1.2 billion would be re-allocated to those jurisdictions over four years. They also stated that the Government would increase its funding for schools by the \$2.8 billion over the next four years. Pyne said that "[every school will get exactly the same amount of money](#)" from the Federal Government over the four years as it would have under Labor.

This announcement effectively restored the commitments the Coalition had made prior to the election. It means that the Better Schools base funding and loadings model will be used to calculate the amount of Federal Government funding to be delivered to state and territory governments for government schools, as well as for private schools. The intention to change the funding model from 2015 was dropped.

However, the Government has maintained its position that there will be [no requirement for state and territory governments to commit additional funding](#) to schools, despite bilateral agreements negotiated by the Labor Government with NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT that they do so. Pyne said:

...as we said before the election we would have a no strings attached school funding model in time. The Commonwealth would put the money that it wanted to put in. And whether the states and territories put the money they wanted to put in would be a matter for them. I never supported - and said so many times - I never supported the Labor Party's attempt to essentially insert the Commonwealth in state and territory schools in their responsibilities by saying, well give you X amount of money as long as you put in Y amount of money. I don't think that is any way to have negotiations between states and territories and the Commonwealth. And we don't own and operate any schools. So we will say to the states and territories, this is the contribution that we're making. If the Northern Territory or Victoria wants to put in more money that'll be a matter for them...

I don't think it's right for us to tell the states and territories how to run their budgets.

And:

We expect the states to make whatever contribution their budget allows them to towards the entire funding—to the loadings and to the base funding for the new

school funding model—because we intend to treat the states and territories like adults. We do not believe in the central command and control model that Labor believes in—running things from Canberra. [Hansard, 4 December 2013]

Pyne said that the same base plus loadings formula would be used to calculate Federal funding for the original signatory states and the non-signatory states “[but we will not be requiring them to make contributions](#)”. He said that the Government expected the original signatory states to keep to the conditions of their agreement “but at the end of the day, that is a matter for those sovereign jurisdictions”. Clearly, the Government has signalled that the signatory states will not be held to the conditions of their agreement with the Labor Government.

The implication is that state and territory governments will not be even required to maintain their current levels of funding, let alone increase their funding, and this opens up the potential for governments to cut their own funding or substitute Federal funding for their own funding. Under the Better Schools package, the states would have increased their funding by \$5.6 billion over the next six years. Their commitments are now in doubt and there is nothing to stop any of them cutting their funding for schools.

This will primarily affect the funding of government schools because almost 90 per cent of their funding comes from state/territory governments and Federal funding is delivered via the states. Government schools could then end up with no additional funding or even less funding, despite the Federal funding increase, under the Coalition’s funding arrangements. This would completely undermine the goal of the Gonski funding plan to reduce inequity in education outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Approximately 80 per cent of disadvantaged students attend government schools.

There also seems to be no requirement for state and territory governments to distribute federal and state/territory funding to individual schools according to a Gonski-type formula.

Under the Better Schools legislation a dollar figure is calculated for each school, which includes some funding from the Federal government and some from the state or territory government. For government schools, the Federal government's share is bundled up and given to the respective state and territory governments, which add their share and distribute it according to their own funding models. The model gives flexibility to government (and private school education systems) to implement their own needs-based funding systems, but every system was required to be approved by the Federal Government to ensure consistency with the Federal formula. Different approaches were to be evaluated for their consistency in addressing student need and school systems were required to publish how they have calculated their funding allocations and what every school actually gets each year.

All this appears to have been dispensed with as part of removing “central command and control” requirements. Pyne said that the Government “[wouldn’t keep the implementation plans of the Federal Minister over individual schools](#)”.

Under sustained questioning in the Parliament, Abbott and Pyne conspicuously avoided guaranteeing that the disadvantage funding loadings will be actually delivered to schools, saying that is a state/territory government responsibility. The Prime Minister told the Parliament that “We are delivering the money that will enable the loading to be delivered”

[Hansard, 3 December 2013]. Pyne said that “[the loadings and the base funding will be delivered from the Commonwealth's perspective](#)”.

Thus, it appears that state and territory governments will not be required to distribute funding to schools according to a Gonski-type formula. It seems that the Federal Government will provide funding to the states based on the loadings, but it will be up to state governments to determine how it is spent. The only requirement the Government appears to have made is for a general one that [governments have their own needs-based model](#):

I can say that every State and Territory is applying a needs-based funding model. They've all agreed to that... They will all agree, as they have, to a needs-based funding model with loadings.

It remains to be seen what this means in practice. At this stage, it is a very general requirement and does not specify that state and territory government models be the same as, or similar to, the base plus loadings model used by the Federal Government to allocate funds to the states. The loadings in these jurisdictions could just reflect current funding systems where a very small percentage of total funding provided by state governments is targeted at disadvantaged students. For example, [the Victorian Government says](#) that the equity component of funding for government schools in that state represents only about two per cent of the total allocation to schools. [As a Crikey journalist commented](#):

States can direct the additional funding (for four years) wherever they like.... there's no requirement on the states to adhere to the needs-based funding model developed by the Gonski panel -- a state could direct all the additional funding to wealthy private schools if it so desired.

Indeed, startlingly, there's no need even for the states to provide the additional funding to which they themselves committed as part of their agreements with the Gillard and Rudd governments, or for the non-Gonski signatories not to *cut* their own schools funding to offset the additional funding announced yesterday. [Bernard Keane, *Crikey*, 3 December 2013]

And, as [Barry Cassidy has said](#): “...there is nothing to stop the states ignoring altogether needs-based funding, or even worse, re-directing education funding to other areas”.

NSW, Victoria and Tasmania have adopted funding models that the Labor Government agreed were consistent with the Gonski principles, although further analysis is needed to determine how closely they align with the Gonski model. South Australia and the ACT agreed to implement such a model but have not done so at this stage. Western Australia plans to introduce a needs-based funding model in 2015, but no details are available yet. Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have not committed to introducing a new funding model or to maintaining funding. The Queensland Government said that it would use the extra Federal funding [to improve teacher quality, increase school autonomy and improve school discipline](#). It said nothing about directing the funding to disadvantaged schools.

The outcome of all this is that the Gonski loadings are only guaranteed to apply to non-systemic private schools because they are directly funded by the Federal Government. There is no guarantee that the loadings will be implemented by systemic, mainly Catholic, private

schools. Catholic and other system authorities receive block funding from the Federal Government and are free to determine their own distribution model.

Thus, key features of Labor's plan have been ditched. State and territory governments will not be required to increase their own funding for schools, and it appears that those without a Gonski-type funding model will not be required to introduce one. There is no longer any guarantee that schools with disadvantaged students in the latter jurisdictions will get additional funding. Having failed to suffocate Gonski at birth, the Coalition has now sabotaged it:

...there's also now nothing left of education funding policy except smoking ruins. The Gonski reforms are dead. The only thing that's left is additional [Federal] funding. [\[Bernard Keane, Crikey, 3 December 2013\]](#)

The outcome of the sabotage is clear: guaranteed funding increases for private schools but not for government schools. It is government schools that will be most affected by the sabotage because their funding (including Federal funding) comes from state and territory governments. State and territory governments will not be required to increase their funding and there is no guarantee that they will pass on the small Federal funding increase over the next four years. They may substitute it for their own funding or even cut their funding. There is no guarantee that any funding increases will be directed primarily to disadvantaged schools as it could be spread across all schools. Thus, there is no guarantee that disadvantaged government schools and students will get any significant increase in funding over the next four years unless state and territory governments can be convinced to adhere to the spirit of the Better Schools plan. In contrast, increased Federal government funding of Catholic and Independent schools is guaranteed under federal legislation and is delivered directly to schools or via private school system authorities.

It is hard to believe that this sabotage is not deliberate. When in power in the past, the Coalition has been more than willing to impose command and control measures on the states and territories directed at outcomes which they supported. The Howard Government, in which both Abbott and Pyne were ministers, was the first Federal Government to systematically attach conditions to federal funding for education programs. It presided over a huge expansion in the role of the federal government in school education covering curriculum, teaching, vocational education and training, assessment and certification, performance measurement and reporting, and specifying particular school structures, activities, and how schools should operate. [Howard said he would not accept handing federal funding over to the states without conditions:](#)

We don't want this money disappearing into state bureaucracies and redirected. It's not good enough just for the states to say give us more money and we'll decide how to spend it....the idea that we should just hand more money over to the States for them to decide how it's going to be spent – we're not just going to accept that.

Not only did the Howard Government subject state and territory government to conditions for federal funding, but it went so far as to circumvent state and territory government control over their own schools by funding schools directly, subject to conditions. Several programs such as funding for flagpoles, school chaplains, the Australian School Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics program and the Investing in Our Schools building program were negotiated with schools directly. Some of the conditions went into the minutiae of

things. For example, as a condition of receiving Federal funding for flagpoles, schools were required to invite a Coalition MP to a flag-unveiling ceremony, publish a picture of the MP in the school newsletter, and erect a plaque acknowledging that it was a gift from the Federal Government.

It is very apparent that the Coalition's new concern to remove conditions attached to federal funding is not a deep and fundamental belief – it applies only to the Better Schools funding plan. The Federal Government provides financial support for a vast number of programs across many policy areas such as health care, housing, skills and workforce development, disability services and indigenous services. These are subject to federal-state agreements that define objectives, outcomes, outputs and performance indicators, other accountability requirements and specify the roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the States in the delivery of services. There has been no hint to date that the Coalition intends to release state and territory governments from the conditions attached to federal funding in these areas.

Nor is there any indication that the Government is removing conditions attached to other education funding programs. There are many national partnership agreements on education all of which have conditions attached and there has not been any announcement that these will be removed. For example, Pyne recently announced an increase of \$58 million in funding for the [More Support for Students with Disabilities](#) program. Funding for this program is subject to a number of detailed performance and accountability conditions. Yet, there was no announcement that these conditions will be removed.

So, the approach to states' rights by Abbott and Pyne in relation to the Better Schools funding plan looks opportunistic rather than driven by a matter of principle to be applied consistently. It seems that states' rights are a convenient way to subvert the principles of the Gonski funding model. By affirming states' rights they undermine the key feature of the Gonski approach, specific funding directed at disadvantaged students, which delivers much larger funding increases to government schools than private schools. This hypocrisy in affirming states' rights about Gonski funding speaks volumes. As the NSW Coalition Education Minister, Adrian Piccoli, has said of Pyne: "[He's still fighting that \[private versus public\] war](#)". And he is clearly on the side of private schools.

However, the battle for Gonski is not over. There is a window of opportunity to save the Better Schools funding model and, if possible, strengthen it. A campaign and lobbying effort must be raised by public school organisations and community organisations representing disadvantaged families. It should be directed at both the Federal and state and territory governments. The new [Need to Succeed Alliance in NSW](#) provides one model for a broad-based community campaign.

The Coalition's sabotage cannot be formally completed until the second half of 2014 because removal of the conditions that state and territory governments agreed to under their bilateral National Education Reform Agreements with the Commonwealth will require changing the Australian Education Act 2013 and its associated regulations. This is unlikely to occur until after 30 June 2014 when the new Senate takes its place in the Parliament.

The campaign goal should be to keep the requirements that state and territory governments increase funding for government schools and that they fully implement the Gonski funding model. It should also press for the full \$10.3 billion increase in Federal funding that Labor promised for the next six years.

At the same time, state-based campaigns must be raised to pressure state and territory governments to increase their funding by \$5.6 billion as planned under the education reform agreements and to distribute the funding to schools according to the Gonski funding model. The original signatory states and the ACT must be kept to their agreement to increase school funding over the next six years. Pressure must be put on the new signatory states to increase funding for disadvantaged students as well. State and territory budgets will not be brought down until mid-year, so there is time to act and make a difference for disadvantaged students.

Despite several inadequacies, Labor's Better Schools funding plan is a watershed in the history of school funding in Australia. It brings to an end a period in which Federal funding priorities were to support private schools and largely ignore the needs of disadvantaged students. Its adoption of the Gonski report's equity goals and principles sets the foundation to systematically address educational inequalities in Australia in the future. Abbott and Pyne are trying to turn this around