

P&C Federation Urges Major Parties to Commit to Free and Fully Funded Public Education

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The Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales (P&C Federation) has written to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and their respective education ministers, calling on them to release their federal election commitments for public education in light of the announcement of the Australian Greens' policy to provide genuinely free education to all parents.

The P&C Federation's President, Aresha Quaass, stated: "It is not enough for politicians to just talk about the barriers to achieving full funding and infrastructure investment. Every child in public education deserves the opportunity to learn in a fully funded and well-maintained school."

In the letters, the Federation highlighted concerns about Section 35A(3) of the Better Fairer Schools Agreement, which allows the Federal Government to prescribe differing federal shares among states. This provision, supported by both major parties, has been used to pressure states like New South Wales into accepting less than a full funding commitment. Parents are deeply disappointed that both Labor and the Coalition have resisted calls to increase the Commonwealth's share of public school funding to at least 25% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) outlined in Gonski reforms over a decade ago.

President of the P&C Federation, Aresha Quaass also emphasised: "Too often, debates about public school funding are framed as a zero-sum game—as though funding public schools comes at the expense of private education. This is a false dichotomy. Public school parents ask simply this: for the federal government to equitably invest in every student."

"There is no more critical investment than in our children and their futures. Every dollar spent on education now is an investment in a stronger, more equitable, and prosperous Australia. Falling short will only perpetuate cycles of inequity and disadvantage and shift the associated costs to future generations."

Speaking on ABC Radio with Paul Turton, P&C Federation CEO Gemma Quinn underscored the critical need for policy reform in public education:

"Public education is meant to be the great equaliser. We're all supposed to have access to free education in this country. Making sure that exists for all parents is an absolutely critical policy."

She further added: “The Gonski model is a base model. Fully funding [public education] to [the Schooling Resource standard] would be good, but it’s just the start. Supplementing parent costs for all those additional things required to put kids through a public education is a fantastic initiative.”

Quinn concluded: “We need to ask ourselves, ‘Are we happy with any child being left behind?’ My answer is no.”

The P&C Federation has called on both the Labor and Coalition parties to match the Greens’ commitment to genuinely free and fully funded public education. Their demands include:

1. Committing to real 100% SRS funding for public schools, without accounting tricks,
2. Increasing the Commonwealth’s share of public school funding to at least 25% of the SRS,
3. Covering auxiliary costs for parents to ensure that education remains genuinely free for all.

“Our children deserve nothing less than a Federal Government that prioritises their education and future,” said Quaass. “The path forward is clear, and we urge all parties to take decisive action.”

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