



MEDIA RELEASE – James Harker-Mortlock – Independent for Hume – Wednesday 24th April 2013

RESPONSE TO PROPOSED CHANGES TO SCHOOL FUNDING

“There are many good ideas put forward in the Review of Funding for Schooling, often referred to as the Gonski Report, which in theory could deliver better outcomes for rural and regional students in Hume,” said James Harker-Mortlock, Independent Candidate for Hume. *“Just some of the many ideas put forward include :*

- a. *addressing inequities between schools, such as those caused by remoteness – hopefully we might actually see some new schools opened-up in regional areas rather than being closed down as has been the trend for too long now*
- b. *focusing on the disparity between outcomes for indigenous students and other students*
- c. *aiming for more students from regional areas attaining Year 12 – currently only 67% of students from inner and outer regional areas, such as in Hume, achieve year 12 versus 81% from major cities*
- d. *more involvement by the local community in determining development and planning of school facilities*
- e. *emphasis upon future funding needs not just current enrolments so that planning processes respond effectively to changing educational needs based on demographic and social change – this should enable account to be taken of growth in areas such as Yass, Murrumbateman, Marulan, Wilton and other areas of Hume where the population is both growing and changing in its make-up*
- f. *the schooling resource standard used to determine the level of funding required for a school to include loadings for school size and location, the proportion of students in a school who are Indigenous or from low socioeconomic backgrounds, or with limited English language proficiency - with loadings to increase for schools where the concentration of such students is higher*
- g. *providing an additional funding to support major works and infrastructure in existing government schools*
- h. *rectifying the lack of data to measure progress against the target to halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment*
- i. *rectifying the lack of data on funding for disadvantaged students and its impact on improving educational outcomes*

However, the method by which the Federal government proposes to fund these initiatives is highly questionable, if, indeed, it has the funds in any event, which is also highly questionable. I have a fundamental objection to taking funds from one part of the education system to fund another part of the education system. If a government wishes to embark upon such initiatives, it should find ways to raise additional revenue, not shift educational expenditure around.

*The Federal Government’s proposal to take money from the university sector (\$2.8 billion) is bad. Such a move may well impact most upon regional universities which do not have the private resources available to them which city universities do to make-up any funding shortfall. Such a move also encourages our universities to become more and more just educational degree factories for foreign fee paying students. I do not believe that this was the purpose for which Australian taxpayers built universities. In regard to the funding cuts for universities, it is unfortunate to note that Mr. Abbott is quoted in ‘The Age’ of April 21st as saying **“I don’t think anyone should expect those cuts to be reversed”** One wonders why, if he does not intend to implement the changes recommended by the Gonski review.*

*However, my greatest concern, is expressed as follows by the Gonski panel : **“There is a distinct lack of coordination in the way governments fund schooling, particularly in relation to directing funding to schools based on student need across jurisdictions and sectors.”** What we need is a major shift in the mentality of education bureaucrats and how they administer funds– not necessarily just more funds for them to administer.” ENDS*

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