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AEU Deliberately Distorting School Funding Discussion

Statement by Michelle Green, Chief Executive, Independent Schools Victoria

By releasing today another version of its McMorrow report, the Australian Education Union (AEU) is again deliberately distorting discussion of funding education in Australia.

Once again, the report only quotes figures for Australian Government funding provided to government and non-government schools. It ignores the fact that nationally, in 2007-08, state and territory governments provided over $26 billion for government schools but only 2.1 billion for non-government schools.

Funding of education in Australia is not a level playing field. In Victoria, government schools get far more money from the state government than Independent schools.

The 2010 Productivity Commission data shows that in 2007-08, the Victorian and Australian governments provided combined funding of $6.142 billion to government schools compared with $1.832 billion to Victorian non-government schools.

Victorian government schools received total government funding of $11,061 per student while non-government schools received $6089 per student. Independent and Catholic schools educate 36 per cent of Victorian school children but receive only 23.0 of total government funding.

Victorian independent schools receive about a third of their income from the state and federal governments – the rest is paid for by parents.

The AEU argues that both major political parties should support the process of the funding review before making any commitments and should resist the temptation to subvert the review’s outcomes. But at the same time the union is attempting to pre-empt the outcomes of the funding review by arguing that the status quo is unacceptable.

We all agree that education needs greater government funding, but demonising non-government schools does not make the pool of available funds any larger. Instead it detracts from the harder issues of designing a fair, transparent and sustainable funding model linked to the needs of students.

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