School Funding – Alice Through the Looking Glass*

Lewis Carroll would have been proud of the bureaucrats who devised the process for developing the funding model for implementing the recommendations for the Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling. They have created a mirror reverse of best practice.

Best practice:

1. Stakeholders begin with a shared and tested dataset.
2. A detailed technical paper for the new funding model is shared and tested.
3. The funding model is implemented as a spreadsheet (dataset plus equations) and provided to stakeholders.
4. A spreadsheet informs stakeholder negotiations in selecting funding model parameters.
5. The government settles on the final funding model, in consultation with stakeholders, and presents the Executive Summary.
6. The 'headlines' from the Executive Summary presented for media and public consumption.

But instead we have:

6. The 'headlines' of the new funding model appeared in the final Gonski report (the new model to cost $5b per annum, and apply student per capita funding plus loadings).
5. A selective executive summary of the final model output presented to stakeholders.
4. Some modelling equations provided on a USB memory stick.
3. The USB stick is intended to inform our understanding of funding issues.
2. DEEWR might release a technical paper on the econometric methodology underpinning the methodology of the new funding model.
1. DEEWR might provide access to some of the dataset.

*Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There (1871) is the sequel to Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865).

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