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## Education Updates

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### Victorian Government Schools Set to Receive an Extra \$10 Billion

The Victorian Government has announced that it intends to increase its contribution to government school funding from its current level of 66 per cent of the School Resourcing Standard to 75 per cent, according to a report in *The Age*. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

The Australian Government has released the final report of an independent review into bridging the educational divide between capital cities and regional and rural areas. [Click here to read more...](#)

### IBAC Releases Education Department's Response to Operation Dunham

The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission has published the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's (Vic DET) responses to the recommendations that arose from its investigation into the conduct of Vic DET staff in connection with the abandoned Ultranet project. [Click here to read more...](#)

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## Nothing New About Transition Support Funding, Says ISCA

The Independent Schools Council of Australia ([ISCA](#)) [has rejected media reports](#) of a 'secret' government 'slush fund' for Independent Schools, saying that the provision of transition support to schools when funding arrangements change was 'well established' and 'hardly a secret'.

The Australian Government's [National Adjustment Assistance Fund](#) helps individual Independent schools expected to get less under the government's 'Gonski 2' funding model to adjust to the new arrangements. A report in *The Age*, however, said the 'secretive' fund was providing the 'wealthiest private schools' in Australia with 'bonus payments'.

Australian Education Union federal president, Correna Haythorpe told the paper the Australian Minister for Education, Simon Birmingham, had 'negotiated a range of special deals that have seriously advantaged the independent sector'.

Deputy Opposition Leader, and Australian Shadow Education Minister, [Tanya Pliibersek, said](#) that despite making cuts to 'ordinary schools', Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull had found:

... a secret \$7 million fund to help the schools that he says are overfunded, some of the very elite private schools, he's giving them access to a secret fund. It's just madness to be cutting funding to ordinary public schools, having a \$7 million secret fund for the most elite private schools.

The Australian Minister for Education, [Simon Birmingham, said](#) the Australian Government had discussed the impact of school funding reforms on schools as part of its negotiations to get the 'Gonski 2' legislation through the Senate, and that some schools were:

... actually going to see a real reduction in their funding. Only a small number, a very small number. But some will and those schools in particular along with parts of the Catholic system asked for some transitional support in the first year so that they wouldn't face less than six months notice by the time the legislature passed a real reduction in the first year.

ISCA said that as stand-alone Independent schools are not supported by school systems, any changes to Australian Government funding could have a significant impact on their finances. ISCA said:

School communities need time to adjust to funding changes, particularly if there is a requirement to increase fees over and above regular cost increases. Parents enrol students in an Independent school with a knowledge of their capacity to pay fees. If there is an unexpected change in those fees, school communities need time to adjust.

- 'Slush fund' for richest schools. Michael Koziol, *The Age*, 13 April 2018
- Simon Birmingham interview, Patricia Karvelas, *ABC RN Drive*, 13 April 2018

## Victorian Government Schools Set to Receive an Extra \$10 Billion

The Victorian Government has announced that it intends to increase its contribution to government school funding from its current level of 66 per cent of the [School Resourcing Standard](#) (SRS) to 75 per cent, according to a report in *The Age*.

The SRS is an estimate of how much total funding a school needs to meet the educational needs of its students. Under the 'Gonski 2' reforms, the states and territories will be required to ensure that their contribution brings the total public funding level to an average of at least 95 per cent of the SRS for all schools. The Australian Government will provide 20 per cent of this amount for Government schools, and 80 per cent for non-government, and expects the states and territories to provide the balance.

The states and territories have not yet signed up for the reforms. *The Age* estimates that doing so would cost Victoria \$10 Billion.

The paper reported that the Victorian Minister for Education, James Merlino, said that the increase in funding meant that 'Victoria will deliver the most significant increase of any other state or territory in the Country'.

Mr Merlino called on the Australian Government to increase its contribution to government schools so that they receive 100 per cent of their student resourcing standard, saying:

There is no logic or fairness in the current proposal by the Turnbull government that increases non-government schools to 100 per cent yet leaves government schools at 95 per cent.

– Victorian schools set for \$10b funds boost. Henrietta Cook, *The Age*, 13 April 2018

## Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

The Australian Government has released the final report of an independent review into bridging the educational divide between capital cities and regional and rural areas.

The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education was led by Emeritus Professor John Halsey with the aim of identifying 'innovative and fresh approaches to support improved access and achievement of these students in school and in their transition to further study'.

In [his report](#) Dr Halsey makes eleven recommendations, across four priority areas:

- establishing a national focus for regional, rural and remote education, training and research to enhance access, outcomes and opportunities
- focussing on research for successful learning and building young people's futures – school leadership, teaching, curriculum and assessment
- addressing the information communication and technology needs in regional, rural and remote locations
- focusing on the transitions into and out of school.

The Australian Minister for Education, [Simon Birmingham, said](#) the report identified gaps and room for improvement, but showed that there was 'no silver bullet' for addressing the issues facing regional education.

He said doing so would 'take the concerted efforts of many, including states and territories and everyone from families to teachers and school leaders, to universities and student accommodation managers to preschool educators'.

The Chief Executive of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, [Beth Blackwood, welcomed the report](#), saying that gaps in educational opportunity can be area-specific, so responses need to be as well:

Our own research among heads of day and/or boarding schools in regional and remote areas, and heads who lead boarding schools in major cities, affirms that government programs aimed at bridging opportunity gaps must be flexible enough to allow for community and school differences to be accommodated.

Ms Blackwood said that Independent schools in regional, rural and remote areas were addressing this cycle of disadvantage in a variety of ways, including:

- offering subjects online, via video conferencing or by partnering with other schools
- linking the curriculum with localised projects in the local community
- establishing links with regional universities
- providing VET courses allied to local industry
- accessing mentors from the community or alumni,
- introducing a 'stage not age' approach to student choice.

National Catholic Education Commission acting executive director [Ray Collins said](#) he was 'particularly impressed' by the report's

... identification of the needs of RRR schools in relation to the provision of teachers in these schools, the quality of the learning experiences for students, the importance of experienced and creative leadership and the important links between schools and their communities.

Deputy Opposition Leader, and Australian Shadow Education Minister, [Tanya Plibersek, said](#) the Australian Government had cut funding to schools, universities, and vocational educational and that the best thing the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull could do for regional and regional education was to 'stop the cuts'.

## IBAC Releases Education Department's Response to Operation Dunham

The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission ([IBAC](#)) [has published](#) the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's (Vic DET) responses to the recommendations that arose from its investigation into the conduct of Vic DET staff in connection with the abandoned Ultranet project.

In 2017, IBAC revealed that the investigation, *Operation Dunham*, had uncovered evidence showing how the tender process for the Ultranet project had been corrupted. (See [Weekly Briefing 1/2017](#)).

In [Vic DET's final report to IBAC in response to Operation Dunham](#), the department says an independent review identified issues with how schools respond to commercial opportunities.

Vic DET's response has / will include:

- a redesigned committee structure that has provided the 'foundation for good governance, and has resulted in stronger leadership, more efficient and effective decision'
- developing intellectual property guidelines that are consistent with the Whole of Victorian Government Intellectual Property Policy and providing training to staff on new procedures
- making it clearer to staff that products they create during their employment are the intellectual property of the Vic DET
- simplifying and streamlining procurement systems
- requiring procurements of over \$150,000 to be approved by either the Department's Chief Procurement Officer, a Procurement Manager, or the Procurement and Probity Committee
- introducing a centralised, electronic system for declaring and registering conflicts of interest and expanding the gifts, benefits and hospitality register.