

PRIMARY RESOURCING

APPA advocates the importance of bringing to life a vibrant, inclusive educational system. This is achieved through adequate and equitable resourcing in primary education, recognising its foundational role in building a stronger and fairer future for Australia. APPA acknowledges the commitment to equalised needs based funding across all sectors by 2029.

QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION

We call for the prioritising of equity, transparency, and holistic child development, as outlined in the Mparntwe declaration. This vision recognises the substantial economic and societal benefits of investing in primary education, laying strong foundations for future generations and a respectful, civic society in general.

Quality primary education is fundamental to Australia's bright future. We emphasise the need for stronger primary foundations to address current disparities and ensure every child receives equitable opportunities, regardless of their background or location. 100% of the SRS for all primary school students is a minimum standard yet to be achieved. Every child regardless of sector and postcode should receive exactly what they need.

RESOURCE EQUITY

We demand full transparency in fund allocation to schools, ensuring resources reach those most in need. We advocate for a comprehensive refresh of the education funding resource model to guarantee fairness and equitable distribution of resources.

Every year of school matters, therefore every year should be resourced to address the specific needs and costs associated with primary student success. Key considerations include:

- » the importance of early intervention strategies tailored to the diverse needs of students,
- » flexibility to meet children at their point of need whenever the need arises, and
- » clarity and transparency of current funding allocations.

PRIMARY RESOURCING

Primary schools are funded significantly less than per student than their secondary equivalents. However, primary outcomes substantially predict the course of a student's life.¹ Prior performance in primary school predicts future outcomes more so than student background or parental education or occupation. The \$3,481 funding gap between Year 6 and Year 7 students in 2024 is difficult to justify, especially given the rise in school refusal and mental health issues in young children.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Evidence overwhelmingly supports early-age student intervention. As economics professor John Heckman highlights, investing in early childhood yields the highest returns, boosting success for more children and reducing future social spending.

Lesser funding to the primary years of schooling affects primary leadership density. It limits resources that schools can allocate to additional leadership roles to address complex issues such as student wellbeing and learning outcomes. The lack of a well-resourced leadership team means that job demands are not matched by job resources.

We argue for a strategic focus on primary education resourcing, where significant, long-lasting impact can be achieved through timely interventions, setting students up for future success. ▶

“ Lesser funding to the primary years of schooling affects primary leadership density. ”

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

To address these issues:

- » Fund every primary school student at 100% of the SRS as a bare minimum.
- » Address the disparity in funding between primary and secondary students.
- » Fund infrastructure in every primary school to create 'fit for purpose', safe and positive environments which are conducive to the learning needs of the cohort.
- » Devolve more resources to the school level and trust senior educators to make good decisions in their local contexts.
- » Ensure resourcing is adequate to meet the needs of the diversity and complexity of priority cohorts.
- » Recalibrate the economic modelling methodology of the SRS which does not address the challenges of educating primary children in remote and rural locations. There needs to be additional funds in the Better Schools Funding Agreement to address this challenge for without them the challenges continue, and achievement gaps remain.

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CONCLUSION

APPA advocates for stronger collaboration between state and federal jurisdictions, engaging with APPA in co-design and solution focused strategies for improvement, and ensuring equity in funding allocation. **APPA calls for funding to ensure an education of the highest quality for every student, in every locale and for funding to be targeted to those students who need it most.** While Australia is recognised as having an excellent education system, it is not excellent for everyone, leaving our most vulnerable children behind.

APPA's advocacy over the past 50 years demonstrates an ongoing commitment to ensuring the children of Australia, regardless of their background or educational setting have what they need to be successful. We will not deviate from this moral imperative.

1 Heckman, JJ (2006) "Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children"; Duncan, GJ & Magnuson, K (2011) The nature and impact of Early Achievement Skills, Attentions Skills, and Behaviour Problems"; Moffitt TE *et al* (2011) "A Gradient of Childhood Self-Control Predicts Health, Wealth, and Public Safety"; Chetty, R, *et al* "How does your Kindergarten Classroom Affect your Earnings? : Evidence from Project Star"; Blander, J, Gregg P & Macmillan, L (2007) "Accounting for Generational Income Persistence: Non-cognitive Skills, Ability and Education".