



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Schools

SPEECH

Wednesday, 22 March 2017

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Ryan, Joanne, MP	Question No.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (15:44): I rise to join my colleagues today on what has been a fabulous day. We spent time this morning with principals and parents from across country. The member for Maranoa, who is leaving the chamber, who had a lot to say on education, might want to take this little piece of information back. The electorate of Maranoa will lose \$33 million if this government does not come up with a new plan for schools and ditch the plan they currently have, which, of course, is to cut \$30 billion from what was promised under Labor.

The school principals we spoke to this morning had pride in their faces as they went to the core of this issue. The core of this issue, as the member for Maranoa rightly points out, is about outcomes. He should have come with us. They were just down the hill; it was not very far to walk. He could have met principals and heard the stories about the outcomes that those schools are achieving, that those schools are getting, because of the resourcing that has been going into those schools. He would have been able to smile with me as I heard about those schools and their great work.

He would have been able to meet Shelby Papadopoulos, the principal of Colac Primary School, and hear her talking about what they are doing with needs based funding at that school. He could have heard from principals in Victoria, from principals in New South Wales and from parents. He could have heard their stories about the improved outcomes in their schools. For his information, in case he does not know—and possibly for the information of parents around the country—there is a website called My School. Those opposite might want to go and look up a few schools on that website. They might want to check what equity funding is going into those schools and the difference it is making to the outcomes for children in those schools.

I went out there today and I talked to Peter Clifton, the principal of Magpie Primary School in Ballarat. Mr Deputy Speaker Coulton, if you go to the My School website and see the difference that it has made in that school, you will be stunned. What was all red on My School is now all green. That means that they are working above standard. He told me he has 90 children in that school—it is a small school—and he told me about the work that they have been doing. There is not one child in that school under national standards. The pride in his voice and on his face was extraordinary. There are stories like this right across this country because of needs based funding. There are stories of kids who were destined to always perform below.

When I go to schools in my own electorate, I walk through the door and principals say to me: 'Jo, I want you to come into the office. I want to show you our results. I want to show you the outcomes we're getting by implementing the Gonski ideals, by implementing the reforms that were set by the former Labor government.' Even though Minister Pyne, while he was minister of education, cut those strings to the states and to the sectors, professional principals have not let go of those reforms. They are driving on regardless. They are doing the work on the ground. They came here today to speak to those opposite. They came here today hoping to get a hearing with the people who are holding the purse strings and making the decisions. They came here to talk to Minister Birmingham about education—the man who keeps putting off the decisions and the sharing of the plan, the man who keeps undermining their work with his chats to journalists. His latest balloon was to pull out one tiny piece of data around children's behaviour and then blame children for a lack of outcomes in their schools. They came to be heard. They came to prove that equity funding is making a difference and improving outcomes. But the only audience they got were those who were already convinced. We on this side will stand here day in, day out, determined to deliver this for our schools for the long term so that we can build a better Australia.

The principals and the parents we spoke to today all had stories about the fact that this is working and that they are getting outcomes. I asked the question that I ask all the principals I meet in this role. I asked them when their indicative budgets will be in. Surprise, surprise! They will generally be in before the fourth term starts. When is this minister going to unveil his great plan? It will be when it is too late for those schools to get that money. It is an absolute disgrace. They are letting down every school in this country, regardless of sector. Just as the

equity funding sector is blind, they are blind to what schools need, and they are treating every sector with the same disrespect.