

Review of needs-based funding requirements 2019–public submission

Albury Wodonga Community College

Stakeholder type: Approved system authority

Jurisdiction: NSW/Victoria

Submission

Ms Quyen Tran & Professor Natalie Brown

Sub-committee Chair of the review of needs-based funding requirements

National School Resourcing Board

Dear Quyen

Indie Schools Observations and Thoughts

Thank you for your recent correspondence (17th June 2019) and offer to speak with you in Melbourne of the 30th July 2019.

So to some viewpoints/experiences I can share and which are possibly within the remit of your Review are:

- The notion of ‘supporting the development of a shared understanding’ is advantageous and continues ‘alignment’ of the various State Departments who can be parochial. I can speak to some of my past/current observations of leading Indie Schools and from invitations to Ministerial Roundtables on Education and another on Industry.
- The concept and implementation of highest funding that supports the greatest need is aspirational and worthy of our best efforts. A base rate with then applicable loadings that are flexible and regularly reviewed for students who need extra support is positive and within the capability of schools as ‘approved system authorities’ to manage.
- The assurance that schools are being fair minded in their application of funding requests based on self-assessment for the most part but with spot checks of compliance assurance is appropriate when using tax payer monies.
- Loadings are an avenue to better ‘balance’ regions, cohorts or circumstances of funding disadvantage and against those aspects already determined, I would suggest that regional economic factors may play a greater part than understood for location loadings.

Distance, population size, economic and climate factors can impact non-metropolitan schools and their capacity to provide small student numbers the ‘same’ opportunities as larger population centres. Technology can offset this disadvantage but that is also a ‘loading’ aspect to equalise student learning pathways.

Selfishly as a cross-border organisation, I know that our ‘compliance’ costs are an average of 7% higher in administration costs than if we were just a ‘one State’ solution only school.

- In respect of my opening point of a shared understanding, our Indie School experiences of operating in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and shortly South Australia as an Independent senior secondary (years 9 - 12) has been ‘interesting’. A most recent June 2019 Victorian VRQA Financial Viability Assessment report of our

Indie School Victoria shines some viewpoints of school operations under a recently modified State regulatory environment which I believe could have further complications for what would be a 'national' approach. Now I know your review does not see 'compliance' as part of your scope but I think the governing approach taken by some Departments and/or their Regulators should be 'background' thinking. I am happy to explain some of these points underpinning our recent experiences.

- Any implementation of a 'needs based' funding arrangement by its very nature will 'average' the student/circumstances/school and that will be on average ok for the mainstream and probably larger schools. For small schools and non-average students there will be data gathering and justification at a higher order. There is little escape and my recent experiences with the NCCDSSD and the effort of its application is a case in point.

My experiences of what is trying to occur under the NCCDSSD and previous high level involvement national with the formation of the Disability Service Standards raises a number of issues, all of which are surmountable but at a cost. That cost is greater training, more auditing and reduction of classroom time by teachers as a consequence. It may be a necessary cost but the other argument may be justified of seeking less accountability for more honesty of effort.

Again, I will use this dot point for a reminder of an example or two if you have an interest in this aspect.

- Flexibility to make 'local' decisions about the distribution of funds is applauded but recent Indie School experiences suggest a heavy level of 'opinion' about flexibility than you might expect. The broad guidelines are appropriate and allow schools to determine how they can best address educational disadvantage. I do however again reflect that sometimes State and State Regulatory Authorities have their 'opinions' which can act counter to the National intent.

In closing, I look forward to our brief time together and I hope I can assist in the very large task you have before you. I will be happy to answer your questions, provide my experiences to any aspects of your review you think I can assist with.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rodney Wangman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rodney Wangman
Principal/Chief Executive Office