Dear Parents

Next Monday, the Federal Government will release the Gonski review of school funding, along with the government’s response to the review. This could be the most significant announcement on school funding for over thirty years.

The PMSA wants to ensure that you are well informed on this issue and can judge the merits of any policy response. Some important facts about your choice of school should be noted in this debate:

- Students at PSMA schools receive one third of the recurrent government funding provided for students at state schools. PMSA schools received an average of $4,902 per student in recurrent government funding in 2010, compared to the $14,380 provided per student in state schools.
- The parents of PMSA school students collectively save the Commonwealth and State governments $47 million in annual funding, as a result of their choice. Parents’ choices of school are not being subsidised by taxpayers, as alleged by critics of independent schools. On the contrary, your choice is enabling government funding to be allocated to areas of greater need.

The PMSA made a comprehensive submission to the Gonski review, outlining the overall strength of the current needs-based funding system, but highlighting some important deficiencies. The PMSA submission proposed some significant improvements to the system, notably:

- Removal of the special “Funding Maintenance” arrangements for certain schools. This major inequity provides lesser funding for PMSA schools than for many other non-government schools with similar socio-economic levels, at significant cost both to taxpayers and to parents of our schools;
- Retaining the current needs-based SES funding formula in real terms for the non-government school sector, with a fairer allocation system enabling governments to improve funding across the spectrum of schools;
- A greater emphasis on funding for areas of identified need, particularly:
  - Fairer funding for students with disabilities attending independent schools; and
  - Improved assistance for new independent schools, to meet the growing demand for independent schooling.

The PMSA is determined that students at all school systems, government, Catholic and independent schools, receive a fair share of funding, with appropriate funding provided according to need, and that parents are not disadvantaged by their choice of a Christian or other independent school.

I encourage you to keep abreast of the announcements in the coming week and to play your part in ensuring that funding for independent schools, including your own choice, is maintained at a fair and sustainable level. For our part, the PMSA and our schools will be working with our peak organisations and directly with governments to ensure the fairness and sustainability of funding for our students.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Rev Guido Kettniss
Acting Chairman
Presbyterian & Methodist Schools Association