

26 March 2014

Jeremy Hanson MLA
Leader of the Opposition
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra
ACT 2601

Dear Mr Hanson

It was with some surprise and profound disappointment that I discovered the Canberra Liberals had, on Wednesday 19 March 2014, voted against a successful assembly motion to support the full six-year implementation of the Gonski schools funding agreement signed last year between the ACT Government and the Commonwealth Government.

I assume you are aware that all school sectors stand to benefit from the full six-year agreement signed between the two governments. The Gonski investment is for all sectors: an additional \$100 million for ACT public schools over six years, and also an additional \$60 million for ACT Catholic schools and \$30 million for ACT independent schools. The Gonski reforms are sector-blind.

The Gonski deal is not a luxury item but a necessity. Eminent businessman David Gonski and his panel could not deny the powerful evidence of the need for the "urgent" reform of a broken system. The reforms are needed to close achievement gaps and thereby lift overall performance. Currently the difference between the top 20 per cent of Australian Year 9 students and the bottom 20 per cent is five and a half years of learning. How can a clever and prosperous nation ignore that?

The Gonski reforms are supported by the overwhelming majority of Australians - by business groups, community and welfare groups, and virtually the entire education sector, from principals to parents.

The NSW Liberal Government is strongly advocating for the full six years and has made it very clear that it expects its deal with the Commonwealth to be honoured. The implementation of the Gonski model is well advanced in that state.

The recently elected Tasmanian Liberals are fully behind the six year deal. (Copy of pledge attached.)

Less than two weeks ago, the South Australian Liberals refused to commit to the Gonski deal and we saw them lose what many believed was the unlosable election.

If the Canberra Liberals don't change their position they will find themselves increasingly isolated.

At this juncture, I'd like to invite you and/or Mr Steve Doszpot to our AEU ACT Branch Council meeting at 10am on the morning of Saturday 3 May 2014 so you can explain to Councillors the position you have taken on this defining issue.

You might also consider explaining to our members why they should consider your party as a viable alternative to the Labor Government at the 2016 ACT election.

Regards

Glenn Fowler
Secretary
Australian Education Union – ACT Branch

Enclosure [1]

- Gonski Pledge

cc: Mr Steve Doszpot