



212 Liverpool Street  
Hobart Tasmania 7000

ABN 55 482 384 108

**SECRETARY**  
Jessica Munday

**TELEPHONE**  
(03) 6216 7600

**EMAIL**  
admin@unionstas.com.au

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Committee Secretary

Senate Education and Employment Committees

PO Box 6100

Canberra ACT 2600

By email to: [eec.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:eec.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary,

Unions Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Senate Education and Employment Committee (Committee) inquiry into the *Better and Fairer Schools (Funding and Reform) Bill 2024* (Cth) (Bill). We believe that full funding of public schools is vital for decent working conditions within Australia's school system, and for access to education, which we know is fundamental to Australian people.

Unions Tasmania is the peak body representing working people in Tasmania. For more than 140 years, Unions Tasmania has been dedicated to giving a voice to working Tasmanians and their families. We represent our affiliate unions, across industry in both the private and public sectors, with approximately 50,000 members.

Tasmanian workers highly value access to public education. Enabling access to education was an early objective of unions in Tasmania, who galvanized the community a century ago to win the eight-hour working day. They knew that that to ensure full opportunities for their children, it was essential to create time with the working week to attain an education, and they hoped that raising the standard of education would enable members of our community to take their place anywhere.

Tasmanian workers today are also facing long standing mainland wage disparity, with wages about \$11,000 below the national average<sup>1</sup> (ABS data), contributing to Tasmania's high number of students in priority cohorts; some 43% of public schools in Tasmania are in the lowest quartile for socio-educational advantage<sup>2</sup>.

We know that educators are leaving the profession in droves because of under-resourcing, which results in unsustainable workloads and burnout. Educators deserve our country's profound respect and support. Full funding of public schools would mean they have the time and support in the classroom they need to deliver education. Unions Tasmania wholeheartedly endorses the Australian

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024, May). *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia*. ABS.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release>.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Education Union (2024). For Every Child report, Their Future – Made In Australia

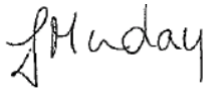
[https://assets.nationbuilder.com/aeu/pages/4145/attachments/original/1724131499/WEB\\_AEU288\\_TheirFuture\\_MadeInAust\\_A4.Pdf?1724131499](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/aeu/pages/4145/attachments/original/1724131499/WEB_AEU288_TheirFuture_MadeInAust_A4.Pdf?1724131499)

Education Union's call for full funding of public schools, with a guaranteed minimum contribution of 25% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) to be made by the Federal Government.

Public education is life changing for students and their families, and it underpins our capacity for social cohesion and economic prosperity into the future. At every stage of their schooling life, Tasmanian students are being shortchanged with public school funding and alarmingly, our year 12 attainment rate is the lowest in the nation at 53.1%<sup>3</sup>. Full funding of public schools would reduce class sizes and help ensure that students with additional needs get the time required for a successful education. Setting a floor any lower than 25% for the Federal Government's SRS Contribution risks the future opportunity and wellbeing of our young people.

Unions Tasmania supports full funding of public schools and replacing the current Federal Government SRS cap with a floor. We submit that the Bill must set the Federal Government's minimum funding contribution at 25% of the SRS, rather than 20%, to ensure the investment in public education that we desperately need.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Munday". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Munday

Secretary

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<sup>3</sup> Productivity Commission (2024). Report on Government Services. <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2024/child-care-education-and-training/school-education>