

Submission Text: As parents of South Melbourne Park Primary school children in the Albert Park Grand Prix precinct, we welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Public School Funding in Victoria. We strongly urge the Victorian Government to fully fund public schools to meet the needs of every student, as promised under the original Gonski reforms.

It is not acceptable that public education continues to be underfunded while money is diverted to other government priorities and infrastructure projects. For example, the Victorian Government recently spent \$350 million on the nearby Albert Park Grand Prix pit lane building — yet public schools like ours are struggling to afford basic classroom necessities and teachers. A fraction of the \$350 million would make a profound difference in our children’s learning outcomes, wellbeing, and future opportunities. Our children deserve no less.

The burden on parents

Our school community is deeply committed to supporting our children, yet the current funding model places an unreasonable and unrealistic expectation on families. The Victorian Government’s assessment of our school’s Student Family Occupation and Education (SFOE) index assumes a level of parental financial capacity and contribution that simply does not reflect reality at our school.

In practice, we understand less than 50% of our families make voluntary parent contributions, yet this shortfall is not recognised or adjusted for in our funding allocation. There is no check or balance in place to verify whether the assumed level of family contribution aligns with what the school actually receives. As a result, schools like ours are unfairly penalised — expected to make up the gap between insufficient government funding and unrealistic assumptions about community capacity.

In addition, we are shackled by department constraints regarding parent payment contributions, leaving parents who have capacity to pay with a very clear message that they are not required to make any contribution whatsoever.

This disconnect leaves schools trapped in a cycle of underfunding and dependence on fundraising and parent funds just to meet basic operational needs, undermining the principle of equitable access to quality education for every child.

The consequences of underfunding

South Melbourne Park Primary School was built without classroom walls, doors, or air-conditioning — fundamental features for a functional and safe learning environment. Parents have had to step in and contribute, both financially and through ongoing fundraising, to provide what should be basic infrastructure and classroom necessities.

Despite the dedication of our staff and community, government funding barely covers the basics. The Student Resource Package (SRP) does not meet our staffing requirements, leaving us under constant financial pressure. Rising costs for casual relief teachers (CRTs), electricity, classroom supplies, and ongoing maintenance, especially for our heritage buildings, mean we will need to operate in deficit or further dip into parent contributions.

This situation is not sustainable, nor is it fair to our staff, students, and families.

The need for full funding

The delay in implementing the full Gonski reforms is an absolute disgrace. Every year of delay is another year that Victorian public school students are denied the education they deserve. Full funding would enable schools like ours to:

- Ensure we can maintain appropriate class sizes.
- Employ the full complement of staff needed to deliver quality teaching and wellbeing programs.
- Provide essential learning tools and resources without relying on parent donations.
- Ensure every student has access to a safe, comfortable, and modern learning environment.

Full funding of public schools means parent contributions can be spent on enhancing school programs to leverage local opportunities and supporting the specific needs of children at our school.

Fully funding public schools is not an expense — it is an investment in Victoria's future.

Conclusion

We call on the Victorian Government to honour its commitment to public education by playing its part to ensure that every public school can be fully funded to 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard. Our children deserve the same opportunities as those in the independent and Catholic sectors.

It is time to stop deferring reform and to prioritise what truly matters — our students, our teachers, and the future of Victoria.

Submitted by:

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