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With the benefit of hindsight, I personally regret three aspects of our Report.

First, we said that for the purpose of implementing the SRS, an additional \$5 billion or an annual increase of 15 per cent of all-government funding, was required.

We debated at some length whether to include any figure, but we decided to. It was a tactical error.

The inclusion of a figure gave governments and oppositions, both state and federal, a way of avoiding the political challenges of a total restructuring of school funding arrangements.

It took attention away from the far more challenging issue of re-distributing the existing government funding – then totalling almost \$40 billion – according to need.

The easy political solution – for both the left and the right of politics - was to find or promise some additional money, label it Gonski funding, establish some sort of SRS (but not by the rigorous process recommended by the Review), dismiss the idea of a national schools resourcing body as an additional layer of bureaucracy, and claim the main elements of the Report had been implemented.

The inclusion of a dollar figure precipitated the cherry-picking of the Report, which destroyed its integrity and gave the politicians an easy way out.

Second, the Report intended that the amount of funding required to meet the SRS for any school should be spent in full **by or on** that school.

Many schools belong to systems, both government and non-government, which provide support for the school in terms of curriculum consultants, speech therapists, music specialists, legal advice and in other ways.

For systemic schools, the cost of this support would be withdrawn from the school allocation, to be spent not **by** the school but **on** the school.

The total funding under the SRS, and the amount and purposes for the part which is withdrawn by the system, should be public knowledge on the website and in school reports to their communities.

In this way, the system would be accountable to the school and its community for the effective delivery of this support. The total and exact amount generated by the SRS would be spent by or on that school.

Now, this was quickly recognised by state treasuries and state education departments, and by church leaders and church education systems, as a constraint upon their capacity to move taxpayer funds across schools according to their own perceptions of need or for other purposes, and to place conditions on schools in receipt of funding.

It would no longer be possible, for example, for non-government systems to provide competitive low fee schools at the middle and upper ends of the socio-economic scale, at the expense of schools at the lower end of the scale.

My regret is that the Report did not sandbag itself sufficiently to deal with the foreseeable systemic opposition on this point.

Had it done so, and had we said more about the unparalleled new level of transparency of school funding and accountability of school systems that this reform would bring about, there would have been widespread support from parents and school communities on this point, and from the teaching profession.

That public support might have made a difference politically.

The public reception of our Report focused on recurrent funding. We made some recommendations on capital funding, but they largely went unreported and ignored, and today I regard them as insignificant.

This is my third regret: while the Gonski principle that public funds should be distributed according to need was applied to recurrent funding, the Report did not consider the application of that principle to capital works.

A decade later, there is an extraordinary disparity between the physical facilities of government schools and non-government schools.

In increasing the level of government funding to non-government schools through the enrolment benchmark adjustment, the Howard Government argued that this would result in reduced fees and hence greater accessibility to non-government schooling, which John Howard believed to be desirable.

Successive governments of both stripes, federally and at state level, have all since facilitated greater access to non-government schooling at public expense, while non-government school fees have continued to spiral upwards.

Unlike government schools, non-government schools and systems have the capacity to raise loans while also receiving large amounts of public funding.

The level of public funding to non-government schools is now of such magnitude that it provides much of their recurrent expenditure, allowing the income from continued increases in school fees to service the loans on capital works.

In 2022, we have many public schools with relocatable classrooms, no air conditioning, inadequate outdoor areas, inadequate libraries, no gymnasium and no real sporting facilities, while there are non-government schools with three swimming pools, extensive playing fields, a grandstand, a multi-million dollar auditorium, extensive landscaping and a wellness centre.

On the national scale of educational priorities, such facilities are surely not a priority to be underwritten by public funding.

As difficult as it would have been, we should have had a shot at this issue.

What is to be said of the Gonski Report after a decade?

Its objective has not been achieved. Australia has continued to decline by international standards.

We have not become a high-quality high-equity country.

We have neither needs-based nor sector-blind school funding.

We are bankrolling systems, not funding schools, and those systems have the capacity to move funding around at will.

The gap between funding for advantaged and disadvantaged schools is widening.

Government and non-government schools are on very different paths towards an SRS standard: some overfunded, and some unlikely ever to meet the SRS.

There is no transparency or accountability, as envisaged by the Review.

I can't help but think of the Gonski Report as a sailing ship which embarked in full sail ten years ago, cheered off at the dock by all and sundry, with great hopes and expectations, a clear destination, and officers and crew with a clear sense of purpose and direction.

And over the decade, at points in its history which are seared in the memory of many of us, it has been blown off course by the winds of sector self-interest, and navigated by the pole star of politics, not principle.

Carried into a backwater, it has run aground on the mudflats of Commonwealth/State relations. The tide has run out, and it now lies on its side amongst the weeds.

And much on board is in disarray, as we will hear at the conference tomorrow.

How are we to get this ship afloat again?

First, we must correct the widespread impression – reflected in statements by ministers and on federal and state websites - that Australia is in the process of a managed transition to a Gonski nirvana, sometime around 2030. It is not.

There is a general misperception in the community that because there have been two Gonski Reviews - one on school funding commissioned by the first Rudd Government and the second on school achievement commissioned by the Turnbull Government – there is a bipartisan approach to something called the Gonski agenda, and that it has been mostly and successfully implemented. That is wrong.

Further, the Gonski brand has become political and educational capital, much misused to confer spurious authenticity and credibility on practices which are quite the opposite of what Gonski intended.

The public must be made aware that while much has been done in the name of Gonski, not much of Gonski has in fact been done, and most of what has been done is its antithesis.

Second, we have to re-energise a broad constituency for reform, beyond the public school community, by getting back to the fundamental narrative of what Gonski is about.

We had this broad constituency in the years immediately before and after the publication of the Report: from the Business Council, from business and industry generally; from people on both sides of politics; from leaders of ethnic and religious groups; and from the media generally, including the Australian Financial Review, and journalists who write not only on education but on business and the economy.

It was understood that the focus of the Report was on the priority of moving funding to socially disadvantaged schools, not because of social justice issues, but because of the hard-headed reason that these are the schools in which the greatest wastage of potential human capital occurs.

It was understood that building our national stock of human capital requires the structural reform of school funding arrangements, to produce high-quality, high-equity outcomes.

The relationship between funding, quality and equity is well illustrated in a paper by Barry McGaw, which is soon to be published. He gave an oral presentation in a recent online symposium for the Academy of the Social Sciences of Australia, which is readily accessible. I can give details of the publication and the website to anyone interested.

The title of the paper is "Quality and equity in education: simultaneous pursuits or trade-offs?" Of particular interest is the discussion of Poland, which in the OECD results for the year 2000 was significantly behind Finland, Canada, Australia and the OECD mean. It is now significantly ahead of the OECD mean and Australia, and not much different from Finland or Canada.

That remarkable improvement was achieved by shifting education funding from the support of secondary schools of different types into which students were streamed on the basis of prior performance, to the funding of comprehensive secondary schools – not a direct parallel to Australia, but a clear indication that it is possible to achieve substantial improvement in a relatively short time.

Gonski will not float again until there is beneath it a rising tide of public advocacy and support from our political leaders, from the leaders of education authorities, from business and industry, from unions, from the media, and from parents, the community and the profession.

And that requires emphasis on the economic impact of social disadvantage on our national stock of human capital.

It requires demonstrating that reduction in the rate of taxpayer funding to wealthy and advantaged schools, and redirecting funding to the elimination of educational disadvantage, will be of direct benefit to the national economy.

I hope that this conference might be the beginning of the turn of the tide.