



Inside **The Advertiser Review** tomorrow

A good move, say parents

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PARENTS have welcomed the Federal Government's plan to measure teacher performance and reward high achievers, saying students will benefit most.

Teachers said performance measurement of schools and staff would be counter-productive and discouraging.

The South Australian Association of State School Organisations, which lobbies on behalf of parents and school governing councils, said the planned reforms were "excellent news" and would help highlight areas of need and poor performers.

"Performance pay rewards good teachers, keeps good

teachers in the classrooms and it attracts good candidates into the teaching profession," executive director David Knuckey said.

The Australian College of Educators, however, said the plan would not encourage teachers to achieve, despite the lure of incentive pay. "It's a very negative approach, it's a very punitive approach," said SA branch president Wendy Teasdale-Smith.

"It's not going to make me want to do my job better if I'm under threat of the sack."

Her view was backed by teachers who spoke to *The Advertiser* anonymously. "I think Mr Rudd has turned into a worse version of Mr Howard

and this pathetic plan is an example of this," one from a South-East school said.

Valeria Ledda, whose daughter Emily attends Walkerville Primary, said the reforms were "unfair". "It depends on how they can base their performance testing. A lot of other factors need to be considered before they start sacking people," she said.

A parent of a child at a southern suburbs school, who did not wish to be named, said schools should operate like businesses where principals were given power to hire, sack and pay teachers as they saw fit and have clear accountability, measured against performance.



UNFAIR: Valeria Ledda, on her way home from school with daughter Emily yesterday, believes more factors should be considered.

Picture: NEON MARTIN

Schools 'vulnerable' under spending cuts

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Teachers and principals could be sacked for failing to measure up. The scheme would be attached to an offer of increased federal education funding.

Teachers and the Opposition yesterday warned the State Government's "mismanagement" of education had left schools vulnerable.

The spending cuts of more than \$25 million ordered in the Education Department are part of an efficiency drive and are on top of spending cuts of \$153 million over four years ordered in the 2006-07 Budget.

The 2008-09 State Budget provides \$2.195 billion for education, up \$12.9 million from the previous financial year.

Ms Haythorpe said the Government "has a responsibility to ensure adequate funding is provided to ensure teachers can do a good job".

The Government was also at odds yesterday with the Opposition over the extent of education spending.

An analysis by the Liberals of the Government's record of investment in schools found that in real terms there had been no increase in spending since 2002, when Labor took power under Premier Mike Rann.

Opposition education spokesman David Pisoni said spending as a proportion of

total Budget spending had remained "static", at about 25 per cent since 2002.

He also said the budget for capital works programs to upgrade schools over the past six years had failed to keep pace with CPI, and should be \$118 million, rather than the current \$103 million.

However, Acting Education Minister Jay Weatherill yesterday said there "are no State Government funding cuts on education".

"We've increased funding to our schools by 52 per cent

Responsibility to ensure adequate funding

during the life of our government," he said.

"But people always expect us to spend taxpayer funds in the most efficient way possible, so we're always trying to economise in the way we use taxpayers' dollars. But the critical thing is we just get more service.

"It's being ploughed back into education."

Ms Haythorpe said this was just "a bit of spin" from the Government.

"What we're seeing is that the money is not going back into our schools, it's going into Treasury's coffers," she said.

The State Government also was accused of allowing the number of education bureaucrats earning above \$100,000 a year to blow out from 123 in 2002 to 605 last year.

The Opposition said the nearly \$50 million salary bill increase for extra Education Department "fat cats" could have been spent on projects to better prepare schools for Mr Rudd's initiatives.

Other key points of the Liberals' analysis, which uses Budget papers and Education Department figures, are:

AN average of 9 per cent of SA's 163,000 public school students are absent on a daily basis.

THE retention rate for boys dropped to 63.9 per cent in 2006 while the number of girls increased to 81.9 per cent.

IN 2002, there were 170,463 students in public schools while there were 163,072 in 2007 - a loss of 7391 students.

Mr Weatherill yesterday welcomed the Federal Government's latest plans for schools. "We're very comfortable with the changes, we support the broad direction of the reforms," Mr Weatherill said.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith, who previously opposed a similar plan put forward by the former Howard government, was on annual leave overseas and unavailable for comment.



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