

CLASS SIZES | Review of funding model likely \$80,000 teacher 'penalty'

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EDUCATION REPORTER

A STRICT teacher funding model is costing schools up to \$80,000 a year, South Australia's peak primary school body says.

South Australian Primary Principals Association president Steve Portlock said the funding model penalised schools for not having the "right" number of students per class.

Under the existing model, a school is provided with a teacher for every 26 students in Reception to Year 2 and for every 30 students in years 3 to 7, with exceptions for disadvantaged schools.

"This means a school with 50 or 51 Year 1 students receives funding for one teacher, while a school with 52 Year 1 students receives funding for two.

"If schools employ 20 teachers based on enrolment estimates but then fall a couple of students short, it can affect the funding model, meaning they are forced to pay for an extra teacher out of their own pocket," said Mr Portlock. "It can cost a school more than \$80,000, all because of a couple of students."

Mr Portlock said a "per student" funding model would allow schools to control how much funding they could spend on teachers.

The Australian Education Union and the State Govern-

ment are locked in Enterprise Bargaining Agreement negotiations over the model, as well as increased teacher salaries and improved conditions.

But the SA Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey said the funding model should be removed from negotiations and be discussed as a separate issue.

"Principals, governing councils and parents should have a say in the school funding model," he said.

Industrial Relations Minister Michael Wright said the funding model would form part of enterprise negotiations.

"All elements of the EBA will be considered in discussions with the unions," he said. "It would be pre-emptive to comment on the State Government's approach to the EBA prior to the formal commencement of negotiations."

Primary principal of Salisbury Junior Primary and Primary School Carol Scerri said a funding model which allowed principals the ability to plan ahead would be beneficial.

She said it would help teachers such as junior primary teacher Jackie Richardson better manage their classes.

"Because we don't get funding until the beginning of the year we do have to estimate enrolments and teacher numbers," Ms Scerri said. "Knowing how much funding we will receive would help."



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HITTING THE BOOKS: Junior Primary school teacher Jackie Richardson with Olivia and Joshua at the Salisbury Junior Primary and Primary School.

Picture: SARAH REED