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NEWS

Education Minister Christopher Pyne offering quarter of public schools cash to become independent

TORY SHEPHERD POLITICAL EDITOR • THE ADVERTISER • DECEMBER 04, 2013 5:00PM 0

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Christopher Pyne outside Parliament House in Canberra. Picture: Gary Ramage Source: News Limited

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EDUCATION Minister Christopher Pyne is offering cash to help one in four South Australian public schools become independent from a "bureaucratic" education system.

Mr Pyne, who has put \$70 million on the table, hopes to work with state governments to

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help a quarter of public schools break away from their departments by 2017.

He said SA was "suffering under a centralised and bureaucratic education system".

"Therefore I would hope we will go down this progressive road of independent public schools, however it's ultimately up to the State Government whether they will take part," he said on Wednesday.

Parents, tell us what you think of Pyne's plan

The schools would operate similarly to government schools but would have autonomy.

Mr Pyne said the model had worked in Western Australia.

"We believe that senior members of a school community are far better equipped to know what is best for their school than government bureaucrats," he said.

South Australian Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey said the DeBelle Inquiry shows schools cannot depend on the Department for Education and Child Development and that research shows self-governed schools have better outcomes.

"Taking power away from the education department will not only improve the standard of education but also protect our children and put an end to the culture of cover up in DECD," he said.

"OECD research shows that schools run by the local community are more efficient, have improved financial management, reduced bureaucracy and are more innovative.

"They achieve this because parents and the local community are more committed to their children than departments are, they are more flexible and they are cheaper."

But state Education Minister Jennifer Rankine says the Government's "ideologically driven attack on public education" would "create an unfair two-tiered education system which, by its very nature, would create winners and losers".

SA already has one of the country's most autonomous school systems, she said.

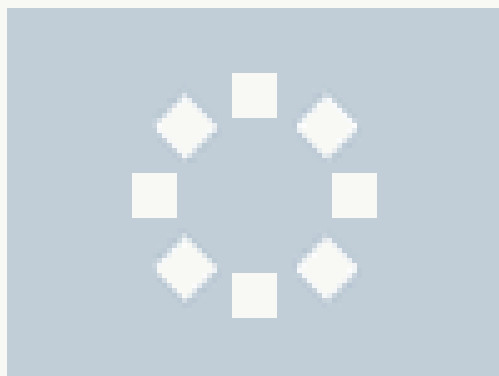
The \$70 million is a Federal fund the states and territories can apply for a share of to help schools transition to independence.

Federal Opposition education spokeswoman Kate Ellis attacked the Government's decision to ditch the Gonski reforms on Wednesday and said it showed the Government was unwilling to fix problems caused by disadvantage.

Under the Gonski model the states had to agree to distribute money according to a formula that had loadings for six areas of disadvantage, but Mr Pyne said they would treat the states like adults and let them decide how to parcel out the cash.

"(Nobody) really believes that Christopher Pyne and Tony Abbott in six months are going to come up with a model with better solutions than this huge and in-depth process that Australia has already been through (with Gonski)," Ms Ellis said.

Mr Pyne said the Government does not believe in "infantilising the states" and that the states and territories were responsible for the schools in their jurisdiction.



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EMBATTLED radio host Mel Greig has quit, parting ways with Southern Cross Austereo almost a year after the infamous royal radio prank call which forced her off air.

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