Dear Parent/Caregiver

As you are aware, I am a passionate advocate of public education, especially of our school. I have been proudly vocal in my support of the Gonski Review and the subsequent findings of that expert committee. I was thrilled to hear the announcement by the Premier of NSW, Barry O’Farrell when he became the first State leader to announce his support for the Federal Government proposal to implement a ‘National Plan for School Improvement’, for all schools and all students. I have been further buoyed by the news that legislation has been passed by the House of Representatives to make this momentous plan a reality.

However, our fight for fairness and equity is not over. The 27th June is the last sitting day of Federal Parliament. If all of the States have not signed up to this agreement, Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne, Shadow Education Minister, have said that they will not support nor honour this deal, should they be elected. This will mean that our children will not be the recipients of an increase in funding, nor will future generations be the beneficiaries of a new funding formula that will enshrine fairness in public school funding into legislation. I cannot see another opportunity for this much needed change in the remainder of my professional life.

Please, if you have not already done so, go to the Gonski website at http://igiveagonski.com.au/ and make your voice heard.

This is what the plan will mean to you and our children at Temora High School. The Plan will resource properly all schools, teachers and students for generations to come. It means fairer funding. Each student in every school will receive a base-rate loading which will be integrated into school funding, permanently and is indexed so it will keep up with the cost of schooling. Schools and Principals will no longer be reliant on special, time limited programs, which in the case of Temora High School, we rarely receive.

Over time, this additional money will allow me to hire additional staff to support literacy and numeracy programs for students who struggle; hire talented writers in residence for gifted students; invest in technology for the future; invest additional resources into the professional learning of staff; and so much more. I am full of ideas about the way this money can be used to ensure that our students receive the very best education that they deserve.

Some facts about The Schooling Resource Standard
Under the new Schooling Resource Standard there will be a base amount of $9,271 per primary school student and $12,193 per high school student. (We currently have 360 students at Temora High School).
There will also be extra money each year, through ‘loadings’ for students and schools that need more support. This includes:
• A low socio-economic status loading—ranging from $695 per primary student and $914 per secondary student to $4,635 per primary student and $6,096 per secondary student.
• Indigenous loading—ranging from $1,854 per primary student and $2,439 per secondary student to $11,125 per primary student and $14,631 per secondary student.
• Students with limited English skills loading—set at 10 per cent of the per student amounts.
• A location loading—applied to each school’s per student Schooling Resource Standard amounts plus any school size amount. This will range from 10 per cent of the loading amount for inner regional schools up to 80 per cent of the loading amount for some very remote schools.
• Size loading—ranging from $150,000 for primary schools with up to 200 students, to $240,000 for secondary schools with up to 500 students.
• A loading for students with disability. This loading will be phased in from 2015 once a nationally consistent data collection on students with disability has been established. In the meantime an interim loading has been calculated, and funding under the More Support for Students with Disability National Partnership will be extended by an extra $100 million in 2014.
I recently overheard a parent ask the question “where will this money come from?” My answer to that is simple: budgets are about setting priorities. What higher priority can a government have than ensuring the future security of our children?

An excellent education generates a nation’s wealth and removes inequality. When education systems fail to invest fairly in opportunities for all children regardless of their economic circumstances, gender and location, entrenched generational poverty occurs.

Our government currently spends less than the OECD average on education – less than Mexico. This is not a situation about which we should feel any pride. It is time to act.

If you would like more information about the ‘National Plan for School Improvement’ go to www.betterschools.gov.au. The website provides more information, including fact sheets.

I am excited by the possibility of additional funding for our school. My only purpose in drawing your attention to this issue is so that our children are the beneficiaries of great reform.

I am not trying to guide your vote at the upcoming election. Fortunately, the political nature of my position is eased because a coalition State government and a Labour Federal Government are in agreement with each other. My only concern is for the future of our great public education system which has and will continue to achieve so much for our children. The ‘National Plan for School Improvement’ will enable us to achieve so much more.

Yours sincerely

Pat Nethery
Principal Temora High School