

# Canberra **farce** continues

**When the dust settled after the Liberal Party's bitter infighting last month, we had a new Prime Minister. There was some hope that with Scott Morrison at the helm, this government might be able to reset some of its priorities.**

But it quickly became clear that when it comes to education, this government hasn't changed. It is sticking with an approach that favours private schools and harms Australia's most disadvantaged students.

Morrison installed a new Education Minister, Dan Tehan, and made his first job repairing relations with Catholic schools. The Catholic school lobby was unhappy with the deal they got under last year's "Gonski 2.0" funding model.

Within days of Tehan's appointment, news leaked of Catholic schools being allocated an additional \$4.4 billion in funding over the next decade. This was prompted by fears among Liberal MPs in marginal seats that alienating the Catholic sector could cost them at the election.

Too bad there doesn't appear to be similar concern about how the new funding model affects children in the public school sector, which educates more than two thirds of all children in Australia (and 75% of kids in the NT).

This model caps federal spending on public schools at 20% of the minimum resourcing standard, with state and territory governments expected to make up the rest. For the NT that means our public schools will see their federal funding cut over the next decade.

States and territories are expected to sign up to this new model before the end of the year. The AEU will continue to challenge these funding arrangements through our Fair Funding Now campaign (if you haven't already done so, I urge you to sign up online as a supporter at [fairfundingnow.org.au](http://fairfundingnow.org.au)).

To make matters worse, the federal government is trying to make its funding conditional on jurisdictions agreeing to implement sweeping changes in areas such as assessment, via a binding agreement.

The National School Reform Agreement (NERA) has been negotiated behind closed doors by education bureaucrats for many months. The AEU has seen a draft of the



*President Jarvis Ryan meets with new Education Minister Selena Uiibo*

agreement, which foreshadows major changes to curriculum and assessment, without any intention of consulting with the teaching profession or considering workload and other implications.

We expect a proposal to go before the Education Council, a meeting of all education ministers, this month. The AEU NT has called on our new Education Minister, Selena Uiibo, to join with other ministers in rejecting any agreement that is based on a top down approach rather than consultation and partnership.

We do not want the NT locked into a restrictive agreement that reduces funding and contains unachievable requirements. The Territory needs to be able to find our own way, one that suits our unique characteristics and the needs of our students.

At a bare minimum, Territory public schools need to get their fair share of federal funding. We also need a genuine partnership between the federal and Territory governments on how to improve student outcomes over the long term.

I can't see any way that will happen while this federal government remains in office. The countdown to the election continues...