A MESSAGE TO SCHOOL COMMUNITIES FROM THE NSW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Right now the New South Wales Government is working with schools to advance the most far reaching changes to school education in this state in over a century – changes that are going to help all our public schools meet the challenges of education well into the future.

Nothing better illustrates this than the new way we are going to fund our public schools. We are putting students at the heart of all decision making.

On July 23 I announced the new Resource Allocation Model, known as the RAM. This delivers on my promise to change the way NSW public schools receive their funding. School communities need to have this important information.

The new RAM is central to the Local Schools, Local Decisions reform. Under the new model schools will see more of the total public school education budget and they will have more authority over how to spend it.

In NSW we are increasing the funding that goes directly to public schools to more than 70% of the total public school education budget, up from the current 10%.

The RAM takes into account the fact that students and school communities are not all the same; they have different needs and will need different levels of support. We cannot improve outcomes for individual students with an out-dated cookie cutter funding model.

The new model will provide certainty of funding for schools to employ teachers in order to adhere to the class sizes policy. No principal need worry about the cost of a teacher, principals will be able to choose teachers based on their quality and skills required to best meet the needs of their students.

The RAM will also reduce red tape. I want our principals to be innovative educational leaders, free from the constraints of too much bureaucracy. Instead of hundreds of small funding buckets to be managed and reported on, schools’ resource allocation will be divided into two components. The first will see money quarantined for staffing purposes only. These resources cannot be used for anything else. The remaining component will fund all other operational requirements of the school and any discretionary needs, which may include employing additional staff.
I am sure that you will be wondering if this is going to be better than the way schools have been funded in the past. It was always an issue for schools and their communities when a small change in enrolment numbers meant a significant change in resources. Under our current model, one or two students leaving can result in the loss of a teacher and changes to classes that impact on the students and the school community. The RAM will help fix this problem but it won't happen overnight. It will take two to three years for implementation across all of our schools.

These changes need to be right for every school across NSW so before we finalise the model we are rigorously testing it across a range of school settings. When new funding under the RAM is received in the first group of schools it will be fairer, more transparent, and it will enable schools to plan more effectively with their communities.

If your school is part of the Empowering Local Schools National Partnership, some changes will happen faster than in other schools. These schools will be the first ones to be funded under this new model and will be able to involve their school communities in the allocation of resources to identified areas. Other schools will be funded by the RAM over the next two years.

The RAM will include loadings for socio-economic status, Aboriginality, English Language Proficiency and students with disability, as well as loadings for school size and location. It will provide a loading for each of these factors to ensure equity for our students.

This is a funding model that is student focused. It is simpler, fairer and transparent. And it will give schools funding stability so a small change in circumstances doesn't lead to a big change in resources.

It is the critical financial enabler of everything we are trying to achieve under Local Schools, Local Decisions; build an even better public school culture; one that promotes creativity and innovation, where the staff in our schools are willing, and supported, to try out new things.

A culture that supports a principal with ideas, energy and a willing school community, to innovate and know they'll be supported, not second guessed by head office.

It's a big change and a long overdue recognition of the capability and professional judgement of the leaders in our schools and of the importance of local decision-making in ensuring NSW continues to have a great public school system.

You can find more information about the RAM on the Local Schools, Local Decisions website at www.schools.nsw.edu.au/lsl. Over the coming months there will be regular updates on this site.

Adrian Piccoli MP
Minister for Education