

Research findings give nod to Gonski

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A Murdoch University researcher says Australia should strive to have every school be a good school, and is calling on Federal political party leaders to clarify their positions on how they intend to implement recommendations from the [Gonski Report](#).

Dr Laura Perry said a commitment to apply and fund the report's recommendations was needed to reduce the growing gap between lower socioeconomic schools and their more privileged, mainly private, counterparts in Australia.

"In a fair society, it shouldn't matter where you go to [school](#). Parents shouldn't be forced to decide whether to send their child to a local school where outcomes are low or make a significant financial sacrifice to pay

for private education," Dr Perry said.

"At the moment our research shows that we are favouring the privileged at the expense of those at the lower socioeconomic end of society.

"This has [negative consequences](#) for those students, their families and communities, as well as negative impacts on the [labour market](#) and even Australia's ranking on international [league tables](#)."

Dr Perry and Dr Andrew McConney recently published [a study which compared Australian and Canadian student outcomes in maths and reading](#).

She said while both countries had a similar proportion of students within the two highest proficiency bands – 14.6 per cent for Australia and 14.4 per cent for Canada – the Canadian system had much better outcomes for lower socioeconomic students.

This resulted in Canada outperforming Australian on rankings such as [PISA](#), the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development's test of student achievement.

"Achievement gaps between schools are much smaller in Canada than in Australia, yet [academic performance](#) for students from high [socioeconomic backgrounds](#) is the same in both countries," she said.

"This is despite the fact that only six per cent of students in Canada attend private secondary schools, compared to 40 per cent in Australia.

"Australia has one of the highest levels of social segregation between schools among economically developed countries, and yet this has produced very little benefit.

"More equal funding of our schools would result in a better allocation of resources and would have knock-on effects. Having students from low and high socio-economic backgrounds together benefits everyone. It builds empathy, understanding and aspiration."

Dr Perry said if Gonski were enacted in the way it has been worded, with guaranteed funding directed to where it is most needed and a reduction in the overfunding of schools that don't need it, it would help level the playing field and give every student a fair go.

"I think that is probably what most parents in Australia want," she said.

Provided by Murdoch University

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