



## David Gonski AC

*Having an education, and ultimately a skill, can be the difference between a life full of productivity and satisfaction and a life of some sadness at being unfulfilled.*

In the first instance when talking to David Gonski AC, you sense his uncanny ability to listen intently and how he uses his social grace and intellect to draw you further into deeper discussion. Renowned for holding many titles, including Chancellor of the University of New South Wales in Sydney and Chairman of the Board for the Australian Council, ANZ Banking Group, Coca-Cola Amatil, and the Sydney Theatre Company, David is perhaps best known in Australia for leading a government-commissioned review on financing education in Australia in 2011. His commissioned report, [Review of Funding for Schooling](#), recommended a \$5 billion AUD overhaul to the education system, which received great fanfare and consensus in education circles but was ultimately deemed too high a cost for the national government to implement. In 2018, David chaired the [Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools](#), recommending three priorities for school education: 1) deliver at least one year's growth in learning for every student every year; 2) equip every child to be a creative, connected and engaged learner in a rapidly changing world; and 3) cultivate an adaptive, innovative and continuously improving education system. Yet despite the exemplary stature of David Gonski as a competent yet empathetic, education leader, he has become a household name by championing those that would be considered disadvantaged—especially the disadvantaged student—be it family background, low socio-economic status, disability, or remoteness. His conviction that a personalised approach to teaching and learning is paramount to improving educational access, equity, and opportunity has resulted in David leading a [Schools Plus](#) initiative that brings together philanthropists to put money where it is most needed, to reward the strengths of the teaching profession and school-based initiatives that demonstrate the improvement in opportunities and outcomes for those who are educationally disadvantaged.

The following are excerpts of key questions raised during the interview with David Gonski:

Q1: How would you describe your leadership approach to improving quality teaching and learning?

A1: David:

- Listen to people
- Don't bring your own baggage
- Be open to new ideas
- Involve all people who need to be involved
- Hear all points-of-view
- Get the sense and implement

Q2: How would you best describe the Australian education environment in accepting radical change in your position of authority?

A2: David:

- All large economic entities do not change immediately
- Revolution is less likely than evolution
- Change is possible but it takes time

Q3: What evidence do you collect to make informed decisions on quality teaching and learning (e.g. training content, assessment, delivery)

A3: David:

- As reviewer, talk to a large number of principals, teachers, students (stakeholders)
- Use own assessments

Q4: In your own words, how would you describe personalised learning?

A4: David:

- Personalised progression must be assessed at different rates according to background, ability, and capability

Q5: How would you respond to the following: Education should not be about how much you learn but what you learn?

A5: David:

- I would agree but I would add that it is not about how or what but the ability to learn and think and question
- Analyse facts, then analyse facts again to ensure that they are correct