Queensland Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek has accused the Gillard government of putting politics before students in a deepening row over funding for schools, training reform and infrastructure.

Mr Langbroek claims the federal government is unfairly withholding reward payments earmarked for the Liberal-run states of Queensland, NSW and Victoria under the national partnership agreement on skills reform on account of “base politics”.

He has also accused the government of locking TAFE colleges out of the $500 million regional priorities round of the education investment fund (EIF) and failing to negotiate the Gonski reforms in good faith.

“To my mind, [federal Labor] are deliberately picking on NSW, Victoria and Queensland in an election year. Those are the states in which the election will be won or lost,” Mr Langbroek told The Australian Financial Review.

He claims there is a lack of detail from the federal government on the new schools funding model.

The federal government has approved $393 million in extra funding for training reform in WA, the ACT, NT, SA and Tasmania.

The funding will create government-subsidised training entitlements for certificate courses and income-contingent loans for diplomas. In exchange, the states have agreed to lift course quality and open training markets to private providers, which will compete with state-owned TAFEs.

But the federal government has not signed off on implementation plans for similar reforms submitted by Queensland, NSW and Victoria, where cuts to TAFEs sparked an angry response from the federal government.

The Victorian government is making nearly $300 million in cuts to TAFE funding, while NSW is axing 800 jobs from its education division and Queensland plans to rationalise TAFE campuses.

Responding to Mr Langbroek’s claims, a spokeswoman for the new federal Tertiary Education Minister, Chris Bowen, said it was time for the Queensland government to “stop the fear campaign” and come clean about its plans for the future of TAFE.

“While we have massively increased funding, the Newman government has announced plans to cut the number of TAFE campuses by half.”

The Australian Financial Review