



Education

Policy Category: D. Care for People

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Principles

The Australian Greens believe that:

1. universal access to high quality education is fundamental to Australia's prosperity, environmental sustainability, well being and social fulfilment.
2. all people are entitled to free, well-funded and high quality, life-long public education and training.
3. the government has a primary responsibility to fund all levels of the public education system - early childhood education, schools, vocational education and training and universities - to provide high quality education to all students.
4. federal funding to the education system (public and private) should be on the basis of equity to ensure that all Australian children have the best opportunities to achieve the best educational outcomes.
5. federal schools funding policy should prioritise the public education system to ensure that public schools are able to provide the highest quality educational experiences and set the educational standards for the nation.
6. teachers, academics, student unions and parent organisations should have a significant role in setting directions, priorities, and curricula and in the administration of the public education system.
7. the salaries and conditions of teachers, early childhood and other educators should be set at a level that recognises the importance of their work, provides secure career structures, and encourages committed and capable people into the teaching profession at all levels of the education system.
8. teachers should have a career structure which provides opportunities for advancement and promotion based on skills, experience and teaching specializations. Performance payments are not an alternative to properly funded career path.
9. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's educational outcomes must match the rest of the Australian population.
10. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should determine their own educational opportunities and, together with students, must be centrally involved in determining their educational priorities and the design and delivery of education opportunities at all levels.
11. early childhood education is a critical component of lifelong learning and should be provided by government and accredited community organizations and not-for profit providers.
12. vocational education and training (VET) should be primarily provided through the public TAFE system while the community and not-for-profit VET sector should also be supported.
13. universities are places of learning and research where the needs of the whole community and the values of service to the public and scholarship take priority over sectional and commercial interests and academic freedom is protected.
14. fulltime university and TAFE students are entitled to a living allowance which enables them to study instead of having to find paid work during teaching semesters.
15. education unions are the appropriate industrial representatives in all educational matters.

Goals

The Australian Greens want:

16. a public school system that is recognised as among the best in the world.
17. every child in Australia to have access to at least two years of public preschool education.
18. schools funding to be placed on an equitable footing by reversing the excessive increases in Commonwealth funding to non-government schools in recent years.
19. increased funding to public education through funding models for all sectors of the education system to prioritise public education.
20. public education infrastructure to be adequately funded for capital works and maintenance to meet the highest environmental sustainability standards and remain in public ownership and control.
21. smaller class sizes throughout the public education system to ensure manageable workloads for all educators and best educational outcomes for all students.
22. higher teacher-student ratios in schools that suffer socioeconomic disadvantage, educate children with special needs and schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
23. increased specialist teachers and support services for students and pre-school children with special needs, including those with a disability or a learning difficulty.
24. increased support for students from non-English speaking backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
25. increased funding for training and professional development for educators in all sectors of the public education system.
26. a career path and salary structure for school teachers and other educators to encourage excellent teachers to enter and stay in the profession.
27. schools and curriculum material free from corporate influence including the use of sponsors' material or logos.
28. home schooling options for parents to educate their children if they meet requirements to provide a balanced education, core educational outcomes and social interaction with peers.
29. VET funding priorities to balance between student needs, employment demand, and providing skills in satisfying and sustainable employment.
30. free university education for Australian citizens, permanent residents and refugees.
31. improved access to comprehensive tertiary education for rural and remote communities.
32. retention rates to Year 12 and enrolments and completions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at tertiary level to match the rest of the community.
33. internationally competitive conditions for academic staff.
34. enrolment for high-demand tertiary courses with limited places to be based on merit and not on ability to pay.
35. elected staff and student representatives on university governing bodies.
36. provision of an adequate means-tested living allowance for full time students in the tertiary sector.

Measures

The Australian Greens will:

37. fund the construction of new public preschool facilities.
38. increase pre-service and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators.

39. develop improved career path, professional development and pay structure for all teachers and other educators.
40. provide additional teachers and resources for students and preschool children with special needs and those from disadvantaged communities.
41. introduce the same accountability and transparency frameworks for government funding to non-government schools as applies to public schools and extend the anti-discrimination measures that apply in public schools to private schools.
42. ensure the viability and diversity of existing public schools is not endangered by the development of new private schools.
43. include the history, culture and contemporary experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the school curriculum, and in the training and professional development of all teachers.
44. support schools in the provision of high quality, rich information to parents and the community and end the public ranking of schools in league tables.
45. support expert decision-making about curriculum, testing, reporting and teaching in consultation with teachers, parents, students and the community.
46. ensure that public funding of private providers of VET and businesses that supply training opportunities does not diminish the viability of public TAFE services, expertise or facilities.
47. phase out the public funding of privately provided VET where TAFE can provide the same educational and training outcomes.
48. abolish all fees and charges for educational services at TAFE institutions.
49. address the over-casualisation of TAFE teaching by introducing a benchmark of 80 percent of teaching by permanent staff throughout public and private VET providers.
50. increase the availability of apprenticeships, especially in rural and regional Australia.
51. ensure educators have a key role in developing and reviewing training packages.
52. provide an adequate mean-tested living allowance for full time students.
53. reject the use of education funding vouchers.
54. increase funding to the tertiary sector to provide sufficient student places to meet the demand of suitably qualified applicants.
55. legislate to increase democratic participation by academics, staff, students and community representatives in the decision-making processes within universities.
56. abolish fees for educational services at public universities for Australian students and forgive HECS debts and FEE-HELP debt incurred at public universities.
57. repeal voluntary student union legislation and support the role of student unions by the universal collection of student fees for amenities and services, by an elected student body.
58. support affirmative action entrance, residential programs and ongoing assistance to improve university entrance opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
59. increase and cost-index per-student funding of all public universities, and ensure adequate funding to all rural, regional and outer-suburban universities.
60. support the right of academics to develop and maintain a research career and increase funding to expand the research capacity of Australian universities and increase the proportion of research funding allocated to pure research and to research for the public good.
61. end the current arrangement for recurrent funding to non-government schools by no later than the end of 2010.
62. implement a new model for recurrent funding to non-government schools based on the following:
 - proper consideration of the resource levels of non-government schools and their financial capacity, including fees and other parent contributions;

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- an appropriate measure for indexation of the funding of non-government schools that decouples it from spending on public schools; and
- non-government schools to be fully accountable to the parliament and therefore transparent to the public on their use of government funds and their financial situation, including all income and assets.

63. ensure that non-government schools in receipt of government funding:

- do not discriminate in hiring of staff or selection of students;
- have an admissions and expulsions policy similar to public schools including an obligation to enrol; and
- demonstrate social and community engagement and benefit by offering community access to facilities and/or a fee waiver for a percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or with special needs.

64. invest the money saved from ending public subsidies to the very wealthiest private schools into a national equity funding programme for public schools.

65. support the maintenance of the total level of Commonwealth funding for private schools at 2003-04 levels (excluding that re-allocated under previous clauses), indexed for inflation.

66. end government funding for schools that operate for private profit.