



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

**THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MHR, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
THE HON. CHRISTOPHER PYNE MHR,
SHADOW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, APPRENTICESHIPS & TRAINING AND
SENATOR MITCH FIFIELD, SHADOW PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR
DISABILITIES, CARERS & THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

REAL ACTION TO HELP STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

The Coalition will invest \$314 million to provide greater support to students with a disability and their families.

It is time to take real action to help to get the best possible educational outcomes for Australian students with a disability.

These young Australians and their parents face many barriers to accessing the sort of educational opportunities that their classmates take for granted.

Parental decisions about where to send children to school are based predominantly on the ability of that school to support and nurture each child's development.

For parents of children with a disability these choices are very limited. They want what every parent wants for their child – the right to choose an education that will allow their child to reach their full potential.

Currently, students with a disability can expect vastly different treatment depending on which state they live in, what type of school they go to, and how their disability is classified.

Also funding is not portable - meaning support and assistance is directed schools and does not follow the student.

An elected Coalition Government will work at a Ministerial Council level to **secure national agreement on definitions of disabilities**. Nationally consistent definitions are the first crucial step on the road towards providing greater assistance for all students with disabilities.

These categories will be adopted nationally to ensure consistency for parents, students, teachers, governments and relevant stakeholders.

The Coalition will ensure that this process is complete before 1 July 2011.

The Coalition will also provide students with portable funding through an **Education Card** worth up to \$20,000 per year, indexed to inflation.

The Coalition will commence the Education Card from January 2012, based on agreed nationally consistent definitions, providing portability of the entitlement between schools or school systems. This will provide real choice to parents and a guarantee of a better education for students.

The entitlement will follow the student and will bypass state educational bureaucracies, by being paid straight to education institutions.

It is estimated that the roll-out of the Education Card will initially provide assistance to almost 6,000 disabled children and their families.

The Education Card will be introduced incrementally and in a targeted manner - commencing with those who need it most and with reference to the newly created disability definitions. Students most in need will get help first, with eligibility to be expanded as the federal budgetary position improves.

These measures are the first installment in the Coalition's disability policy and will cost \$314 million over the forward estimates.

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