

Kim Beazley's Plan for Better Teachers and School Facilities

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Overview

How well we educate our children will determine whether or not Australia will be a successful and prosperous nation in the future.

It will also determine whether or not we are a fair society or one where the winners take all.

The answer is to give every child a high quality education. That means more funding for our schools, improving the quality of teaching and making our schools places we can all be proud of.

Better Teachers

Creating this Knowledge Nation with opportunities for all will depend largely on the professionalism and dedication of Australia's teachers. They are one of our most important assets. We must value and respect them and give them the resources they need to fully develop the nation's knowledge potential.

In short, we must make our teachers our national heroes.

Research tells us that the best way to improve a school's results is to have gifted teachers who have expertise in the subjects they teach and can instil their enthusiasm for it in their students.

That's why Labor will implement new policies to attract more high achievers into teaching, retrain our existing teachers and provide teachers who upgrade their skills with greater financial rewards.

Better Facilities for Schools

We must also improve the physical condition of our schools. How can we expect children to have pride in their schools when those schools are in need of basic repairs and up-to-date facilities like science labs and libraries? We must create schools we can be proud of, and provide funds to keep them in good repair, with modern facilities.

Better Funding Priorities

Becoming a Knowledge Nation will require many more highly educated and skilled people. With our small population we can't afford to waste the talent of a single person. This means funding must be directed to where it will make the most difference.

Through the National Public Education Alliance, Kim Beazley and the Labor State Premiers pledge to increase the funding of public schools in real terms over the next decade.

To help pay for this investment, Labor will redirect to schools that need it, the funding increases the Howard Government wants to give to the elite Category 1 private schools.

The Howard Government's Failures

THE SHORTAGE OF HIGHLY TRAINED TEACHERS

A number of recent reports have pointed to serious deficiencies in the skills and numbers of our teachers:

- The Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies ('FASTS') estimates that approximately 40 percent of junior secondary students are taught maths by teachers with little or no background in maths and no studies in the teaching of maths.¹
- Australia's Chief Scientist has reported that our science teachers' skills are less than satisfactory and that they are dissatisfied with the profession and their level of rewards. As a result, our children are losing interest in science and maths and enrolments are falling.²
- A recent survey by the Australian Secondary Principals' Association ('ASPA') found that some schools, particularly those in regional Australia, cannot offer important subjects because they can't replace teachers who have left.
- The same survey found that overall teacher shortages in Australian schools have reached near critical levels and are projected to get even worse.³

This shortage of teachers is a national crisis requiring urgent action.

THE POOR STATE OF OUR CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

As well as improving the quality of teaching - we need to instil pride in all our schools.

Too many of our schools are in a poor state of repair, lacking the modern facilities that the elite Category 1 private schools take for granted.

One recent investigation found more than 50 run down schools in South Australia alone, some with problems such as leaking roofs, rotting walls and broken windows.⁴

How can our children be expected to excel in portable classrooms that are too hot in summer and too cold in winter, classrooms with flaking paint and broken furniture, or schools with outdated science labs and inadequate libraries?

Our schools must be modernised and repaired.

Urgent action is needed.

Unlike the Howard Government, Labor has a plan to attract more high achievers to teaching, retrain and reward existing teachers and improve and modernise our school buildings.

¹ FASTS, *Mathematical Sciences In Australia: Looking for a Future*, October 2000, p.2.

² Chief Scientist, *The Chance to Change*, November 2000, pp.50-1.

³ ASPA, Press Release, *School census shows teacher shortage reaching critical levels*, 1 October 2001.

⁴ *Adelaide Advertiser*, 13 August 2001.

KIM BEAZLEY'S PLAN FOR BETTER TEACHERS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

TEACHER EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIPS – ATTRACTING HIGH ACHIEVERS INTO TEACHING

Labor will offer 1,000 HECS-free Teacher Excellence Scholarships each year to attract high achievers into teaching.

We know that the quality of teaching is the single most important factor in students' results.

As Australia's Chief Scientist says, '*excellent teachers are the key to exciting and sustaining interest in science in schools.*' The same goes for all subjects.

That is why we must place a higher priority on recruiting and retaining the best teachers.

We also know that there are several subject areas where there are serious shortages of qualified teachers – particularly maths, science and IT.

Under this plan, students will win Teacher Excellence Scholarships on the basis of their tertiary entrance scores.

The scholarships will be targeted to subjects where there are already shortages.

Most teachers take between 7 to 10 years to pay off their HECS debts. Scholarship holders will have their annual HECS payments forgiven each year they work as a teacher in a government or non-government school.

In this way Labor's Teacher Excellence Scholarships will act as an incentive not only to attract the best students into teaching but also to encourage them to remain in teaching.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS – RETRAINING AND REWARDING OUR EXISTING TEACHERS

As well as attracting high achievers to teaching, we must help our existing primary and secondary teachers develop further their professional skills and provide additional rewards to those who attain new skills and qualifications. That's why we will create Teacher Development Partnerships.

Labor will invest \$108 million over five years to offer Teacher Development Partnerships to 4,000 teachers a year in government and non-government schools to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

Teachers who accept a partnership and undertake a semester of part-time training in their own time will receive up to \$4,000 for their course costs and a \$2,000 completion payment.

Labor's Teacher Development Partnerships will be offered to the teachers who have the greatest need to improve their knowledge and skills, particularly teachers who are forced to teach outside their area of specialty, teachers who need to improve their IT skills, and excellent teachers to assist them in passing on their knowledge to their fellow teachers.

It is not fair to either the teacher or the students when a teacher has to teach a subject they are not trained in.

Under this program, a maths teacher can do a specialist course to refresh their expertise in mathematics and learn the very latest methods for engaging and getting their students interested in the subject. The same goes for other key subject areas.

This policy will also inject substantial additional resources into university education faculties, which will be the main providers of this training.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAPITAL FUNDING

Labor will provide \$110.5 million over five years for improvements for refurbishing classrooms, laboratories and libraries in public schools.

The Labor States have already agreed to match this funding for the first three years and the Commonwealth will negotiate with all State Governments to match the full five-year program, boosting the total to \$221 million over five years in additional capital funding for public schools.

John Howard plans to spend millions of dollars on funding increases for wealthy schools that already have facilities that public schools can only dream about.

He plans to spend \$4 million on The King's School alone with its 15 cricket fields, five basketball courts, 12 tennis courts, 50m swimming pool, gym, two climbing walls, indoor rifle range, 13 rugby fields, three soccer fields, cross country course and boatshed.

Meanwhile, because of inadequate investment by the Howard Government some public schools are forced to make do with buildings in serious need of repair.

Labor will invest this money in facilities for public schools instead.

We will close the gap between the facilities of these wealthy schools and our public schools - John Howard will widen it.

THE NATIONAL PUBLIC EDUCATION ALLIANCE

Labor's ambitious plans for improving Australia's schools will require significant national investment in public schools by all Governments – Federal, State and Territory.

The full cost of Federal Labor's investment in policies under the National Public Education Alliance will be announced during the campaign.

As the Report of the Knowledge Nation Taskforce said - our schools don't just need little changes, they need massive revolutionary changes.

This will involve new priorities for public spending. But as Barry Jones constantly reminds Australians: *'if you think education is expensive, try ignorance'*.

That is why Kim Beazley and the Labor Leaders in every State and Territory have signed the National Public Education Alliance.

The Alliance is a long-term commitment from all Labor Federal, State and Territory leaders to:

- Increase funding for public schools in real terms over the next decade;
- End the blame shifting between the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories that holds back real progress; and
- Co-operate on Labor's new initiatives to strengthen and modernise our public schools for the 21st Century.

It signals a major shift in public policy in Australia.

Labor will work with the States and Territories to increase public school funding in real terms over the next decade.

It will kick start higher levels of public investment in the improvement and modernisation of our nation's public schools.

It's an agreement that the Howard Government, with its agenda to destroy public education, will never make.

John Howard constantly claims that he has increased funding to public schools and that the fault lies with the States. Australian parents and their children know this isn't true.

It's time the blame shifting ended and cooperation and higher levels of national investment started.

ESTABLISHMENT GRANTS FOR NEW NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Recently the Howard Government proposed the payment of establishment grants to new non-government schools. Because the Government refused to provide any balancing increase to public schools, the new funding did not pass the Senate.

But as Labor will be providing substantial increases to funding for public schools, including today's announcement of capital funding, Labor will pay these grants to all eligible schools.

FUNDING CATEGORY 1 SCHOOLS AT THEIR 2000 LEVEL

Labor will fund Category 1 private schools at their fully indexed 2000 funding level in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Last year, the Howard Government provided a massive funding increase for elite Category 1 private schools, with no matching increase for public schools.

Labor will redirect these funds to improve the education of all our children.

The funding increases – totalling \$150 million to December 2004, which would have flowed to these elite Category 1 private schools, will be re-directed as available to the areas of genuine need:

- Capital improvements for public schools;
- Provide 1,000 scholarships each year to attract high achieving school leavers into teaching and keep them there; and

- Re-training for 4,000 existing teachers per year.

Labor supports the funding of non-government schools on the basis of need – and the only schools affected by this policy are the 58 elite Category 1 private schools – like Melbourne Grammar, Geelong Grammar and The King's School.

Costing

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	Total
National Public Education Alliance*	-	-	-	-	-
Teacher Excellence Scholarships	0.4	1.0	1.7	2.4	5.5
Teacher Development Partnerships	12.0	24.0	24.0	24.0	84.0
Public Schools Capital Funding	4.5	16.0	30.0	30.0	80.5
Abolish elite Category 1 private school funding increase	-15.0	-37.5	-52.5	-30	-135.0
Establishment grants for new non-government schools#	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL (millions)	1.9	3.5	3.2	26.4	35.0

* The full cost of Federal Labor's investment in policies under the National Public Education Alliance will be announced during the campaign.

Funding for this measure is included in the forward estimates.