

Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Raising Standards

Raising Standards - The Coalition is committed to strong government and non-government school sectors. The Coalition will not only increase funding for schools but also provide a range of initiatives that will benefit all Australian school students.

Raising Standards

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Executive Summary

The first Howard/Fischer Government:

- Promoted and achieved a specific national goal to improve literacy and numeracy standards. In only two and a half years, the Coalition obtained support from state and territory governments to agree to a National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. For the first time, a national literacy standard is now in place.
- Provided \$680 million over four years for literacy and numeracy.

- Provided \$17.5 million over four years to establish the ‘Discovering Democracy’ civics curriculum.

A Second Howard/Fischer Government will:

- Provide an additional \$72 million over three years to further improve literacy and numeracy standards in schools.
- Provide an additional \$40 million over four years to ensure high literacy and numeracy standards in the middle years of schooling.
- Provide \$85 million a year, without qualification and backdated to 1 January 1998, to place the Catholic education systems in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory into funding category 11.
- Direct \$75 million over three years to a Quality Teacher Programme to update and improve teachers’ skills and promote and lift the status of teaching in government and non government schools.
- Provide an additional \$90 million over three years for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy.
- Provide an additional \$23.6 million over five years to increase the Basic Boarding Allowance component of the Assistance for Isolated Children Allowance from \$2900 to \$3500 per year and index it to inflation.
- Provide an additional \$2.7 million over five years to increase the maximum level of Assistance for Isolated Children Additional Boarding Allowance to \$4,347, the same as the equivalent ABSTUDY allowance.

Labor’s Record

Schooling requires a partnership between parents, teachers, the local

community, students and government. Labor failed to recognise that. For thirteen years, Labor's policies were dictated by teachers' unions.

Nothing has changed, and Beazley/Evans Labor have even admitted it. The would be minister for education, Mark Latham told the ALP National Conference on 21 January 1998:

In particular, I look forward in the months ahead to working closely with the leadership of the AEU (Australian Education Union) and the NTEU (National Tertiary Education Union) to turn its contents into the programs of the Beazley Labor Government.

Labor hasn't learnt. Australia can't afford to go back to Labor because school students and their families would be subjected again to Labor's inflexible and union boss-driven policies:

- After 13 years of a Labor government, thirty percent of our school children could not read or write properly. Basic skills like reading, writing and arithmetic were continually ignored during this period.
- Labor's inequitable New Schools Policy prevented parents, especially low income parents, from choosing the best school to meet their child's needs.
- Labor neglected the seventy percent of school leavers who do not go from school to university.
- Labor's legacy of welfare dependency encouraged young people to drop out of school, and go on the dole without genuine prospects of gaining employment and improving their quality of life.
- Under Labor, little progress was made in raising the standards of indigenous education.
- Labor neglected the important transition between school and work and let young people fall between the cracks.

Highlights of the Government's Achievements

The Coalition is committed to ensuring that all students receive a high quality education. It is only through education and training that employment opportunities, and therefore life opportunities, for young people will be increased. This commitment is mirrored in the increased amount of Commonwealth funding for both government and non-government schools. Direct funding to schools amounts to \$4.1 billion in 1998, an increase of \$612 million over 1996.

A Literacy and Numeracy

Ensuring that every Australian school child has the opportunity to read and write properly has been the Coalition Government's top educational priority. The Coalition has provided strong national leadership in the area of literacy and numeracy. The Coalition is committed to achieving and realising Australia's first national literacy goal: *that every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.* To support this goal the Coalition has:

- Provided \$680 million over four years for literacy funding targeted at students in greatest need.
- Achieved Commonwealth, state and territory agreement on national literacy standards in writing, spelling and reading for Years 3 and 5. The national literacy standard will enable parents, teachers and governments to assess the improvement of students and assist students who are having difficulties.
- Provided \$5 million over 1998-2000 for 17 literacy pilot projects in secondary schools targeted at young people who have reached secondary school without achieving acceptable literacy and numeracy standards.

B Industry Recognised Vocational Education in Schools

The Coalition believes that there needs to be more vocational education in schools to ensure that school leavers are better equipped to meet Australia's skill needs. Young people can now start gaining a qualification while still at school. Students in Years 9 and 10 who might have left school are being encouraged to continue to Years 11 and 12.

Students in Years 11 and 12 are also being given the opportunity to participate in school based apprenticeships that link in with local industries through new pilot projects. The Coalition has:

- Provided over \$200 million over four years to assist students combine study towards a senior secondary certificate with nationally recognised and accredited vocational education and training, including:
- \$80 million over four years for the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation, enabling schools to develop school-based industry courses with local businesses. The number of students enrolled in Foundation programmes has grown from 18,000 at the end of 1996 to 38,000 in 1997.
- \$13.6 million over 1998-2000 to help schools become job placement agencies and mentors for their school leavers.

C Children from Rural and Regional Australia

The Coalition believes that it is important to support students and families facing barriers to education who live in rural and regional Australia. Many students are unable to attend an appropriate school on a daily basis because of remoteness. Key achievements and commitments of the Coalition include:

- Over \$33 million per annum to support the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme including an additional \$4.7 million per annum to increase the Basic Boarding Allowance to \$2900 a year and an increase in the Correspondence Allowance to \$1000 a year for primary students and \$1500 a year for secondary students.
- \$50 million over three years for the Country Areas Programme to help schools and students in rural and regional areas. This programme assists parents, administrators, teachers and other members of the community to work cooperatively to improve primary and secondary school education.
- \$25 million over three years from the proceeds from the future sale of Telstra to stimulate internet service delivery in regional and rural Australia. As a result of this initiative, 99.7% of Australians will have cheaper access to the Internet.

D Choice in Schooling

The Coalition abolished Labor's restrictive New Schools Policy thereby allowing families, especially those with low incomes, greater choice in schooling for their children by allowing the establishment of low fee non-government schools. Choice is an essential foundation for school learning, allowing school programmes to be matched to students' learning needs, facilitating innovation and encouraging greater involvement and commitment of both parents and children.

E National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools

The Coalition has continued its support for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy in cooperation with the states and territories to support Asian languages and Asian studies in all school systems and develop an understanding of Asian cultures for our students. The languages targeted are Chinese (Mandarin), Japanese, Indonesian and Korean.

F Civics

The Coalition is committed to giving Australian students a strong education in the history of Australian democracy and what it means to be Australian. The 'Discovering Democracy' civics programme, which focuses on Years 4 to 10 of schooling, has been developed to give students an understanding of, and pride in, Australia's system of government and the principles of democracy which underpin it. The Coalition has provided \$17.5 million over four years to support this programme.

G The Full Service Schools Initiative

The Coalition introduced the Youth Allowance to provide an incentive for young people to continue improving themselves through training or further education.

The Full Service Schools Initiative recognises the needs of young people who have been encouraged to return to school as a result of the Youth Allowance. The initiative aims to give young people, who have been identified as at risk of dropping out of the system, access to flexible and innovative schooling. The Coalition has provided \$24

million to support this initiative.

H Indigenous Education

Indigenous people are amongst the most educationally disadvantaged people in Australia, with school retention rates well below the retention rates of other Australian students. The Coalition has addressed indigenous disadvantage by:

- providing \$80 million over four years for practical projects to improve educational standards.
- providing \$6.2 million per annum for intensive English as a Second Language assistance for non-English speaking indigenous students.

I Special Education

The Coalition Government is committed to improving the education of young people with special needs and disabilities. Assistance is provided through the school system, community groups and non-school organisations. Key initiatives include:

- \$106 million to support children with special needs in both government and non-government schools.
- A review of Special Education which will assist in future planning.

Coalition Initiatives

A Literacy and Numeracy

The Coalition will continue to provide strong national leadership to lift literacy and numeracy standards in Australia's schools. One of the challenges facing governments and schools is to ensure that students do not leave school without the literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to enter work or further training. In its next term, the Coalition will provide:

- an additional \$72 million over three years to assist schools improve the literacy skills of school students.

- an additional \$40 million over four years to support the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan for the middle years of schooling. This will assist students who have progressed to secondary school without developing basic literacy and numeracy skills to cope with the demands of the secondary school curriculum.

B Catholic Schools

Non-government schools are funded on the basis of need within a framework of twelve funding categories. A recent independent assessment of the Catholic education systems identified a range of cost pressures that made it difficult for the Catholic education systems to maintain their operations within the present funding category. The pressures include changes in staff salaries; prolonged drought and hardship in rural communities; a need to broaden the curricula; increased retention rates; a significant increase in numbers of students with disabilities; and the longstanding commitment of small parish schools to assist disadvantaged communities in rural and metropolitan areas. In response to this assessment the Coalition will provide:

- \$85 million per annum, without qualification and backdated to 1 January 1998, to place New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory Catholic Education systems into category 11.
- This is in contrast with Labor who will effectively deny Catholic schools eighteen months of funding, and who will make the demands of their union mates in New South Wales and Queensland a condition of the funding.

C Quality Teacher Programme

Teachers are a critical component in the learning partnership with parents, students and the community. Teaching skills are fundamental to the attainment of higher levels of student achievement. The ongoing professional development of teachers is therefore of critical importance.

The Coalition will provide \$75 million over three years to strengthen the skills of the teaching profession. These funds will be used to update and improve teachers' skills and help lift the status of teaching

in both government and non-government schools. The focus will be on professional development in literacy, numeracy, mathematics, science, information technology and vocational education in schools. Assistance will be targeted to the seventy percent of the teaching force (140 000 teachers) who completed their formal training 10 or more years ago, casual teachers and teachers seeking to re-enter the teaching force.

D National Asian Languages And Studies In

Australian Schools

The Coalition will continue to support the development of Asian languages and an understanding of Asian culture in our schools. We will provide an additional \$90 million over three years for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy.

E Isolated Children

In recognition of the barriers to education faced by many isolated families and the extra costs associated with the schooling of their children, the Coalition will:

- provide \$23.6 million over five years to increase the Basic Boarding Allowance component of Assistance for Isolated Children from \$2900 to \$3500 in 1999 and ensure that it is indexed to inflation.
- increase the maximum level of the Assistance for Isolated Children Additional Boarding Allowance to \$4,347, which is equivalent to the relevant ABSTUDY rate, at a cost of \$2.7 million over five years.
- provide short term emergency funding for school term hostels in significant financial difficulty to ensure their continued existence until a long term solution can be found at the next meeting of the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.