

# Science in Schools

**JOBS FOR THE FUTURE**



**A Government for You.**

WA Labor Policy

February 2016

## Investing in schools for the jobs of the future

WA Labor will invest \$17 million to roll out science labs and equipment in up to 200 primary schools. This investment in science, technology and innovation is part of our vision to create a broad economy which generates jobs in a diverse range of industries.

Science labs engage students and if we are serious about diversifying our economy then we must start at a school level to prepare students for jobs beyond the resources industry.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines will be the future drivers of innovation as we reshape our economy. Science is one of the fundamental elements of the STEM disciplines. A focus on science will support the diversification of the economy and is an investment in the jobs of the future.

WA Labor will roll out science programs in up to 200 primary schools including funding for science labs on school premises. We will work with teachers and Scitech on appropriate professional development for teachers to focus on teaching science in schools.



*"It is crucial to ignite a passion for science in our children as early as possible and ensure they receive a quality education in science, starting in primary school."*

*Mark*

Mark McGowan  
WA Labor Leader

### Recommendations

- A McGowan Government will invest \$17 million to roll out science programs in up to 200 primary schools including funding to convert existing classrooms to science laboratories and upfront grants for resources to make science a more diverse and engaging experience for students.
- A McGowan Government will work with teachers and Scitech on appropriate science professional development (PD) for teachers.

### STAY INFORMED:

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## Investing in Schools

Most science in primary schools is not taught in a purpose built science lab, but in general classrooms or in multipurpose wet areas. Therefore the experience of science is narrower, less diverse and less engaging for students.

The activity of observation and experiment is difficult to teach in the absence of a lab where resources and equipment are purpose built and permanent. In secondary school, science is taught in purpose designed labs where there are multiple work stations with built-in equipment.

Currently 22 secondary schools and 279 primary schools have a science or art room funded as part of the Building the Education Revolution program. In most schools these spaces are a shared space and are not necessarily a specific science space. WA Labor's proposal is to focus on science at a primary school level and that focus needs a science lab with appropriate resources and equipment.

WA Labor will invite expressions of interest from all public primary schools to apply for the program. In the initial phase, up to 200 schools will be upgraded to ensure that they have appropriate facilities.

- **An allocation of \$12 million will be made available to convert classrooms into science labs.**
- **A further \$5 million will be provided in grants of \$25,000 to enable schools to buy resources to equip those labs.**

The teaching of science should start as early as possible in a child's education however each school will have the flexibility to manage how they integrate the new science lab resources into their school curriculum.

## Shifting the focus back to Science

WA Labor believes science has been a missed opportunity for WA and currently there is a lack of science focus in primary schools. This has had a flow on effect into secondary schools with less students taking up science.

While there are science jobs in the resources sector, as exploration and development shrink so too do these jobs. Science is more than geology and biology and if WA is to become a smarter and more innovative State then we must prepare students for jobs beyond the resources industry.

Science and innovation are recognised internationally as key for boosting productivity, creating more and better jobs, enhancing competitiveness and growing an economy.<sup>1</sup>

WA Labor believes we must be innovative to keep our economy growing. A McGowan Government's plan to roll out science programs in primary schools and science labs on school premises will provide a focus on science in primary school. Focusing and investing in science in the early years of formal education is one way of creating a broad economy which generate jobs in a diverse range of industries.

<sup>1</sup>Chief Scientist for Australia, STEM: Australia's Future; September 2014; p7

## WA Labor | **Science in Schools**

Innovation

Diversification

Creating Jobs

Strong Economy



**A Government for You.**