

Labor Promises Big – But Will it Show True Commitment?

With outrage building across Australia over the Federal Government's assault on equitable education funding, the Australian Labor Party has pledged ambitious education funding plans.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten announced that if elected, his government would invest an extra \$14.1 billion in government schools over the next 10 years, including an extra \$917 million over three years for government schools in New South Wales. Currently, the Federal Government says it will provide a maximum of 20% of funding for government schools. Labor has vowed to remove that cap and provide 22.2% of funding in most states and territories by 2020.

P&C Federation Susie Boyd commented "While the promises sound generous, the devil will be in the details."

"When we signed onto the first Gonski agreement in 2013, the then-Labor Government sadly didn't incorporate that in any legislation, and the following government felt it could renege on it. That reneged agreement cost government schools in New South Wales \$846 million in 2018 and 2019. It's also concerning that Mr Shorten did not commit to reversing the Federal Government's reprehensible deal to give non-government schools over \$4 billion in extra funding."

"We believe any new funding arrangements must end the enormous preferential treatment that the Federal Government gives to non-government schools, since education funding must prioritise the schools and students that need it most. This unfair advantage of non-government schools must end immediately, not in a decade or more."

"Over 65% of students attend government schools, and government schools enrolments are growing at the fastest rates. Whether you look at school infrastructure needs or support for students with disability, most support is needed in the government school sector, so that is where most funding should go. This should not be a partisan issue. We need all political parties to commit outright to equitable education funding that is sector blind."

Mr Shorten also said that in return for this funding, his government would "require State and Territory governments to sign up to a national plan to improve schools with clear and ambitious goals and targets."

Ms Boyd said "Nobody objects to the basic principle of schools having clear and ambitious targets. However, is Mr Shorten's plan going to lead to a league table, where schools have to compete for funding? We've had enough league tables with NAPLAN, we don't need another."

"We know what equitable education funding looks like. Now we need our political representatives to commit."

Sydney, NSW, 10 October 2018

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