

2016 FEDERAL ELECTION: FUNDING POLICIES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic education wrote to both major parties to ask about their education policies and how they will affect the 765,000 students being educated in the 1,731 Catholic schools across Australia. Summaries of the parties' responses are provided below. Full responses can be found on the NCEC website.

AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

LIBERAL-NATIONAL COALITION

1: How will your policy support parents to choose the education they want for their children and ensure religious freedom for Catholic schools is preserved?

Labor has a strong record of supporting Catholic education and values the role of Catholic schools in educating the next generation. Labor respects parents' choice in schools and has no plans to change the legislation in relation to exemptions for religious schools.

In government, Labor worked cooperatively with the Catholic education systems to partner in delivering the Gonski needs-based funding reforms, which will drive better student outcomes. If elected, we will continue to work closely with Catholic schools to implement these important reforms.

The Coalition appreciates the vital contribution that Catholic schools make to Australian society by educating some 750,000 children. We believe that parents should be guaranteed the freedom to choose an education that best suits the needs of their children and their personal beliefs.

We strongly support the rights of Catholic schools to conduct and govern themselves in every respect in accordance with their religious beliefs and values and within legislative and funding requirements. This includes curriculum, school practice and enrolment.

2: How will your education policy advance the educational outcomes of students in all schools?

Labor's school funding policy is sector-blind and needs-based, which means every child in every school will get a better education. Labor's "Your Child. Our Future" plan will deliver the Gonski reforms that we introduced when in government, on-time and in-full. This plan will see an additional investment in our education system of \$3.8 billion compared to the Liberals in 2018 and 2019 and help keep fees down in Catholic schools.

It will also mean teachers in Catholic schools will have the resources they need to provide students with more individual attention, and for schools to tailor programs to meet the needs of their students and improve results.

Our proposed initiatives will focus on boosting student literacy, numeracy and STEM performance, improving the quality of teaching and school leadership, preparing our students for a globalised world, focusing on what matters most and those who need it most, and accountability through transparency.

More information on our approach to the future of schooling reform can be found by reading our "Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes" policy.

3: How will your policy affect the ability of Catholic education systems and schools to distribute funding according to locally-identified needs?

In government, Labor worked closely with Catholic schools on funding reforms to get the balance right between flexibility and autonomy, and accountability and transparency. We will continue this approach in delivering the six-year funding agreement with Catholic schools on-time and in-full, with systems continuing to distribute funding in line with the needs-based funding principles. With Labor, \$3.8 billion more needs-based support will reach schools in 2018 and 2019 alone, compared to the Liberals. This will put downward pressure on fees.

Parents need to be sure that taxpayers' money is reaching the classroom and delivering evidence-based programs that boost student results. With "Your Child. Our Future", school systems will need to be transparent and accountable for how they distribute additional funding to improve student outcomes.

Labor has also committed \$82 million in additional funding for Catholic education commissions and Independent school associations in 2018 and 2019 to deliver a Teaching and Learning Support Program.

The Coalition strongly supports the ability of Catholic education systems to flexibly and responsively re-distribute funding according to local need. Our commitment is to grow schools funding in line with costs, and to support evidence-based initiatives proven to make a difference to student outcomes.

4: How will you ensure your policy minimises red tape and regulation on schools, teachers and school systems that distract from quality teaching and learning?

Teachers and principals in Catholic schools know best the needs of their students and how to meet them. Labor's priority is ensuring federal investment reaches classrooms and giving schools the flexibility to use additional investment to drive evidence-based improvements in teaching and learning.

A Shorten Labor Government will work with Catholic schools to ensure integrity in funding arrangements and transparency for parents, without red tape.

Under the Coalition, future funding will not only be needs-based but it will be linked to ensuring that evidence-based reforms that have the most impact on student performance are implemented. We must make sure that teachers can implement what they need, rather than taking them out of the classroom with red tape.

The Turnbull Government has committed to reducing the cost of unnecessary or inefficient regulation imposed on individuals, business and community organisations by at least \$1 billion a year. An important part of this commitment is the Regulator Performance Framework to review the performance of Commonwealth regulators.

5: How will your policy deliver funding certainty for schools and ensure funding keeps pace with the educational needs of students and the real cost of educating a child?

To make sure needs-based reforms drive a permanent improvement in education, Labor has provisioned \$36 billion more than the Liberals over the decade to give schools, principals and teachers long-term funding certainty. This will put downward pressure on fees over the long-term.

A Shorten Labor Government will more than reverse the Liberals' \$29 billion school cuts and provide funding certainty for schools and parents.

The Coalition has kept its 2013 election promises, we have restored funding certainty and provided record funding. Recurrent funding for the Catholic education sector across Australia will total \$23.3 billion over 2014 to 2017 – a 19.7 per cent increase.

In the 2016-17 Budget, the Turnbull Government fully-funded its School Achievement Plan, which includes schools funding for 2018-2020 at an education-specific indexation rate of 3.56 per cent plus enrolments. This reflects more accurately the real growth in education costs and aligns with the National Catholic Education Commission's pre-budget submission. Total Commonwealth funding to all schools across Australia will be a record \$73.6 billion over the forward estimates (2016-17 to 2019-20). Recurrent school funding increases from \$16.0 billion in 2016 to \$20.1 billion in 2020.

6: How will your funding policy ensure that students with additional needs – across all sectors and in all schools – receive the support they need and that funding grows with needs?

Labor's "Your Child. Our Future" plan will put needs-based, sector-blind funding permanently at the heart of our school system – so every student in every school will get the support they need to achieve their best. All students will benefit. Especially for those with the most to gain, with needs-based loadings for: Students with a low socio-economic background; Indigenous students; Students with disability; Students with limited English; Small schools; Rural, regional and remote schools.

Labor's plan will mean more one-on-one support and attention for every student, early intervention programs in every school, and better remedial literacy and numeracy support. Additional investment will also be used to offer more vocational education opportunities in schools, boost year 12 completion rates and deliver more allied health support – such as speech and occupational therapists.

A Shorten Labor Government will provide \$320 million from 2017 to better support students with disability – more than reversing the Turnbull Government's cuts to the More Support for Students with Disabilities program.

Over the 2014-17 period the Catholic education sector will receive \$1.9 billion for students with disability, including \$430 million in 2014 (an increase of \$278 million, or 183 per cent since 2013) and \$529 million in 2017.

This funding includes the recent Budget allocation of an extra \$118.2 million in 2016 and 2017 for students with disability. Funding will be targeted to those schools and students with the highest needs and, for the first time ever, is informed by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability.

From 2018, details of how the future new school funding model will address student need will be negotiated with States and Territories and the Catholic and Independent school sectors.

7: Parents currently pay most of the capital costs in Catholic schools. How will your policy support the capital needs of new and existing Catholic schools?

Labor understands the importance of long-term certainty to enable schools to improve facilities and grow. That's why we have provisioned \$36 billion more than the Liberals for schools over the next decade – keeping fees down.

This will also allow Catholic schools to plan for their capital needs in a way that would simply not be possible under the Liberals' \$29 billion cut.

In addition, Labor will provide over \$140 million in capital grants for non-government schools each year through the Capital Grants Program, taking further pressure off fees.

In 2015, the Coalition Government, under the Capital Grants Programme (CGP), helped 183 non-Government schools construct new classrooms, build specialist learning spaces and improve student and staff amenities. The CGP will continue under the Turnbull Coalition Government.

In 2016, the Coalition Government is delivering more than \$140 million for non-government school infrastructure projects. If re-elected, we will provide \$578 million over four years in capital funding for schools, including Catholic schools.

Read Labor's "Your Child. Our Future" policy at <http://bit.ly/NCECLaborEducation>

Read the Coalition's "Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes" policy at <http://bit.ly/NCECCoalitionEducation>