



# EDUCATION EQUALITY

## Needs-based funding for all

### Working for a world-class education system

Right now, our schools are chronically underfunded, putting pressure on teachers, students and parents. The Greens know that schools offer opportunity, and believe that every Australian child deserves a world-class education. That's why our schools policy is based on needs, not sectors or means.

Our schools face systemic inequalities and cuts to funding. The Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling found that Australia's educational performance has declined by international standards over the past decade. It found that years of underinvestment in education has led to deep inequalities in Australia's school systems.

The Greens have a vision for the future – one where every child has a chance at success. Whether it's going to university or TAFE, or taking on a trade – we need an education system that gives every child this opportunity. That's why the Greens support a sector-blind, needs-based school funding system.

### > WORLD-CLASS PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Greens want a public school system that is recognised as the best in the world, where funding is provided on the basis of equity and need. The Greens will:

- Honour the full six years of National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) for all jurisdictions, including those that did not sign up in 2013 - \$5.4 billion;
- Maintain NERA-levels of funding beyond year six;
- Top-up the disability loading using Nationally Consistent Collection of Data, as currently less than half of all disabled students are being funded for extra resourcing - \$4.8 billion;
- Provide extra funding for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and entrepreneurial curriculums and teaching incentives - \$678.9 million;
- Introduce a sustainable schools fund, built on an initiative that The Greens rolled out in Tasmania, where schools can bid to the fund for energy and water efficiency projects and renewables - \$192 million. The money they save on their utility bills can be poured directly back into the classroom.

### > THE PROBLEM

Tony Abbott ripped \$30bn over a decade from our schools system, and Malcom Turnbull has continued the failure to invest in the future by abandoning year 5 and 6 of the Gonski funding.

This will disproportionately affect schools with more disadvantaged students. All education experts and school system peak bodies support a needs-based school funding system, but the Government has turned its back on student needs, which will further entrench social disadvantage.

The children of the unemployed are ten times more likely to not meet the minimum standards for numeracy and reading in year 9 than the children of senior managers and professionals. Indigenous children are five times more likely to not meet national minimum standards of reading in year 9 than other children. This inequity in learning corresponds with inequity in resource distribution – by international comparison, Australia is an outlier in distributing greater amounts of resources to more advantaged schools<sup>1</sup>.

In terms of cost to the economy, the failure of the Australian government to retain all students to the end of year 12 schooling will generate direct financial costs in excess of \$72 billion (current prices) by 2070<sup>2</sup>.

The teaching profession has also been abandoned by the Government and its brutal cuts to education. Between 30 and 50% of teachers give up their job within their first five years in the profession. Many assistant principals don't go on to become principals on account of the level of work stress they will be subjected to<sup>3</sup>. The churn of teachers isn't just affecting students: research suggests replacement costs to the economy of about 0.2% of annual GDP<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Rorris, A. 2016, *Australian Schooling: The price of failure and reward for success*, AEU, viewed 2 May 2016, <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/application/files/3814/6172/5096/Rorris2016.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Toscano, N. 2016, *Stress, burnout, abuse deter deputy principals: study*, The Age, viewed 12 May 2016, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/stress-burnout-abuse-deter-deputy-principals-study-20160107-gm16su.html>

<sup>4</sup> Lumsden, B 2015, *Why are so many teachers fleeing the classroom?*, News Corp, viewed 12 May 2016,

## > BROKEN PROMISES, REDUCED FUNDING

The Coalition do not support Gonski reforms, and have badly let down Australian students, teachers and schools by reneging on their 2013 election promises to fund a full six years of NERA. Their policy of funding for “high-performing” schools will redirect resources to the top and risks reigniting the funding battle between public and private schools.

This will work against states, territories and schools with more disadvantaged children. While Labor would underinvest and the Coalition wants to cut education funding, the Greens are standing up for all Australian children to secure a world class education, and are the only political party whose support of the Gonski reforms has been unwavering.

## > WHY WE NEED THE GONSKI REFORMS

Much research has identified a significant relationship between student’s performance and their socioeconomic background. As schools have invested the Gonski money in improving outcomes, we can already see the good use this money is being put to<sup>5</sup>:

- Within six months of the reading program starting at one school, students were recording between nine months and two years of progress;
- Another school invested in an “intervention teacher” to work with smaller groups. Some of the students made 12 months’ worth of learning and improvement in their reading levels in just over one term of intensive support;
- Another school increased its performance against national minimum standards by 20% over three years, and is performing “substantially above” its expected levels of improvement, by investing Gonski funding in building teacher capacity.

We also need the NERA to run its intended six years because most of the funding was loaded into its last two years, with the agreement not becoming fully funded until year six.

## > THE GREENS’ SCHOOLS FUNDING PACKAGE

Our schools funding package is a genuine needs-based funding package, which addresses the needs of students, parents, teachers and our nation’s future.

<http://www.news.com.au/finance/work/careers/why-are-so-many-teachers-fleeing-the-classroom/news-story/f2f718575b25d7fc21ae9570a1da2b71>

<sup>5</sup> Australian Education Union 2016, *Getting Results: Gonski funding in Australian schools*, AEU, viewed 8 May 2016,

<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/application/files/1914/6284/3484/GonskResults2016.pdf>

The Greens will properly fund schools, and student need, with \$3.9 billion for years five and six of the National Education Reform Agreement (otherwise known as Gonski) and \$1.5 billion for the maintenance of this level of funding into 2020. This is the amount the Parliamentary Budget Office costed a full rollout of NERA, with a year six level of funding maintained across the first half of 2020 to cost.

An extract of that advice is provided below.

Table 1: Financial implications (outturn prices)<sup>(a)</sup>

Impact on	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	Total
Fiscal balance (\$m)	-	-470	-1,900	-3,020	-5,400
Underlying cash balance (\$m)	-	-470	-1,900	-3,020	-5,400

(a) A negative number for the fiscal and underlying cash balances indicates a decrease in the budget bottom line in accrual and cash terms respectively. Amounts may not sum due to rounding.

On top of our Gonski commitment is our \$4.8 billion policy to properly fund the disability loading of NERA using Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability. The Greens are the only political party with a disability in schools policy costed on Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. This policy can be viewed in full at: <http://greens.org.au/disability-education>.

The Greens believe that the education of our young people on respect, inclusion and celebrating diversity is incredibly important. As part of our Equity for Everyone policy The Greens will not only protect the Safe Schools program, we will expand its funding from \$2 million annually, to \$8 million annually. The Greens have long advocated for qualified mental health counsellors in schools as an alternative to the Chaplaincy Program. This policy can be viewed in full at: <http://greens.org.au/inclusive-communities>.

The Greens have committed a further \$678.9 million to increase uptake and improve delivery of STEM and entrepreneurship studies in schools. This was announced as part of our Innovation Nation package<sup>6</sup>. This policy can be viewed in full at: <http://greens.org.au/innovation-nation>.

The Greens’ Australian Sustainable Schools Fund, which is a part of our Renew Australia plan to create Australia’s new clean economy with at least 90% renewables by 2030<sup>7</sup>, will provide \$192 million over two years for cost-saving sustainable works on school grounds. This policy can be viewed in full at: <http://greens.org.au/renew>.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Greens 2016, *Innovation Nation*, Greens, viewed 21 May 2016, <http://greens.org.au/innovation-nation>

<sup>7</sup> Australian Greens 2015, *Renew Australia*, Greens, viewed 22 February 2016, <http://greens.org.au/renew>