



**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP  
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR WOMEN  
MEMBER FOR SYDNEY**

**WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS - NATIONAL PRESS CLUB ADDRESS**

***WEDNESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2019***

***\*\*\*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY\*\*\****

**Opening**

Like many parents I've spent the last few weeks settling my kids back into school.

Of course the first question we ask when they get home after their first day, is "who's your teacher this year?"

Because we all know it matters.

Common sense and all the academic literature agree: the most important factor in a child's progress at school is their teacher.

My focus today is on teaching and educational leadership in schools.

Because teachers, principals, educators are at the heart of Labor's vision for the future of education.

Of course, education starts before the first day of school.

If we want world class life-long learning we start with the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

We need to support parents to be their child's first educator, by giving them easy to understand information about child development.

Two out of five parents don't read to their child before the age of one; families that are less well-off are less likely to be advised of the importance of doing so.

We need a system that recognises childcare is about early learning, not babysitting.

That's why Labor will provide access to preschool for every three year old, as well as every four year old, and why we're committed to boosting the quality of early learning.

Quality early childhood education is for children – it's not just a workforce participation measure for parents.

We need high quality TAFE, university and adult education which prepares people for the jobs of the future or gives them new opportunities in our changing economy.

Tertiary education fuels our economy with increased productivity, research and discovery and it gives people the opportunity of a full rich life.

And schools?

We want our schools to be the best in the world.

Where every child is learning every day.

Where every child is welcome.

Where kids who are struggling at home get refuge and support, and where families who are struggling can be connected to health services and even adult education and employment services for parents.

Schools are the heart of their community, and we should better resource that role.

I want schools where every child masters the basics and those with learning difficulties have them identified early and addressed...

...where gifted and talented children can be challenged and extended.

Where teachers have deep knowledge of their subject , deep knowledge of the science of teaching and the time to know every child in their care.

Where teachers collaborate with colleagues to be lifelong learners themselves, using and contributing to research that improves teaching.

Where they make use of data, but are not drowning in paperwork.

Where principals can focus on leading their teachers to be better all the time.

Where educators are respected for the professionals they are, and for the profound impact they have on young lives.

Teachers change our lives; what they teach us stays with us all our lives.

I have a sense of humour because my year 6 teacher encouraged it.

She also supported my guerrilla action campaign to have two mixed lines rather than a boys' line and girls' line.

That early win changed what I thought was possible.

I see the world differently because my art teacher gave me a lifelong love of art.

When I travelled to Egypt as a 21 year old I visited Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el Bahri and I remember, unbelievably, being able to understand the story the bas relief sculptures told because I'd been taught history so well.

Something I'd been taught in a classroom in Jannali, years ago and a world away, came alive for me.

I love Jane Austen and Shakespeare and Gerard Manly Hopkins because of my brilliant English teachers.

School education has to be more than just passing exams.

It helps us find our passions in life.

It opens up new worlds and new ways of thinking.

And for kids like me, raised by parents who had little opportunity for formal education....

...who came to Australia with little more than a small suitcase, it represents the hope of a job and a pathway to financial security.

Education moves us, it inspires us.

But Labor's vision for education isn't driven by sentiment, or emotion.

It runs deeper even than our faith in social justice.

Investing in education matters to us not just because we believe that every person deserves the dignity and opportunity of a decent education - but also because we know education is the foundation of our national prosperity.

And we will be a fairer nation, and a more successful one, when we get this right.

Education is how we create new jobs and train people to do them.

Education is how we break the disadvantage, poverty and inequality that can hold us back.

Education is how we bring new industries to our shores and export new products to the world.

And education is how we position Australia to thrive in our region, on our terms – fair wages and secure jobs, a smart, skilled, productive economy and a fair and

cohesive society.

And speaking of our region, in the Asian Century many of our neighbours are investing heavily in education and achieving extraordinary results.

Vietnam is, officially, still a developing country but it outperformed Australia and the OECD average in the latest PISA results in maths and science.

The nations in our region are investing in education for the same reason we should be: because education is one of the most powerful drivers of long run productivity. Education is also – as Gough Whitlam called it - “the great instrument for the promotion of equality”.

That's particularly true of public education. Inclusiveness and excellence are not mutually exclusive.

They are partners in unlocking the potential of all our children.

The pursuit of excellence in our public schools meant that a person like Michael Kirby could become the foremost intellect on the High Court, or Peter Doherty could come from Indooroopilly High to win a Nobel Prize in Medicine.

Every parent wants to see their own child prosper and succeed, but we also have an economic and a moral interest in *all* children succeeding.

If I become Education Minister I want an education for every Australian child that is as good as the education I want for my own children.

That means every school must be a great school.

That means parents shouldn't have to drive across town or work a second job to pay school fees or buy coaching because they're worried about the standard of education at the school down the road.

Not every school can have ten rugby fields or a rifle range but every parent should be confident that the local public school will educate their child as well as the nation's most elite private school.

That there will be books and computers and sporting equipment and buildings that show the value we place as a community on education.

And most importantly world class teaching.

If parents want a religious education or private schooling for their child, then Labor absolutely supports that choice.

We respect every parent's right to choose the school and system that best suits their child.

The reality is that many families have children in more than one system.

They choose the school that best meets the needs of each individual child.

But the truth is there's no genuine choice if your local public school is struggling.

### **Liberal Failure**

When Labor was in government we introduced the Schooling Resource Standard so that there would be an objective measure of the cost of properly educating a student – including loadings for factors like socio-economic status, remoteness,

size of the school, number of Indigenous students, disability and English language proficiency.

This was to be an end to the school funding wars – something we could all agree on.

The Liberals gave lip service to this idea in opposition and trashed it in government.

In their first few months in power, the Liberals cut \$30 billion over the decade from projected school funding – and boasted about the ‘savings’ in their first budget – and while they’ve changed Prime Ministers and Ministers many times, the funding has never been restored.

Labor campaigned alongside Catholic and Independent schools against the Liberals’ cuts to their funding.

And yes, we are pleased that after years of denying that these cuts even existed, Scott Morrison has reversed them.

But this means that, in the years ahead, the Liberals’ cuts now fall entirely on public schools.

Under the Government’s formula all private schools will reach or exceed their fair funding level.

But no public school ever will.

And it’s public schools that educate two thirds of students in this country: 2.5 million children.



And it's public schools that educate the majority of kids in poorer families, children with a disability and Indigenous kids.

The children for whom the extra resources and support make the most difference.

### **Labor's plan**

The Government often claims that funding doesn't make all that much difference.

Tell a parent working long hours to pay school fees that funding doesn't matter.

If funding doesn't matter, why are schools already ordering their democracy sausages for election day fundraisers?

Why am I in the kitchen at 11 o'clock on a weeknight baking cakes for the cake stall?

We know from all the Australian and international evidence that money matters.

That's why Labor will match the funding the Government has restored to non-government schools and vitally, invest an additional \$14 billion in public schools over the decade.

An additional \$3.3 billion will be invested in public schools in the first three school years alone and public school parents can already look at the estimates for their school on our FairGoForSchools website.

But critical as that extra funding is, it's what we do with it that matters.

When Labor was last in government we introduced measures to improve teaching, results and performance: a Schooling Resource Standard, NAPLAN testing and public reporting, a National Curriculum, Australian Teaching Standards and Principals' Standards and a national school building program.

We insisted states and territories increased their funding too.

This Government said that was just 'red tape'.

And in the past six years, enough time for a student to start and finish high school, there's been no action on school standards.

The federal government doesn't run schools but it does have an enormous impact on the quality of schooling.

Today I want to focus on three priority areas where Labor would use the powers of the Commonwealth for the benefit of students.

First, teaching.

I want our high school duxes and our university medallists competing to get into teaching degrees in the same way they compete to get into medicine, dentistry and vet science.

Competing in the same way, for the same reasons – because it's respected, valued, rewarding work.

I want highly successful professionals looking for a way to give back to their community, retraining as teachers.

But at the moment the marks to get into teaching degrees continue to fall and fewer high achievers are choosing teaching courses.

Parents, and even teachers, are telling students they shouldn't "waste" a high ATAR on a teaching degree.

That is a tragedy and the beginning of a dangerous spiral.

It undermines the status of teaching, diminishes the attractiveness of teaching degrees, and acts as a disincentive to high achievers.

It is also a waste of students' time and money to allow them to complete a teaching degree if they are unsuitable to teach.

Extraordinarily, nearly one in ten teaching students reach the end of their degree unable to pass a relatively simple literacy and numeracy test.

(To give you an idea of its difficulty, a sample question shows you two times on a clock and asks you to calculate how much time has passed between them.)

That is why a future Labor government will target entry to teaching degrees to the top 30 per cent of academic achievers.

We obviously need to ensure there are pathways into teaching for those who might have struggled with their schooling for any number of reasons but remain academically capable of teaching our children.

For example, before it was abolished by this Government, we had the successful More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers program – because we know one of the best ways of getting children in remote communities to go to school is

being taught by great role models from their own community.

I want to work cooperatively with the university sector to get this balance right.

However, ultimately as Federal Minister for Education I would have the ability to cap places in teaching degrees - and that option will remain a live one in any future discussions.

Teaching should be a first choice, not a fall back.

That's why a future Labor government will invest \$45 million to give our nation's top achievers cash bonuses of up to \$40,000 to encourage them into teaching.

Year 12 students with exceptional marks and people with outstanding achievement at university or in the workforce will compete for up to one thousand bursaries each year.

The tax-free bursaries of \$10,000 per annum will be paid to recipients for the duration of a teaching degree, up to a maximum of four years.

This sends a strong message that we value teaching as a profession.

### **Support teachers to deliver outstanding teaching throughout their careers**

Of course, we already have many thousands of wonderful teachers in our schools.

It's our job to keep them there – in our classrooms.

Too many leave the profession frustrated and burnt out.

Or leave the classroom for an administrative or bureaucratic role, because it's the only way they can get a pay rise.

We will rejuvenate the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers program, providing a career path for teachers, which recognises exceptional teaching and uses the skills of exceptional teachers to guide and mentor their colleagues.

And fair funding for schools will allow real investment in continuing professional development for teachers, so they can be lifelong learners, improving their teaching throughout their professional lives.

### **National Principals Academy**

School leadership is the second area where we intend to focus our efforts.

The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence - or Gonski 2 - indicated that high performing school leaders add between two and seven months' growth in student learning in a single year.

And Professor John Hattie's research says that "Collective Teacher Efficacy" has the highest impact on students. That means leadership to get the best out of every teacher so we can give the best education to every child.

However, Australia faces a looming shortfall in school leadership.

Almost three quarters of Australian principals are over 50 years old and the proportion of principals over 60 grew by 10 percentage points (from 8 to 18 per cent) in recent years.

A state by state and system by system approach to identifying, training and supporting school leaders is haphazard and acts as a potential barrier to movement between the systems.

This is a national challenge that needs national leadership.

So, a Labor government would seek to work with principals' organisations, the states and territories, catholic and independent schools to provide the highest quality training and support.

That is why today I'm committing a Shorten Labor government to investing \$30 million to establish a National Principals Academy.

Training will be available to current and aspiring school principals, as well as other school leaders.

There will be a range of courses offered by the Academy, from standalone subjects to programs that run for a couple of years.

Organisations with a proven track record in school leadership education will be able to tender to deliver these courses.

When I talk to principals I hear so many concerns about health and wellbeing.

I support greater school autonomy when we're talking about decisions like staffing, speciality subjects, student welfare and so on.

But the reforms of the last decade have too often only given Principals autonomy over the paperwork, diverting their time and energy.

We want our school leaders to focus on instructional leadership –getting the best from their teaching staff, so that their students get the very best education.

## **Disability**

This week the parliament has been talking about a royal commission into the abuse, neglect and discrimination faced by people with a disability.

Too much of that abuse, neglect and discrimination takes place in our schools.

Every school should have the resources to teach every child

No child should be turned away from their local school because the school feels it cannot provide adequately for the needs of that child.

This is one of the biggest challenges we have before us, and the third area where the Commonwealth should lead.

Of course, this starts with training to confidentially address the learning needs of all students.

That means better initial teacher education and better continuing professional development and mentoring for principals, teachers and educational support staff.

It also means better funding and clear accountability about how extra funding is used to make a difference to a child's learning.

The numbers of students assessed as eligible for disability funding in Australia has doubled in recent years from about 220,000 to around 450,000.

But under the Liberals, funding has only increased by about seven per cent.

That means many students with disability are missing out on the extra help they need.

It's completely unacceptable.

That's why Labor will increase funding for students with disability by \$300 million over the three calendar years from 2020.

Our commitment is in addition to the disability loading included as part of needs based school funding.

This increased disability loading will help students get specialised teaching and support, pay for necessary equipment and alternations to school facilities and provide access to modern technologies that enable learning.

It is a significant contribution towards making sure that students with disability can reach their full potential.

We need to start with the belief that every child can learn and progress, and that every child should be safe, nurtured and challenged wherever they go to school.

### **The best school system in the world**

The commitments I've made today build on the reforms Labor has already announced.

Labor will work with the states and territories to set out our new national goals for education in a Sydney Declaration.



We'll invest \$280 million into an Evidence Institute for Schools, so high-quality, independent research drives our education system, the same way it does health.

And our plan will see teachers and principals engaged in leading this research the way doctors direct clinical trials.

We'll get more Australian students studying Asian languages to ensure the next generation is prepared for the jobs and economic opportunities of the Asian century.

And we'll invest in community language schools so that Australian students can learn the language of their parents and grandparents because the earlier children learn a second language, the more likely they will be fluent.

We will ensure every Aussie kid has access to swimming and water safety lessons in primary school.

We'll look at how to improve the insights we get from tests like NAPLAN, and how we can better focus on the progress of students and schools over time.

We'll have a sensible conversation about how and what we test, and how results are reported fairly and accurately and most importantly, in a way that contributes to student learning and does not mean teachers spend more time on paperwork than talking to children.

And we will support organisations that improve school attendance, increase Year 12 completions and employment rates among Indigenous students.

## **Closing**

When my oldest children moved from primary school to high school I literally lay awake at night worrying about which school would be best for them.

Most parents are desperate to make the right decisions about their children's education.

If I become Australia's education minister, I want every parent to have the confidence that every Australian school is a great school.

For me, that will be the measure of our success as a government.

And I believe it will guarantee of our success as a nation.

And I'm confident we can – and will – succeed.

**MEDIA CONTACT: DAN DORAN 0427 464 350**