

**THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
RESPONSE
TO
ACSSO'S ELECTION QUESTIONS**

1.0 FUNDING OF SCHOOLS

Q1. Will you make need the key factor in the next round of education funding?

Labor is committed to funding schools on the basis of need and fairness and providing certainty to all schools about funding schools arrangements.

As part of its Education Revolution, a Rudd Labor Government has committed to:

- not take a single dollar off any individual school;
- not disturb the current schools indexation arrangements; and
- adopt the existing Socio-Economic Status (SES) funding model for the next funding quadrennium, from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2012.

The effect of this is to deliver real funding certainty to all schools and school systems.

This commitment amounts to a minimum, upfront \$42 billion certain funding commitment to schools over the four year period.

For school systems, Federal Labor's commitment means that the base funding position will be the same in real terms. For schools, Federal Labor's commitment means it will not be possible for any individual school to be worse off.

Put simply, Federal Labor will only make additions to schools funding, not subtractions.

But more than certainty is required. What is also required is a greater investment in schools and schooling.

That is why Labor has already made funding commitments of half a billion dollars for early childhood education and a \$2.5 billion commitment to provide trades training centres in Australia's secondary schools.

Labor also sees areas of especial funding need. There is a need for additional investment in primary schools, particularly needy government primary schools, rural, regional and remote education, special education, and Indigenous education.

Further announcements will be made in the course of the current election campaign. Please refer to www.alp.org.au periodically for details.

Q2. Will you revive the Investing in Our Schools Programme or its equivalent based on the principles of parent involvement in the design and promotion of the programme, the assessment of the school submissions and the writing of submissions made by each school?

Federal Labor has already committed to significant additional infrastructure funding in Australian schools.

- \$2.5 billion for trades training centres in secondary schools.
- A \$62.5 million *Local Schools Working Together* plan to encourage Government and Non-Government schools to share infrastructure and resources.

When Labor released its *Local Schools Working Together* plan Labor said that "*Labor is committed to providing substantial infrastructure funding for all Australian schools, through a Schools Infrastructure Funding Program...*"

More detail about Labor's schools infrastructure funding program will be announced over the course of the election period.

School community involvement is an essential component in identifying infrastructure needs in schools.

One of the strengths of the existing Investing in Our Schools Program is that the school community gets a say in the infrastructure needs of an individual school. Labor will ensure this school community role is present in its school infrastructure funding program.

Q3. Will you co-operate with state governments in the management of the programme?

Yes. Labor in Government will work with the State and Territory Government's to ensure that there is a cooperative and coherent approach to the management and implementation of Labor's schools infrastructure funding program.

Equally, Labor in Government will work cooperatively with the Catholic and Independent school systems to ensure a cooperative and coherent approach to Labor's infrastructure funding program as it relates to Catholic and Independent schools.

While there is a clear role for the local school community to identify the infrastructure needs of an individual school, State and Territory Governments, Catholic and Independent school systems must also be involved to ensure an overall coherent approach to improving infrastructure in our schools.

Q4 How will you work with state governments to build certainty and long term planning into education funding and decision making?

The Howard Government has refused to work collaboratively and cooperatively with the States and Territories to improve educational outcomes. Instead the Howard Government has resorted to blaming the States and Territories and not accepted the responsibility of national leadership.

As well, the Howard Government has been preoccupied with micromanaging inputs, including whether schools have flagpoles and whether Ministers have their names on a plaque, rather than focusing on lifting national educational outcomes.

There is a broad range of interests in education: the Commonwealth, the States, the Territories, public and private interests, religious and secular interests. We must ensure that all of these interests work cooperatively to lift national educational outcomes.

A Rudd Labor Government will work collaboratively and cooperatively with the States and Territories and the Catholic and Independent school sectors to negotiate a new four year funding agreement for 2009-2012 to provide schools with financial certainty and the ability to plan for the long term. Labor's focus will be on achieving better national educational outcomes.

2.0 PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

Q1. Will you continue to fund ACSSO with the Grant-in-Aid/DEST research funding to allow the peak parent body to represent its members around Australia on key bodies, in key forums and to conduct research and other activities which ensure that parents are given an effective national voice in education decisions?

Yes. A Rudd Labor Government will continue to fund ACSSO with the existing Grant-in-Aid funding arrangements.

Q2. Will you fund (Cost \$174,500 per annum) the Parent-School and Community Partnership Bureau which ACSSO and the Australian Parents Council will use to build and support parent-school partnerships across the country?

A Rudd Labor Government will provide up to \$800,000 over four years to fund the development of a Parent-School and Community Partnership Bureau along the lines outlined by ACSSO and the Australian Parents Council in previous consultations with the Shadow Minister for Education and Training.

Labor recognises that while formal education settings are an important part of a child's education, greater focus should also be placed on bridging the education experience a child receives at school and the experience a child receives at home. Bringing teachers and parents closer together in the education of children is a key factor in improving national educational outcomes.

Labor will work with the ACSSO and the APC and other parent groups, and principal associations to ensure that the design and implementation of the Bureau best meets the needs of children, parents and schools and becomes a valuable aid in improving national educational outcomes.

Q3. Will you appoint and support the national parent organisations (ACSSO and APC) to boards and key reference groups such as curriculum and training authorities that help guide the Education Minister's policy decisions and the policy deliberations of his or her Department?

Members and or representatives of the ACSSO and the APC are currently appointed to a range of boards and reference groups on a number of important educational bodies. As a matter of general principle, this practice will continue.

Labor regards it as important for parents and parent organisations to be involved in the consultation and development of a number of education initiatives and policy areas, for example improving teacher training and improving school curriculum.

Q4. Will you continue to fund the highly successful twice yearly forums between the Minister, DEST and ACSSO/APC which provide an opportunity for briefings and consultations on key education programmes?

Yes.