

Tasmanian Association of State School Parents and Friends Management Committee Meeting 13 February 2010 – Labor's Response to Questions

1. What measures do you intend to take to turn the Post Year 10 reforms into a success?

The Labor Government was not prepared to accept the lowest retention rates in the nation and therefore undertook reform to the post year 10 sector.

Recently the Auditor-General released a statement expressing satisfaction with the reliability of processes used to produce post-Year 10 enrolment and attainment data.

The Auditor-General confirmed that the official August census data provided by the Department of Education also showed a 12% increase in enrolment.

The Labor Government has listened to teachers' concerns with the post years 10 reforms and delivered, initially with an Action Plan in October last year.

The Shared Services project lead by Jenny Gale has been very effective in meeting with teachers and fixing problems.

In January I announced a revised leadership structure for the Tasmanian Polytechnic in 2010 with a greater emphasis on local campus leadership.

As a response to feedback, a revised leadership structure will operate in 2010 with a greater emphasis on local campus leadership.

In 2010, Student Co-ordinators will become Campus Leaders. They will be assisted by Learning Leaders to lead the pastoral care and support of students on campus. Learning Leaders will now be based at each campus of the Polytechnic where there are 16-19 year old students.

Further support for our younger students will be provided through the increased time allocated for Student Support Leaders to work closely with students and their teachers to ensure a positive 'on-campus' experience.

Staff have also expressed a desire for more responsive decision making at the local level. Change leaders at each campus will be the first point of contact for staff on professional learning and issues relating to their daily work.

I announced recently that rural, regional and disadvantaged communities across the State will benefit from an increased presence of the Tasmanian Polytechnic and Academy through a \$16.35 million boost to rural education

2. How will you ensure that parental representation at the Academy and Polytechnic campuses will be implemented to ensure true parent input?

The Academy held parent forums towards the end of last year at Don, Hellyer, Newstead and Hobart campuses. The intention is to have forums each term in 2010 as requested at the Newstead forum.

However, there was recognition that there is a different expectation of parent involvement when dealing with 16-19 year olds.

There will also be the normal level of contact in regard to orientation evenings, parent-teacher nights and direct contact via classroom teacher.

Changes in the leadership structure of the Polytechnic is recognition of pastoral care needs of 16-19 year olds, which of course, involves parents.

Labor commits to working closely with the Tasmanian State Parents and Friends and the Boards of each organisation to ensure parental engagement on each campus of the new organisations.

3. How do you plan to renew secondary school education?

A Labor Government will extend Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap to ensure those students who most need extra literacy and numeracy support in years 7-10 will receive it. The Labor Government will invest \$12 million over four years in high schools around the state.

Students in Years 7-10 will benefit from the directed resources to ensure a significant increase in the number of children finishing their high school education with functional literacy and numeracy skills.

Elements of support could include:

- Additional teacher allocation to work directly with students most needing to improve their literacy skills
- Senior staff allocation – so the Principal can lead a whole school literacy improvement approach.
- Additional professional learning support
- Increased allocation of specialist support staff

Big Picture schools focus on teaching one child at a time, offering a more personalised approach to learning both in the classroom and the community.

Australia's First 'Big Picture' School will be built in Hobart's Northern suburbs (\$1.35 million).

The school, on the Goodwood Primary site, will have around 120 students split up into small class groups.

The school will operate independently but will be linked to a new high school, Montrose Bay High, which will be formed in 2010 with the amalgamation of Claremont High and Rosetta High on the Rosetta High site.

The Flexible Learning School will offer personalised learning that meets all learning needs, including digital and online learning.

It will cater for students who need additional learning, including highly able and gifted students, those who can't attend school for a variety of physical, medical or geographical reasons, and students for whom regular school isn't a viable option.

Services and courses will be provided online, using mobile devices such as handhelds, iPods and other MP3 players, by telephone, by post and in person.

The school will offer both full time and dual enrolments where students can combine flexible learning with attendance at a primary or high school.

From 2011, Flexible Learning Tasmania, (and within this program the Tasmanian Virtual School), will provide:

- An expanded and expanding range of high quality teacher-supported online programs and courses targeted at the full range of student capacity and need
- Resources to Learning Services, and through these to schools to implement and develop more flexible learning opportunities for students
- Enrolment in either a northern or southern campus for students who are travelling, pregnant, isolated or ill
- Teacher support to students in the Royal Hobart and Launceston General Hospitals and resource support to Home Educators
- Free access to an expanding range of current digital curriculum materials for classroom teachers

The Northern Vocational School is open to students already on Australian school-based apprenticeships and new students, or those who are not apprentices.

Staff is a mix of qualified teachers and qualified tradespeople working together and is a flexible environment.

The school, which has a Launceston and Burnie campus, will offer state of the art training across five different trade training areas – Hospitality, Building and Construction, Metals, Electrical and Refrigeration and Automotive.

As well as providing the best quality technology for practical training, the school will provide a flexible learning environment using online delivery.

2010 will be a transition year offering places for year 11 and 12 students, but after that the school will be open to students from year 9 to 12.

The Northern Vocational School is an interim name. Under the Education Act, each school must have a school association and an interim School Association has been formed for 2010. The School Association will have the opportunity to recommend a permanent name for the school.

4. How will you address the shortfall of special needs funding?

Under a Labor Government the level of resources for educational and support services for students with special needs will have increased by more than \$28 million since 2004 to a total of \$59.8 million for the 2010 school year.

A major new initiative for 2010 has seen the implementation of improved funding for teachers in special schools. An additional \$930 000 will improve the teacher staffing ratio in special schools.

The Labor Government will continue to support students with special needs, their parents and teachers and support staff who work with them.

We have achieved much but there is always more to do and we will be making further announcements in this area throughout the campaign.

5. How do you intend to improve education in the early years?

The first sixteen Child and Family Centres have been announced as part of the Government's \$76 million strategy to help our children get the best possible start in life.

The State Government's \$12.6 million Launching into Learning initiative focuses on schools forming relationships with families before children start kindergarten.

The 2009 Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessments for the program show that children who participated in the program have significantly improved.

Earlier this year 95 per cent of the 477 students who participated in Launching into Learning in 2007 undertook their first PIPS assessment.

An analysis of their results compared to the children in the same schools who did not participate in Launching into Learning indicates a significant improvement in reading and numeracy outcomes for these students.

The improvement was similar for numeracy.

The early years' program has helped improve students' kindergarten development check results.

Currently 76.8 per cent of participating students are achieving all 21 markers of the Kindergarten Development Check, surpassing the 2010 Tasmania Together target of 76 per cent.

The Kindergarten Development Check (KDC) helps kindergarten teachers monitor and observe important skills for learning and determine whether students are making appropriate progress for their age.

Skills in the KDC include thinking and problem solving, listening, speaking and understanding, following instructions, gross and fine motor skills and personal and social skills.

The number of students involved in Launching Into Learning continues to grow.

In 2007, 477 students in 42 schools participated in Launching Into Learning. Now more than 3000 children and 2600 parents and carers in 121 schools state-wide are participating regularly.

6. What will your party do to ensure that students absenteeism will be significantly reduced in the next three years?

More than \$770,000 will be invested over the next four years to help keep students in education and training beyond Year 10.

This will be direct action to identify early leavers and encourage them back into education and training;

Early school leavers will be identified by matching Year 10 completion records with Year 11 and 12 enrolments in the following March each year.

Those who have dropped out will then be telephoned to try to identify the reasons why they are not in school or training.

Efforts will then focus on developing ways to re-engage these young people and help them to overcome the barriers to further education and training.

Schools have various strategies for following up absent students, including phone home and using SMS.

Learning Services provide additional support, particularly for those students who are chronically absent.

This support includes flexible educational provision such as Youth Arc PLP (Ed Zone) and Alt Ed for students who are not achieving success with mainstream education for a variety of reasons and require a more personalised approach as part of a long-term strategy of re-engaging them into mainstream schooling.

The Department of Education also works with other agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania Police and Youth Justice to help identify some of the causes of truancy and provide strategic planning, networks and support to help students at risk of not attending school.

7. How will you improve teacher quality for both new teachers and current staff?

An innovative program designed to help aspiring teachers gain more practical experience will be expanded to the North-West in 2010

The Partnerships in Teaching Excellence program would be run in the region in 2010 following its success in southern Tasmania.

Partnerships in Teaching Excellence is a collaborative and innovative approach to support high quality teaching in Tasmania through the whole cycle- from pre-service to early career and beyond.

It is the result of a partnership between the Department of Education and the University of Tasmania.

As part of the partnership, 18 second year University of Tasmania Bachelor of Teaching students were this year mentored by five experienced Department of Education colleague teachers.

A review of the Partnerships in Teaching Excellence program found that student teachers, principals and colleague teachers were highly supportive of the program and wanted to see it expanded.

It also found that participation in the partnership program enabled principals and teachers to grow professionally and develop on-going professional learning networks.