



HON MICHELLE O'BYRNE MP
DEPUTY LABOR LEADER

Ms Lisa Gillard
President
Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations inc.
info@tasso.org.au

Dear Lisa

Thank you for giving Labor the opportunity to respond to the Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations inc. (TASSO) Election Position Statement.

Labor believes Tasmanian students should have access to the highest quality education and training.

We see education as the foundation that allows people to achieve their full potential.

Labor recognises the valuable role of TASSO and the guidance and advocacy it provides to parents and students and assistance to school associations and parent groups.

Below are responses to specific questions raised by TASSO and as always, please get in contact if you have any further matters you wish to raise.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michelle O'Byrne'.

Michelle O'Byrne MP
DEPUTY LABOR LEADER
MEMBER FOR BASS

26 February 2018

CC: the Hon Rebecca White MP

TASSO Election Position Statement – Labor Response

Senior Secondary College Funding TASSO affirms its absolute support for the continuing operation of Senior Secondary Colleges in Tasmania, including offering at least the current levels of curriculum choice, student support services and activities. An increase in funding for infrastructure, provision of student accommodation, transport and staffing. TASSO does not support the introduction of Years 11 and 12 into urban schools.

Response

A Labor Government will not wind back year 11 and 12 in extension schools, but we will ensure that students are not disadvantaged in course choice or their ability to transition to higher learning.

Labor understands that distance is a barrier for some students to continue their education. That is why when in government we facilitated the extension of rural high schools to year 12.

We are also strong believers in a vibrant and fully funded Tasmanian public college system and the opportunities it provides to students. Labor believes that there is a better way for schools to deliver improved outcomes and clear pathways for students in their learning journey than simply extending all schools to years 11 and 12.

Labor knows that many schools and communities are already working collaboratively and wants to enhance and formalise this.

Students will enrol once in year 7 through to year 12 at a multi-campus school and will be able to access a full range of course options.

Labor also wants to ensure that no students have been disadvantaged as a result of the extension of schools to year 11 and 12 and to evaluate whether the rollout has achieved stated aims and assess whether pathways are being achieved. Which is why we will conduct a comprehensive audit of the rollout and make the results public in our first year in government.

You can read more about this and Labor's quality plan to Make Tasmania the Education State at <https://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.au/embedding-a-culture-of-lifelong-learning/>

Qualified Support Staff

State schools need more Psychologists, Speech Pathologists and Therapists, Social Workers, Student Support Workers and School Nurses at all school types. As well as

an increase to the number of Teacher Aids, with better employment conditions and formal training, especially to meet the needs of students with disabilities and additional needs.

Response

Labor will invest in an additional 30 FTE support staff like school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and school social workers to ensure that the services students need to achieve their best are wrapped around them in a school environment.

This will also give teachers the time they need to focus on teaching. Labor will work with schools to identify which professional support staff they need in their school communities.

Labor also recognises the invaluable support that teacher assistants and administrative staff provide in schools.

Teachers are struggling to juggle the level of administrative work placed on them which is why Labor will provide funding for 30 FTE teacher assistants and administration staff to reduce the pressure on our teachers.

This commitment will allow resources to be allocated to areas of greatest need around the state.

You can read more at <https://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.au/restoring-teacher-numbers-2/>

Student Assistant Scheme (STAS)

TASSO policy is that state schools should be free of fees and levies. Within the current system a review of STAS and school fees is called for.

Response

Labor has committed to provide free universal public education from kindergarten to year 12. Labor will provide direct assistance to schools to replace the revenue previously raised through school fees and levies.

We have also committed to use our previously announced review of school fees to develop a new funding model for all schools over the course of the next four years, in consultation with school communities.

Labor's commitment is about fairness and equity.

You can read more at <https://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.au/free-universal-public-education/>

School Transport

TASSO policy calls for free transport for all students attending the nearest or designated Government school of appropriate level and that the safety of students in transit is of the utmost importance. Where Year 11 and 12 is being provided at the local school, free bus transport must be provided to that local school and the designated Year 11 and 12 State College.

Response

Under a Labor Government all students attending their nearest public or school of their chosen faith will be provided with free public transport.

Labor has allocated \$9 million for initial concession support.

You can read more at <https://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.au/making-education-fairer/>

School Buildings, Grounds & Facilities

For many years schools have questioned the process for allocating infrastructure and maintenance spending by government. TASSO supports greater transparency and accountability, in the allocation of resourcing to state schools requiring upgrades for aging infrastructure or additional facilities, to cope with expansion in school populations or additional requirements for students with additional needs. A process which is publicly available that is used to formulate upgrades and maintenance is required. The Government should also conduct an annual survey and publish a register of the physical resources of every State School. School communities must not be left for years to shoulder the responsibility for extensive upgrades. There needs to be a fairer system to ensure that urgent corrective action is taken, regarding any essential works, not presently being met or adequately planned for.

Response

Labor is committed to ensuring that upgrades that need to be undertaken are based on need and that schools and school communities have clear information on when they can expect upgrades to take place. In Labor's Quality Education Plan policy we have committed to long term planning of infrastructure priorities in schools across the state. We will commit to a transparent process for the allocation of capital works funding to ensure that it goes to schools based on genuine need.

You can read more about Labor's commitment at <https://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.au/building-our-education-base/>

Parent Engagement

The increasing role and function of TASSO is consistent with the state government's increasing acknowledgement and engagement of parents and community as an essential element of children's learning. Recognising the value of parent and community engagement in education through programs such as Launching into Learning (LiL) and Learning in Families Together (LIFT) reflects this acknowledgement.

Recommendation 1 Recognise and acknowledge parents as the first and primary educators of their children and empower and allow them to exercise their rights as educators.

Recommendation 2 To recognise the importance of parental engagement in a child's education.

Recommendation 3 To recognise and understand the barriers that can inhibit parental engagement in our schools.

Recommendation 4 The ability to change and educate the system as to the importance of parental engagement in a child's lifelong learning.

Recommendation 5 Recognise that educators need to have parental engagement implemented into their training.

Response

Labor understands the importance of parental engagement in educating children, we know that they are the first and primary educators of children.

Labor is committed to embedding a culture of life long learning in our children beginning at birth. That is why we are investing in proven strategies that are tailored to meet the needs of their communities.

A Labor Government will build six new Child and Family Centres in its first term. Child and Family Centres have transformed the lives of children and their families by giving them better access to learning, health services and support.

Labor does not support lowering the school starting age, we are committed to having a genuine conversation with communities about the barriers that families face in accessing early learning.

Labor has identified the need to invest in new early childhood teachers and the Early Childhood Intervention Service from funding previously set aside to lower the school starting age.

The implementation of further solutions that address the needs of families and communities will be informed through consultation.

You can read more about Labor's commitment to lifelong learning at <https://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.au/embedding-a-culture-of-lifelong-learning/>

Funding for Parents.

Parents are required to be part of special committees, Reference Groups, Policy Committees and Steering Committees as well as Principal Selection Panels. It is unsatisfactory not to fund parents who take on these tasks without compensation, whilst DoE staff and others with whom they work receive salaries and reimbursement of expenses. It is an inequitable position and may limit the cohort of parents or carers available to be to carry out such roles on behalf of the state school parents of Tasmania.

Response

Labor does not have a policy to remunerate parents for their role on special committees and panels.

However, I hope it is demonstrated in the policy agenda that we are taking to the election that Labor is committed to engaging positively with TASSO to progress issues of concern.

In Government we would commit to working with TASSO to progress this issue.