

Will Hodgman MP

PREMIER OF TASMANIA



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Ms Lisa Gillard
President
Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations Inc.
PO Box 183
LINDISFARNE TAS 7015
Email: info@tasso.org.au

Dear Lisa

Thank you for your recent letter outlining TASSO's election priorities for the upcoming state election.

I have pleasure in responding on behalf of all Tasmanian Liberal Members and Candidates.

Investing in education and the future of our children is the best investment a government can make.

This is the premise that has underpinned the Liberal Government's commitment to education over the past four years, and the premise from which we will continue to invest, if re-elected, into the future.

Education has been at the heart of my Government and, as such, we have overseen some of the most substantial and successful reforms to Tasmania's education system in decades.

These reforms include the extension of high schools to year 12, and the introduction of an entirely new Education Act, which, for the first time, legislates a right to 13 years of compulsory education, and an expectation that young people remain in school until they complete year 12, or its equivalent, or turn 18.

A blue shield-shaped logo with the text "Building your future" inside. The shield has a white outline and a small white dot at the top center.

Building
your
future

We have backed up our commitment to education with consecutive record investments in education each and every year. This has resulted in 38 schools extended to year 12, more than 70 more professional support staff and 107 more teachers in our schools.

Further, we have increased our focus and investment on the importance of parental engagement in education through the Launching in Families Together initiative (LIFT), which is showing excellent results in 80 school communities around the state.

As a result of our focus on education over the past four years, we are seeing excellent improvements in our education results, with more students staying at school longer and achieving more while they are there. These are reflected in improvements in long standing recognised educational performance measures.

For example, our NAPLAN results have showed some promising shifts; retention of students to year 12 has increased from 67.1% under the previous government, to 73.4% in 2016; and attainment of the TCE has increased from 46.5% under the previous government to 56.4% in 2016.

These are excellent improvements, however, I'm acutely aware that not all Tasmanians are feeling the benefit of our focus on education, and I want that to change.

This is why, if re-elected a majority Liberal Government will make the most significant state investment in education in history, including –

- The employment of 358 more staff in Tasmanian schools over 6 years, with 277 to be employed within the 4 years of the next term of government. Of these staff, 250 will be newly employed teachers and 80 of them will be for additional teacher assistance in the early years.
- Additional teachers to provide a Literacy Coach in every school, to properly staff and resource school farms, to extend every school to year 12, and to progressively remove Principals from the school staffing formula giving them more time for school leadership.
- A strong focus on early year's education, reflecting the fact that investing more in the early years of education can set children up for a more successful journey through education, and a more successful life, particularly for those who are disadvantaged.
- The provision of a free year of pre-school to vulnerable or disadvantaged children through a partnership with the Early Childhood Education and Care sector.
- Construction and staffing of 6 new Early Learning Hubs, incorporating all the services of a Child and Family centre, together with Early Childhood Education and Care facilities and Kindergarten to Grade 2 education, collocated on a school site.
- Investing \$179 million in infrastructure over 6 years including the construction of a new primary school at Legana, a new 7-12 high school at Brighton, rebuilds of Cosgrove, Sorell and Penguin high schools to year 12 and investments in College infrastructure.

In relation to your call for specific commitments, I provide the following:

Senior Secondary College Funding – Our \$179 million investment in education infrastructure includes significant investments in college infrastructure such upgrades to Hellyer and Launceston college science facilities. This investment aligns with our commitment that we will

extend all Tasmanian Schools to year 12, and Senior Secondary Colleges will remain open, as an integral part of the Tasmanian education system. I recently wrote to all Senior Secondary College School Associations affirming this commitment.

Qualified Support Staff – Since coming to government, we have employed over 70 more professional support staff including School Nurses, Psychologists, Social Workers, and Speech Pathologists. This includes our most recent commitment to the employment of 14 additional full time equivalent Psychologists, Social Workers and Speech Pathologists. These staff were employed late in 2017, and as such, their impacts will only begin to be felt in the system throughout the 2018 school year.

Student Assistance Scheme – The Department of Education is currently undertaking a review of fees and levies with a view to achieving greater levels of equity between schools and across the State as a part of ongoing continuous improvement of the system. I understand TASSO was recently briefed on the review, including the scope of the consultation and TASSO involvement. If re-elected, our intention is that the review recommendations would be implemented in a timely manner.

School Transport - Student transport is an important priority for the Government. In line with the government's commitment to reducing the cost of living, there will be no student bus fare increase in 2018. Further to that, if re-elected,, we will maintain the long standing student travel arrangements instigated under the previous government: These include:

- Provision of a large number of bus services across the State, the largest proportion of which are dedicated to students.
- Provision of rural School Buses and Special Needs services on a free-to-the-user basis.
- Free travel on fare paying services (for those eligible for concessions) and a large number of Tasmanian families who are on lower incomes already receive free student travel through the existing concession structure.
- Deeply discounted student fares offered regardless of distance travelled, with a further discount of 20% for students purchasing multi-trip tickets or paying via electronic ticketing systems. These fares are considerably less than the cost of transport.

School Buildings, Grounds and facilities – Investing in school infrastructure has been a priority, and indeed a hallmark of my government. Over consecutive budgets, we have invested over \$110 million across the forward estimates in education infrastructure upgrades. This has been necessary due to the lack of strategic investment undertaken under the previous government. While it's been wonderful to see school communities around the state benefiting from the upgrades, we understand there remain many schools in need of funding. Our election policies include a commitment to \$179 million in infrastructure funding including new school builds, re-builds, college infrastructure and school upgrades.

We further anticipate existing capital works priority rating processes to continue in schools. This process occurs through the Department undertaking a Capital Works Review Process every year whereby all public schools can apply for Capital Works. There are established assessment criteria that each school needs to address in lodging a submission. These criteria form the basis of the assessment process and priority rating for schools.

In addition to existing departmental processes, individual members of a community often highlight the importance of capital works at schools through making contact with their local member of parliament and that is their right.

Parent Engagement – My government has acknowledged both the importance of the role of parents as educators and the important role of parental engagement in education. As you rightly point out, the learning in Families Together initiative, introduced by my government, is focussed on engaging parents in around 80 school communities across the state in their child's education. Further, through the introduction of an entirely new legislative framework for education in Tasmania, we have enshrined in legislation the important role of parents. The Education Act 2016, includes, as principles which are the basis of the Act:

- (c) that the State recognises the role and importance of a child's parents in the education of their child;
- (d) that the State recognises that a child's parents are the first and most important educators of the child;
- (e) that the State recognises –
 - (i) that parents have a responsibility to ensure that their child receives an education; and
 - (ii) that the State has a responsibility to support parents in ensuring that they meet their responsibilities under this Act

Funding for Parents – Parental engagement in policy development and decision making at the school and departmental level is critical to ensuring our education system is fit for purpose and reflects the needs of our community. With this in mind, if re-elected, we will undertake a review of how the department of Education engages parents in decision making and the costs involved.

I hope you have found this information useful. More information can be found through reading our education policies which are attached to this letter and can be found online at: <https://www.tas.liberal.org.au/>

Thank you again for your letter, I sincerely appreciate your efforts in representing parents around the state in education in Tasmania.

Yours sincerely



Will Hodgman MP
Liberal Leader