

Greens NSW

Education Policy

Revised July 2011



Principles

The Greens NSW believe that:

1. Education is a right of all citizens.
2. Governments have a responsibility to provide high quality comprehensive public education for all citizens, regardless of their income, class, ethnicity, religion, race, sexual preference, marital status, and intellectual, physical or other abilities.
3. Resources within Public Education should be allocated to achieve equity in educational opportunity and outcome. Public education should be funded so that it is free and every learner in a public facility receives the highest quality education.
4. Public schools, TAFE colleges, AMES centres and Universities should be free of political interference and the need to compete in the marketplace for funding and/or resources.
5. The Greens NSW are committed to a secular public education system.
6. Curriculum should be determined independently of political and economic influence.
7. The funding of equity programs in public schools is an important social investment.

Detail

The Greens NSW will work towards:

The Funding of Public Schools

8. The funding and regulation of private schools should not:
Disadvantage the public school system;

Exacerbate socio-economic inequality;
Create ethnic and religious divisions;
Disadvantage students with special needs;
Permit discriminatory behaviour;
Contribute to profits of any corporation or other organisation; or
Compromise the viability of any public school.

9. The funding of public school education should be dramatically increased to a level at which:
 - 9.1 Fees and "voluntary contributions" in public education, including TAFE colleges and universities are abolished;
 - 9.2 The number of school counsellors, specialist teachers for students with learning difficulties, aboriginal education support staff and resources for children with special needs, are increased to meet the need for their services;
10. Class sizes are reduced to a maximum of 25 and to 20 in the early years. For practical subjects, including science, class sizes should be limited to 20. Maximum of 20 students for years K-2, 30 for years 3-6 and limited to 20 for practical subjects including science. The staffing formula should be applied separately to K-2 and 3-6.
11. Teaching assistants and reduced class sizes are provided for all classrooms in which children with special needs are integrated.
12. Public school buildings and grounds are cleaned and maintained to the highest standards.
13. Appropriate climate control technologies are installed where classrooms are exposed to temperature extremes.
14. Additional teachers and resources are provided to public schools serving socio-economically disadvantaged communities.
15. English as a Second Language teaching services are available to all students in public education with language needs.
16. Incentives are provided to attract and maintain staff in difficult-to-staff schools.

17. Schools and regions are able to implement strategies to address the shortage of casual teachers; 8.11 All 3 and 4 year olds can have access to two years of universal, free public pre-school education.
18. Additional resources can be directed to the early years of high school to facilitate the transition from primary school.
19. Beginning teachers are mentored by experienced teachers with additional release time for both.
20. The Transport Conveyance Subsidy Scheme should be restricted to travel to the nearest public school.

The Greens NSW reject:

21. Commercial sponsorship in public schools;
22. Privatisation and competitive tendering policies in public education.

Public Education Must be Free from Political Interference

The Greens NSW reject:

23. The use of threats of withholding federal funding to achieve political outcomes such as curriculum changes and the formulation and publication of league tables.
24. Basing education policies on the ideology of consumer choice results in destructive competition between schools and TAFE colleges. It divides communities, increases inequality and distorts educational outcomes.

Curriculum & Testing

25. The Greens NSW support the development of curricula that are based on sound educational principles by educational experts with appropriate community and teacher involvement.
26. Student test results are not to be used in any way that allows the production of league tables. Test results should be used only to assess and promote individual student learning.
27. The Greens NSW are committed to maintaining a curriculum that is evidence-based and that is free from interference from religious and sectarian influences.

28. Changes to curriculum must be accompanied by adequate funding and resourcing of implementation in public schools.
29. The proposed national curriculum should be of the same or better standard as the current NSW curriculum.
30. The process of developing a national curriculum must not undermine the ability of schools to adapt teaching to the specific needs of their students and community.

Public Ownership and Control of Public Education

31. The Greens NSW oppose further privately financed public school development and call on the NSW government to fully fund all new public schools.
32. Private ownership and operation of the resources of public education is not cost effective or superior to public ownership.
33. The Greens oppose the sale of public education land unless an equivalent or better site has been secured to serve the same community. Public school and TAFE sites that are not currently required to meet the demand for education in their area should be held in a land bank against subsequent increases in population. Sites within the land bank should be used on a lease basis for other public purposes.

Private Schools

34. The Greens NSW support the abolition of all public funding of the wealthiest private schools. Public funds that are given to these schools under current arrangements should be committed instead to equity programs within the public school system.
35. Private schools and private school systems that receive public funding should be subject to the same level of public accountability and scrutiny that applies to public schools or forego all public funding.
36. The Greens NSW will work towards an end of all funding mechanisms which unfairly act to the detriment of public education, including per capita funding mechanisms based on the cost of educating a child in a public schools (such as the "25% rule" in section 21 of the Education Act).

37. The Greens NSW are committed to ending all public funding of schools which discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, religious background, sexual preference, marital status, disability, or ability to pay fees. We also believe that public funding should not be allocated to private schools which engage in discrimination in employment practices. We are committed to removing all exemptions for private schools from the Anti-discrimination Act.
38. The Greens NSW oppose State funding of capital works in private schools.
39. The Greens NSW believe that state funding of private schools should be adjusted so that the total allocation of commonwealth and state funding to all private schools is frozen at its year 2003 level, adjusted for inflation, and that further increases in the education budget should be directed to public schools and TAFE colleges.
40. The Greens NSW reject the concept of educational vouchers which would inevitably damage public education.

Equity Programs

Resources within Public Education should be allocated to achieve equity in educational opportunities and outcomes.

41. The Greens NSW will work towards significantly increased funding for the Priority Schools Funding Program (PSFP - formerly known as the Disadvantaged Schools program) which provides additional resources for public schools which serve disadvantaged communities.
42. The Greens NSW will work towards securing increased guaranteed funding for the Priority Schools Action Program. Teachers, their union and parents should be involved in selecting schools for this program.
43. The Greens NSW are committed to the provision of appropriate English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching services. In particular, we will work to restore student teacher ratios to their 1987 levels.
44. The Greens NSW support the increased provision of specialist teachers and resources for students with learning difficulties and special needs.
45. Special needs education requires a substantial increase in funding to reduce the unacceptable pressure on teachers and students in schools for special purposes, support units and integrated classrooms.

46. Children with multiple special needs should be funded to provide resources to address all of their disabilities.
47. Children in schools for special purposes and behaviour schools should have access to the full age-appropriate curriculum.

Aboriginal Education

48. Resources and structures within Public Education should recognise the unique educational requirements of Aboriginal communities and redress the impacts of two centuries of socio-economic and cultural discrimination and abuse.
49. The Greens NSW are committed to implementing fully funded, long term programs that ensure Aboriginal children achieve educational outcomes equal to non-Aboriginal children within 10 years, build Aboriginal student self esteem and acknowledge Aboriginal identity.
50. The Greens NSW will work with Aboriginal communities to build the capacity and confidence of Aboriginal people and address the communities identified needs.

TAFE and AMES

51. The Greens NSW are committed to a publicly funded TAFE system as the dominant provider of vocational and further education and training.
52. The Greens NSW are committed to ensuring that AMES is a publicly funded, quality provider of adult migrant English education.
53. The Greens NSW reject the increasing casualisation of the TAFE/AMES teaching workforce and are committed to restoring high levels of permanency.
54. The Greens NSW are committed to funding TAFE at levels at which it can meet the demand for vocational education and training, second chance and lifelong education and education for youth at risk without compromising course quality or duration and without exploiting teachers. To this end, the Greens NSW will campaign for:
 - 54.1 The restoration of TAFE per-student hour funding to its 1997/98 levels (in real terms);

- 54.2 The restoration of all positions cut from TAFE since 1997/98 and protecting all staffing levels;
 - 54.3 Recognition of the excessive workloads of Teachers and action to ameliorate the issue;
 - 54.4 The establishment of a Class Size Committee, with NSW Teachers Federation representation, to determine legally binding maximum class sizes for all modules in TAFE;
 - 54.5 Restoration of the integrity of TAFE's units responsible for vocational and educational curriculum and standards (the Curriculum Units), and teacher academic qualifications;
 - 54.6 Protection of the quality of TAFE/AMES teaching by ensuring that all part time/casual and temporary teachers are provided with suitable teacher education opportunities at Certificate 4 level free of course fees, and further ensuring that all permanent and long term temporary teachers receive teacher education at degree level or higher;
 - 54.7 The provision of improved access to literacy, numeracy, special education and disability support;
 - 54.8 Improved resources and time allocation for TAFE/AMES teachers to provide quality workplace educational training and assessment;
 - 54.9 Improved education and development of TAFE/AMES teachers;
 - 54.10 The development of incentives to attract and maintain staff in difficult-to-staff TAFE colleges.
55. The Greens NSW are committed to adequate support for Vocational Education and Training in schools. However, the resources available to those courses, the class sizes and the safety standards must conform to the best practices in both schools and TAFE colleges.
56. The Greens NSW will work to reduce competition between TAFE institutions.

The Greens NSW are committed to:

- 57. Ending the funding of private providers except where TAFE/AMES cannot meet demand and could not do so with additional resources;

58. Tighter registration and accountability standards for private colleges, schools and vocational educational and training providers and the restoration of controls on the expansion of private colleges, schools and on the credentialling and/or accreditation of the personnel of private schools;
59. The reversal of privatisation and competitive tendering policies in TAFE.
60. The Greens NSW are committed to ensuring that AMES is the publicly funded, quality provider of initial adult migrant English education. Greens policies outlined above should also apply to AMES.
61. The Greens NSW are committed to preserving the rights of the unions representing TAFE staff.
62. The Greens NSW reject the creation of Federally-controlled Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs). We call for the money currently being directed into these colleges to be redirected to the expansion of the TAFE system.
63. The Greens NSW oppose the establishment of the NSW Government's so-called Trade Schools.

Universities (see also Australian Greens Education Policy)

64. Universities need to be resourced in order to provide high quality education research, social critique and community service. University should be free to all qualified students.
65. The Greens NSW are committed to the public funding of university education so as to make it free and accessible to all.
66. The Greens NSW support the independence of universities from political interference and will move to amend the of NSW universities legislation to enshrine the right to free inquiry and critical analysis and independent scholarship.

Teacher Professionalism

67. Educators should be recognised for their professionalism and remunerated accordingly.

68. The Greens reject the introduction of short term training to place non-teachers into teaching positions.

The Greens NSW support:

69. An increase in the salaries and status of teachers to restore them to at least 150% of average weekly earnings in the long term.
70. Respect for teachers and their professional judgment and a reversal of the trend of deskilling of teachers through highly prescriptive curriculum; and
71. A state wide transfer system that ensures all schools across the state are able to be staffed with suitably qualified teachers.
72. The Greens NSW will work for an increase in funding for continuous professional development for teachers at all levels of public education.
73. The Greens NSW support the introduction of teacher scholarships to address the shortage of teachers.
74. The Greens NSW strongly support the rights of teachers in public education to be represented by their teacher union organisation in collective bargaining and in consultations over industrial and educational matters and disputes.

Secular Public Education

75. The Greens NSW call on the state government to:
 - 75.1 oppose the placement of Chaplains in NSW public schools as part of the Chaplains in schools program
 - 75.2 insist that the Federal government redirect the funding for the Chaplains in Schools program to Public Schools to employ qualified welfare and family workers and to increase the number of school counsellors.
76. The Greens NSW will work towards tightening the NSW government's policy for external providers of instruction and curriculum materials to exclude religious or hidden judgemental messages that contradict the mission of public education.

77. As long as SRE continues to be offered the Greens NSW support the teaching of ethics as an alternative to SRE for all students.