

Greens NSW

Education Policy



Revised October 2006

Principles

1. Education is a right of all citizens.
2. Education is a key determinant of an individual's ability to participate in the economic, cultural and social life of society.
3. Education is central to creating a fair, safe, cohesive and successful democratic society.
4. Therefore, governments have a responsibility to provide high quality public education for all citizens, regardless of their income, class, ethnicity, religion, race, sexual preference, marital status, and intellectual, physical or other abilities.
5. A well funded Public Education system is essential as it is the only system that can fulfil these needs and respond to the diverse educational needs of the whole community and:
 - 5.1 Encourage tolerance and respect of diversity by bringing children from all backgrounds into one educational setting;
 - 5.2 Ensure that all learners, regardless of their backgrounds and abilities, receive a quality education and are enabled to participate in the cultural, social political and economic life of our society;
 - 5.3 Recognise the disadvantage that comes with poverty and marginalisation and takes positive steps to redress that disadvantage and works towards equality of opportunities and outcomes; and
 - 5.4 Does not discriminate against, or exclude, students on the basis of income, class, religion, race, sexual preference or disability;
6. Comprehensive public education contributes to the reduction of inequality, supports social cohesion and economic well being and creates a safer society.

Goals

7. Public education should be resourced to the extent that it is free and every learner in a public facility receives the highest quality education.

8. Public schools, TAFE colleges and Universities should be free of political interference and the need to compete in the marketplace for funding and/or resources.
9. Curriculum should be determined by educational bodies that are independent of political and economic influence.
10. Test results should be used to assess and promote individual student learning and should not be made available for other purposes.
11. The funding and regulation of private schools should not:
 - 11.1 Disadvantage the public school system;
 - 11.2 Exacerbate socio-economic inequality;
 - 11.3 Create ethnic and religious divisions;
 - 11.4 Disadvantage students with special needs;
 - 11.5 Permit discriminatory behaviour;
 - 11.6 Contribute to profits of any corporation or other organisation;
or
 - 11.7 Compromise the viability of any public school.
12. Resources within Public Education should be allocated to achieve equity in educational outcomes and opportunities.
13. 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.
14. A publicly funded TAFE system should be the dominant provider of vocational education and training.
15. Universities need to be resourced in order to provide high quality education world-leading research and social critique and community service. University should be free to all qualified students.
16. Educators should be recognised for their professionalism and dedication and remunerated commensurately with the expertise and responsibility they exercise.

Detail

The Funding of Public Schools

17. The Greens NSW believe that Government's primary financial responsibility within the education sector is to fund education excellence and equity for all students in the public education system, in line with section 4(d) of the Education Act 1990.
18. In particular, the funding of public school education should be dramatically increased to a level at which:

- 18.1 Public education can realistically meets changing community needs;
- 18.2 Fees and "voluntary contributions" in public education, including TAFE colleges and universities are abolished;
- 18.3 The provision 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;
- 18.4 Class sizes are reduced in all years, but especially in the early years of schooling - K-3 class sizes to be reduced to a maximum of 20 students, in schools serving disadvantaged communities, and in classrooms with children with special needs;
- 18.5 Teaching assistants are provided for all classrooms in which children with special needs are integrated;
- 18.6 Public school buildings and grounds are cleaned and maintained to the highest standards;
- 18.7 Appropriate climate control technologies are installed where classrooms are exposed to temperature extremes;
- 18.8 Additional teaching resources and teachers are provided to public schools serving socio-economically disadvantaged communities;
- 18.9 Publicly run out-of-school-hours care programs are available for all children and provide quality services;
- 18.10 English as a Second Language teaching services are available to all students in public education with language needs. In particular, the number of teachers should be increased to restore student teacher ratios in primary and secondary schools to at least 1987 levels;
- 18.11 No public school is forced to sell public lands to fund maintenance or the provision of new facilities;
- 18.12 A range of fully funded and resourced placement options are provided within the public education system for students with special needs;
- 18.13 Incentives are provided to attract and maintain staff in difficult-to-staff schools;
- 18.14 Schools and regions are able to implement strategies to address the shortage of casual teachers;
- 18.15 All 3 year olds can have access to two years of universal, free public pre-school education;
- 18.16 Additional resources can be directed to the early years of high school to facilitate the transition from primary school;

- 18.17 The mentoring of beginning teachers is significantly improved by additional release time for experienced teachers; and
 - 18.18 Public school teachers' salaries and working conditions are at a level which sustains the system by attracting high quality recruits into the teaching profession.
19. The Greens NSW reject:
- 19.1 The notion that schools must be run as businesses;
 - 19.2 Any form of corporate sponsorship of public schools;
 - 19.3 Privatisation and competitive tendering policies in public education; and
 - 19.4 The selling of public education lands. Schools and TAFE Institutes should not be forced into a financial position where their land is sold to fund other activities. The lands and buildings of public education institutions that are closed should be kept in public ownership and made available for other public uses, including public education.
20. The Greens NSW will work towards the reform of the Transport Conveyance Subsidy Scheme to ensure that subsidies are only applied to travel to the nearest public school and that recipients of the Subsidy in rural and remote locations in NSW who are genuinely in need of financial assistance receive an equitable share of these funds.

Public Education Must be Free from Political Interference

21. The Greens NSW reject:
- 21.1 Political interference in the delivery of public education. In particular we oppose the use of threats of withholding federal funding to achieve curriculum changes, reporting and the imposition of flagpoles on schools; and
 - 21.2 The on-going political attacks on the values of public education and the manipulation of public perceptions of public schools for political gain.
22. In particular, the Greens NSW are opposed to:
- 22.1 Policies which are designed to promote competition between schools and colleges and which pit community against community;
 - 22.2 The manufacturing of crises of educational standards in order to undermine confidence in comprehensive public education and to narrow the curriculum;
 - 22.3 The utterly false and misleading notion of consumer choice. Cultivation of this concept results in students becoming

'products' as they are selected by schools and/or industry to enhance their market position; and

- 22.4 The whole ethos of economic rationalism and neo-liberalist economic fundamentalism which undermines the social role of government in intervening in society. The provision of public education to promote equity and cohesion is an important example of the role of government that is being threatened by economic rationalism.

Curriculum & Testing

23. The Greens NSW support the development of curricula that are based on sound educational principles by educational experts with appropriate community and teacher involvement.
24. The Greens NSW support the promotion of reflective and critical curriculum development processes that involve individual teachers adapting curricula to their teaching context.
25. Student test results are not to be used in any way that allows the production of "league tables" that would pit school community against school community, or to identify individual students in public.
26. The Greens NSW believe that while mass skills testing occurs there should be no publication of the results and/or use of the results of mass skills testing for competitively oriented educational policies.
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. The Greens NSW believe that constantly changing curricula impose costs on schools and on teachers. Changes to curriculum should be accompanied adequate funding and resourcing of implementation in public schools.

Public Ownership and Control of Public Education

29. The Greens NSW reject the assertion that private ownership and operation of the resources of public education is cost effective or superior to public ownership. In particular, we call for full public disclosure of the costing of public provision (the Public Sector Comparator) and of all modelling assumptions used in accepting the private sector bids for public schools operations.
30. The Greens NSW oppose further privately financed public school development and call on the NSW government to fully fund all new public schools.

Private Schools

31. The Greens NSW will work towards ending 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.
32. 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.
33. 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). These mechanisms act as a tax on the betterment of public education and create unconstrained flows of money away from the public purse.
34. 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, particularly with respect to gender, ethnicity, religious background or belief, sexual preference, disability, or marital status. We are also committed to removing all exemptions for private schools from the Anti-discrimination Act.
35. The Greens NSW are committed to ending all public funding of schools which seek to exploit the Federal Government's industrial relations regime to reduce working conditions of their employees.
36. The Greens NSW recognise that the system of providing low interest or interest free loans to private schools for capital works programs, such as new buildings, has not operated in an equitable fashion. We are particularly concerned that many private schools have received such funds while the physical conditions of many public schools are inadequate and dangerous and have dramatically deteriorated. We will seek to reform the system to protect public schools from the expansion of private institutions.
37. 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.
38. The Greens NSW reject the concept of educational vouchers which would inevitably damage public education.

Equity Programs

39. The Greens NSW believe that funding of equity programs in public schools is an important social investment not only in the future of the individual students attending those schools but also in the well being of the entire society.
40. 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. In particular we are committed to ensuring that:
 - 40.1 All schools within the PSFP receive more funding to address the affects of community disadvantage;
 - 40.2 Schools that are within the PSFP but are no longer eligible for funding are not removed from the program without at least three years of continued funding; and
 - 40.3 A greater number of schools receive funding under the PSFP.
41. The Greens NSW will work towards securing increased funding for the Priority Schools Action Program and ensuring that its funding is guaranteed and provided as a budget line item that is not dependent on annual re-authorisation by the Minister.
42. The Greens NSW are committed to ensuring that all children in public education regardless of their linguistic background have access to the full curriculum and that language barriers are removed by the provision of appropriate English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching services. In particular, we will work for the immediate employment of 100 new ESL teachers with 800 new teachers employed in the medium term to restore student teacher ratios to their 1987 levels.
43. The Greens NSW recognise that some students need and should be given more assistance to succeed because of other disadvantages they have to overcome. In particular we are committed to increasing funding for students with learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural issues or other special needs to:
 - 43.1 Provide teaching assistants for classes in which children with special needs are integrated;
 - 43.2 Reduce class sizes for classes for special needs children or where special needs children have been integrated; and
 - 43.3 Increase the provision of specialist teachers and resources for students with learning difficulties and special needs.

Aboriginal Education

44. 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.

45. 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

46. The Greens NSW are committed to a publicly funded TAFE system as the dominant provider of vocational and further education and training. The TAFE system not only builds a strong foundation for an economically successful society but it also provides essential social justice outcomes, by offering second chance and lifelong learning opportunities, employment skills for a broad range of Australians, many of whom are from working class backgrounds, and education and training for youth at risk. TAFE also provides broad and transferable education to many Australians and skills for all industry sectors.
47. The Greens NSW reject the economic rationalist approach to TAFE which has resulted in the highest levels of casualisation of the teaching workforce in Australia, with devastating consequences for teacher work loads, recruitment and the future development of teachers. We are committed to restoring high levels of permanency.
48. 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:
 - 48.1 The restoration of TAFE per-student hour funding to its 1997/98 levels (in real terms);
 - 48.2 The restoration of all positions cut from TAFE since 1997/98 and protecting all staffing levels;
 - 48.3 Recognition of the excessive workloads of Head Teachers and action to ameliorate the issue. This may include changing the calculations and criteria for the establishment and maintaining of Head Teacher positions so that more positions are created to carry the load;
 - 48.4 The restoration of permanent teacher numbers including through the conversion of Temporary Teacher positions to permanent where the need for such a position has existed for two years, and through a renewal of the TAFE Staffing Agreement and an increase in the ratio of permanent to part time/casual teachers to at least 70:30 by 2009;
 - 48.5 The establishment of a Class Size Committee, with NSW Teachers Federation representation, to determine legally binding maximum class sizes for all modules in TAFE;

- 48.6 Maintenance of the integrity of TAFE's units responsible for vocational and educational curriculum and standards (the Curriculum Units), and teacher academic qualifications. This includes adequate funding and staffing of the units, so that teaching sections in Institutes can in turn be adequately supported;
 - 48.7 Protection of the quality of TAFE 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 diploma level;
 - 48.8 The provision of improved access to literacy, numeracy, special education and disability support for all students with special needs in TAFE;
 - 48.9 Improved resources and time allocation for TAFE teachers to provide quality workplace educational training and assessment to match the demanding supervision requirements imposed by legislation;
 - 48.10 TAFE as an educational institution itself adequately investing in the education and development of its staff, including Return to Industry programs and career development opportunities for all staff, including Part Time Casual employees;
 - 48.11 The development of incentives to attract and maintain staff in difficult-to-staff TAFE colleges, including housing assistance; and
 - 48.12 The inclusion into vocational curriculum of a module on awareness of unions and industrial rights issues.
- 49. 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. VET in schools must not become a cost-cutting exercise.
 - 50. The Greens NSW support the development of vocational education that works to enhance young people's ability to innovate and to enhance their quality of life as well enabling them to learn new workforce skills. The delivery of this aspect of education must be via the public sector and all courses provided need to be fully accredited under AQTF and VETAB and provide for full student involvement.
 - 51. The Greens NSW will work to restore some unification and centralisation of TAFE systems and procedures, especially in the areas of Industrial & Employee Relations. We will work toward a well funded system within which the components can work in a collegiate environment rather than an insular competitive environment which

tends to waste resources through replication and lack of communication and sharing.

52. The Greens NSW are committed to:
 - 52.1 Ending the funding of private providers except where TAFE cannot meet demand and could not do so with additional resources;
 - 52.2 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;
 - 52.3 Ensuring that all providers of vocational education and training conform to the minimum educational standards required by TAFE of their permanent full time teachers; and
 - 52.4 The reversal of privatisation and competitive tendering policies in TAFE.
53. The Greens NSW are committed to working with the Federal Government to ensure that AMES is the publicly funded, quality provider of initial adult migrant English education. To this end the various policies outlined for TAFE above will apply where applicable and possible to AMES as well, including the ending of funding to private providers through the reversal of privatisation and competitive tender policies.
54. The Greens NSW are committed to reversing the industrial relations changes imposed on TAFE institutes in NSW by the Federal government. In particular we reject the use of the threat of withholding federal funding to blackmail state governments and the way in which the changes will devastate the industrial rights of TAFE employees, including the most vulnerable, part time/casual teachers and ancillary staff, and damage the culture of collegiality and cooperation. The Greens NSW are committed to preserving the rights of the unions representing TAFE staff, including their bargaining rights , their work place entry rights, and their rights to service their members.
55. The Greens NSW reject the creation of Federally-controlled Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs), as they are designed to compete with the public school and TAFE systems. ATCs are a wasteful and an ideologically motivated attempt to undermine the working conditions of all school and TAFE employees. ATCs are socially divisive and inefficient. We call for the money currently being directed into these colleges to be redirected to the expansion of the TAFE system.
56. The Greens NSW oppose the establishment of the NSW Government's so-called Trade Schools as they will be socially divisive and result in inefficiencies in the education system.

Universities (see also Australian Greens Education Policy)

57. The Greens NSW are committed to the public funding of university education so as to:
 - 57.1 Make it free and accessible to all including students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities;
 - 57.2 Eliminate the system of HECS fees to allow university graduates to begin their working lives without being encumbered by accumulated debt; and
 - 57.3 Remove the financial disincentive for mature age students, working adults and adults from single parent or single income families to pursue undergraduate or post-graduate university courses.
58. The Greens NSW reject the use of federal funding of universities as blackmail to achieve a highly unfair and exploitative industrial relations environment in universities (The Higher Education Workplace Reform Requirement - HEWRRs), the destruction of the destruction of student democracy and services (Voluntary Student Unionism - VSU) and the stacking of the governing bodies of tertiary institutes with representatives of the corporate sector.
59. 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.
60. The Greens NSW are deeply concerned with the increase in student poverty on university campuses and the increasing number of hours of paid work students are required to undertake to support themselves. We are committed to increasing levels of student financial support.

Teacher Professionalism

61. The NSW government must give highest priority to teachers' salaries, working conditions and status in the public education system in order to:
 - 61.1 Ensure that the best teachers are attracted to and retained in the public education system; and
 - 61.2 Recognise the dedication and professionalism of teachers, including the large number of unpaid overtime hours provided by many teachers and the importance of their role in developing young people.
62. The Greens NSW support:
 - 62.1 An increase in the salaries and status of teachers to restore them to at least 150% of average weekly earnings in the long term;

- 62.2 Respect for teachers and their professional judgment and a reversal of the trend of deskilling of teachers through highly prescriptive curriculum; and
- 62.3 A state wide transfer system that ensures all schools across the state are able to be staffed with suitably qualified teachers.
63. The Greens NSW will work for an increase in funding for continuous professional development for teachers at all levels of public education, including both additional release time and the funding of in-service opportunities for the development of educational, administrative, management, leadership and budgeting skills and training and preparation for curriculum changes, with additional funds allocated to teachers in rural and remote locations to address additional travel costs.
64. The Greens NSW support the introduction of teacher scholarships to address the shortage of teachers.
65. 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 and the obligation of governments to negotiate in good faith changes to public education and the working conditions of teachers with the union.

Structure of Public Education

66. The Greens NSW support opportunities for lifelong learning based on interlinking educational pathways. We are committed to creating opportunities to permit individuals to re-enter the educational mainstream; - update, lifelong learning.
67. The Greens NSW are opposed to the trend towards stratification of schools based on the curriculum offered, because replacing comprehensive education with specialisation reaffirms class and social divisions. We support the phasing out of selective, specialist and senior high schools, and OC [Opportunity Classes] classes in favour of a comprehensive public school system.
68. The Greens NSW welcome the processes of the Vinson enquiry which engaged teachers, parents and supporters of public education into a new and highly democratic mechanism for public policy formation. The Greens NSW will continue to work towards implementing the positive recommendations of the Inquiry.