

Greens commit to fairer students with disability funding

The Greens have committed to increase resources for students with disability by \$4.8 billion over the next four years, as part of a comprehensive plan for fairer funding for schools.

Australian Greens Leader Richard Di Natale said he was proud to lead the only party with a comprehensive plan for students with disability.

“The Australian Greens believe every child has the right to an education and disability should never be a barrier to access,” Senator Di Natale said.

“The Abbott-Turnbull Government has failed to provide young children with disability the vital resources they need to enable them to continue education in mainstream schooling.”

“We want to make sure that each and every child, no matter their abilities, gets go to school and participate just like everyone else.”

“Children with disability have the right to follow their dreams just like every other child, and schools need the funding to support them.”

Greens spokesperson for schools Nick McKim said fairer funding for students with disability meant better outcomes for all students.

“Less than half of students with disability in Australian schools are currently being funded,” Senator McKim said.

“Our funding proposal is based on nationally consistent data that will help an additional 277,000 students.”

“We want to ensure that every child in every Australian school can reach their full potential.”

The Greens have also committed to making a National Plan for Students with Disability, so that each and every child has their right to an education recognised.

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Disability Funding for Schools

Higher Funding for Higher Needs

Enabling Schools to Enable Education

Less than half of students with a disability in Australian schools are currently being funded for their support needs. The Greens will enable an equitable education for all, and ensure that every student in every Australian school can reach their full potential and maximise their abilities.

Currently less than half of all students with a disability in Australian schools are funded for the extra school resources they need to support their education.

The Greens believe this is unacceptable, and unfair: it fails students, and it fails our schools.

> FIXING THE FUNDING GAP

The Greens are the only party to have a disability funding policy for schools based on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD).

This policy funds the gap between what the Commonwealth Government has budgeted for in its disability loadings for schools, and the amount required when calculated against the NCCD.

> BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Parliamentary Budget Office has costed the Government's current spending on disability in schools for 2016-17 at \$1.3bn. Using NCCD data the real funding need is \$2.4bn.

That's why The Greens will fund **an extra \$1.1bn into disability in schools** for 2016-17, with that figure indexed at 4.7% across the forward estimates.

That is \$4.8 billion over the forward estimates.

> THE PROBLEM

Under Labor's National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) and the Coalition's Students First funding, disability loadings are calculated using different and disparate state and territory based definitions of disability.

Recently the Productivity Commission found that in 2013 there were 190,887 students who received extra funding for disabilities in Australian Schools. In 2015, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on School Students with Disability

identified 467,842 students with a disability who required extra funding for extra school resources¹.

This means less than one in two students with disability in our schools are being recognised and appropriately resourced by the government.

Not only does this create funding inequities between the jurisdictions, but also problems for students when they move from one state or territory to another and find themselves losing the extra teaching resources they depended on.

The use of jurisdictional disability definitions was always regarded as less than adequate, and was only ever meant to be a temporary measure when introduced into the *National Education Reform Agreements* and the *Australian Education Act* in 2013.

Three years and a federal government later, and this less than adequate temporary measure is still in place, despite the Abbott-Turnbull Government now having the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability that was intended to fix this problem.

> CURRENT SITUATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

- Around 9 in 10 attend a mainstream school;
- Around 3 in 4 attend a Government school;
- Nearly 1 in 2 live in or near poverty;
- They are 33 per cent more likely to not to study beyond year 10 than students without disability;
- They are nearly twice as likely not to complete year 12 than students without disability.²

¹http://www.igiveagonski.com.au/broken_disability_promise_hurts_students

²Children with Disability Australia (2015) Hear Our Voices, Submission to Senate Inquiry

> A NATIONAL STRATEGY

The Australian Greens support the development and introduction of a National Strategy to improve the education of students with disability as recommended by a Senate Inquiry – Access to real learning: the impact of policy, funding and culture on students with disability³.

Key features of a National Strategy would include:

- Recognising all students with disability as learners,
- Ensuring all students with disability benefit from evidence-based, best practice programs,
- Best practice ongoing professional development for teachers and principals, and
- Including students with disability and their families in the development of educational plans.

> WHAT DISABILITY FUNDING IN SCHOOLS DOES

Disabilities can come in many forms, including intellectual disability, physical disability, sensory disability, and mental illness. Each disability can require a different set of infrastructure and support to manage in a school setting.

The following are just some of the extra resourcing needs of schools educating children with a disability⁴:

- Infrastructure (modifications/additions to buildings, classrooms, toilets, pathways etc.);
- Assistive technologies (computer software, low-vision aids, communication tools etc.);
- Curriculum adaptation;
- Trained aides and ancillary and support staff;
- Teacher and aide training;
- Transportation.

> WHY PROPERLY FUNDING DISABILITY IS GOOD FOR ALL STUDENTS

Currently some high-needs students are being supported with resources not specifically designated for that purpose.

So if one child doesn't receive a fair education, no child does. And that's not fair.

> ONLY THE GREENS ARE COMMITTED TO FULL FUNDING

Three times now the Abbott-Turnbull government has promised to fund disability in schools using Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on School Students with Disability. Firstly the Abbott Opposition in 2013 promised extra funding for disability in schools in 2015. Secondly, in 2105 the Abbott Government promised the Parliament that NCCD would be used to increase the disability loading for schools in 2016. Thirdly, later that same year the Turnbull Government reiterated that same promise. And here we are half way through 2016: no NCCD and no extra funding for disability in schools.

Labor as allocated an “extra” \$320m alongside their underfunded Gonski commitment. Even if this was new money, it would be a band-aid on a gaping wound.

Only the Australian Greens have committed to fully funding students with disabilities on the basis of identified need in our schools.

The Australian Greens will also ensure that there are opportunities for review of NCCD classifications if parents believe their child has been inappropriately assessed.

> THIS IS JUST ONE PART OF OUR NEEDS-BASED SCHOOLS FUNDING PLAN

The Greens believe in a fairer funding system for fairer education opportunities in Australia.

The Greens are the only political party whose support of the Gonski reforms has been unwavering.

As part of our Fairer Funding for Fairer Results plan, The Greens will also be funding, in full, years 5 and 6 of the National Education Reform Agreement.

> LIFE TIME OF LEARNING

The Greens believe that investment in public education is essential to ensure a fair Australia and to support the transition to a sustainable new economy. *Disability Funding for Schools* forms a part of our Lifetime of Learning policy that includes early childhood education, support for schools, students with a disability and the tertiary sector.

³http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/Report

⁴<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/access-education-students-disability-barriers-and-difficulties>