

COALITION POLICY FOR THE 2014 VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION

THE NATIONALS

STRONG PLAN

FOR A

Smarter Victoria



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BUILDING A SMARTER VICTORIA

Introduction

The Victorian Coalition recognises that young people are Victoria's most valuable asset.

And we understand that investment in education is both an investment in the immediate future of young Victorians and in the long-term future of the state.

Over the next four years our education system must meet the needs of a growing population and the demands of a changing economy if Victoria is to maintain its position as one of the world's best places to live, work, study and do business.

The Coalition is committed to creating jobs and opportunities for young people, and we are committed to preparing young people for the jobs of the future.

That's why we are investing record sums in building a smarter Victoria.

In contrast, Labor failed Victorian schoolchildren, neglecting the government school system for over a decade. Labor promised over 200 schools upgrades that were never funded. Labor left a \$420 million maintenance backlog and dispirited school communities stripped of all autonomy by unions and by Labor's insistence on centralised control.

Despite a decade of national economic growth, student outcomes in Victoria in 2010 were flatlining. The Auditor-General's analysis of literacy and numeracy performance in Victorian schools from 1997 to 2007 revealed that the only programs to show any sustainable improvement were early years literacy programs established by the Kennett Government. Three years of NAPLAN data confirmed the trend in Victoria between 2008 and 2010.

And early learning services, particularly in Victoria's regions, were in pressing need of updated infrastructure and new equipment.

Instead of a focus on the basics of education and good management, the Victorian education system under Labor was plagued by short term fads, white elephant investments and failed projects. These included the botched Ultranet and Building the Education Revolution, broken funding promises, too much red tape, and constant kowtowing to unions.

In its first term, the Coalition Government has repaired Labor's budget black hole, delivering the money to fund record spending on schools, record spending on higher education and skills, and record spending on early childhood development.

Victoria leads the nation in early childhood education, delivering the world class early learning programs that Victorian children deserve and are an essential part of making Victoria a great place to raise a family.



In contrast to Labor's 11 years of neglect, the Coalition Government is investing record amounts in Victorian schools. We have invested \$9.2 billion this year – \$1 billion more than in Labor's last budget.

The Coalition has delivered 24 new schools and undertaken a massive upgrade of hundreds of existing schools. We are making the greatest investment in special schools in more than a decade, and have connected 1,240 schools to the wireless network.

We are getting on with the job of fixing Labor's school maintenance mess, investing 40 per cent more in school maintenance, including funding utilities and cleaning — which were not funded under Labor.

The Victorian Coalition Government has maintained a focus on our plan for a better curriculum and better teaching, so kids can leave school and go to higher education or get meaningful jobs.

The Coalition will continue to invest in new and improved schools and early childhood centres, particularly in areas of high population growth. We will continue to focus on teacher quality and standards, and there will be an even greater emphasis on language and digital learning, ensuring Victorian children have access to a truly 21st century education.

The vocational education and training sector will continue to deliver the skills Victorians need to find lasting employment. Key to this success will be partnering with industry, to ensure training is geared to emerging demand.

And we will continue investing in programs with a proven track record of reconnecting our most vulnerable people with education and training, working across government and the community sector to connect vulnerable young people to the right opportunities.

Where Labor governed at the behest of the unions, the Coalition will continue to focus on the needs of students, parents, teachers and local communities.

Staff, students and their families best appreciate the challenges and opportunities facing a school, a childcare centre or a training institution. The Coalition has returned control to those who know, and care, the most. We will ensure local schools stay truly local. School principals and school boards will have the autonomy and resources to tailor education to the needs and opportunities they identify.

Our future prosperity relies on a strong and effective education system. A better, smarter, more skilled Victoria, underpinned by the Coalition's strong economic management, will help build a better Victoria for young people, and for all Victorians.



A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Build better schools for young Victorians with a \$5.4 billion investment.**
- **Provide a \$100 rebate on Kindergarten bills to relieve cost of living pressures for more than 200,000 Victorian families**
- **Give more students support by providing every government primary school across Victoria with access to a Primary Welfare Officer**
- **Create a \$120 million capital infrastructure fund for non-government schools**
- **Provide first aid training for Year 9 students in all Victorian secondary schools**
- **Provide 3D printers for every government secondary school**
- **Support young Victorians learning a second language**
- **Reinstate training support grants for special religious instruction providers**
- **Make Victorian schools safer through a \$4 million School Safety Grants program**
- **Build the next generation of young leaders by establishing new campuses of the School for Student Leadership at Dunkeld and Woori-Yallock**
- **Help students' mental health by expanding *SAFEMinds* support training to 3,500 more teachers across all Victorian schools**
- **Intervene earlier for vulnerable school-aged children with a mental illness**



BUILDING A SMARTER VICTORIA

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Build better schools for young Victorians with a \$5.4 billion investment.**

The Victorian Coalition is committed to giving young people the best opportunities with high quality education.

Our plan to build a smarter Victoria will deliver better facilities and better learning experiences for all young Victorians, whether they are pre-school children in early learning centres or students who are in their late teens and completing VCE.

We will invest \$1.2 billion in new schools and school upgrades over the next four years because we know that having access to new, modern learning facilities helps young people reach their potential. This investment will fund more than 200 school infrastructure projects around the state.

A re-elected Coalition Government will also deliver additional funding through the Better Schools Agreement with the Commonwealth Government, providing an additional \$4.2 billion for primary and secondary education over the next term.

The Napthine Coalition Government is already addressing Labor's failings by invest in the future. In our first term, the Coalition has delivered funding for 24 new schools as part of our school capital investment program, and undertaken a massive upgrade of hundreds of existing schools.

We are making the greatest investment in special schools in more than a decade, and have connected 1,240 schools to the wireless network.

We are getting on with the job of fixing Labor's school maintenance mess, investing 40 per cent more in school maintenance, including funding utilities and cleaning — which were not funded under Labor.

The Coalition Government is already investing record amounts in Victorian schools. We have invested \$9.2 billion this year – \$1 billion more than in Labor's last budget.

The Coalition Government will start delivering additional funding to build a smarter Victoria in the 2015-16 Budget.



FAIRER KINDER

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Provide a \$100 rebate on kindergarten bills to relieve cost of living pressures for more than 200,000 Victorian families.**

The Coalition Government is committed to help young families who are feeling cost of living pressures.

The Fairer Kinder initiative will provide families with children attending kindergarten in the year before school with a \$100 rebate on their annual kindergarten fees.

This \$100 rebate will help ease cost of living pressures by directly reducing the fees paid by parents. It builds on the substantial funding the Coalition Government already provides to kindergartens to ensure Victorian children have access to 15 hours of kinder per week.

In 2015, the rebate will apply to more than 54,000 families with children attending kindergarten in the year before school, otherwise known as four-year-old kindergarten.

The Fairer Kinder rebate will apply from the 2015 school year, with more than 200,000 families expected to benefit.



PRIMARY WELFARE OFFICERS

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Give more students support by providing every government primary school across Victoria with access to a Primary Welfare Officer.**

Every child has the right to feel safe and protected at school. The Victorian Coalition is committed to assuring the welfare of children in Victoria's schools, especially in primary schools when children can be particularly vulnerable.

Primary Welfare Officers help students to deal with problems in their foundation education years, with the aim of helping them to realise their potential and get the most out of what Victorian schools have to offer.

In its 2010 election platform, the Coalition promised to provide an additional 150 Primary Welfare Officers, a commitment delivered in the Coalition Government's first term.

Primary Welfare Officers now help students at 800 schools in Victoria. Primary Welfare Officers provide a range of services including counselling, behaviour management and welfare referrals for students at risk. They play an important role in helping to manage behavioural problems in the classroom, and support children in danger of disengaging from school.

The Coalition's current priorities for Primary Welfare Officers are tackling bullying and supporting students with behavioural, mental health and welfare problems.

Expanding the Primary Welfare Officers network complements other support programs that enhance student health and wellbeing, engagement, retention and academic achievement. These include Student Support Services Officers and Student Welfare Coordinators. Primary Welfare Officers also help students link to other services, such as health and community services.

This initiative will provide access to Primary Welfare Officers for every government primary school by the second school term of 2019.



NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOL CAPITAL FUNDING

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Create a \$120 million capital infrastructure fund for non-government schools.**

The Victorian Coalition is committed to ensuring all Victorian children learn in high quality schools.

Traditionally, non-government schools have been left to get on with the job of building or upgrading their own infrastructure with no help from the state government. However, some non-government schools, particularly those who serve vulnerable communities, have very limited means to raise capital for buildings and repairs.

The Coalition recognises that the non-government school system educates 37 per cent of Victoria's schoolchildren, with lower fee schools often teaching the most pupils.

The Coalition will provide \$30 million per year over four years to create a pool of infrastructure funding for non-government schools to help create a better learning environment.

A re-elected Coalition government will also legislate to provide funding certainty for non-government schools.

Applications for funding will be allocated on a needs basis, with schools in greatest need given the highest priority.

Community partnership co-funding will be encouraged, especially where a school enables local community groups to use its facilities, but will not be a condition of funding.

An independent panel will assess applications and make recommendations to a re-elected Coalition Government.

This initiative complements the Coalition Government's investment in government school infrastructure delivered in its first term.

Applications for the first round of new capital grants for non-government schools will be called for in 2015.



FIRST AID TRAINING FOR ALL YEAR 9 STUDENTS

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Provide first aid training for Year 9 students in all Victorian secondary schools.**

The Victorian Coalition is dedicated to building a safer Victoria. Training young Victorians in first aid will save lives for years to come.

This initiative will see approximately 66,000 Victorian students receiving compulsory first aid training each year. Teaching maturing students how to respond to medical emergencies will build self-confidence and resilience, as well as delivering enduring public health benefits.

Year 9 students will complete the certified course Provide First Aid, delivered by accredited training organisations such as St John's, Red Cross, Melbourne First Aid and Vic First Aid.

Students will become competent in CPR and the early management of burns, bites, fractures, asthma and exposure to extreme temperatures.

Training will be delivered over one to two days, including assessment. Some schools may select one day courses which involve a preparatory online or homework component, while others may choose to have the course delivered entirely in class. Schools will be able to determine the time during Year 9 when the course is provided.

Victorians are very willing to help out in an emergency and provide assistance until emergency services arrive — a factor vital in victim survival. This Coalition initiative will vastly expand the pool of people who are competent to help save lives for decades to come.

Selected schools will begin training Year 9 students in first aid during the 2015 school year, and training will be available at every school from 2016.



3D PRINTERS FOR EVERY SECONDARY SCHOOL

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Provide 3D printers for every government secondary school.**

The Victorian Coalition is committed to equipping Victoria's secondary students with the technology and skills that will prepare them for 21st century jobs.

As part of this commitment, a re-elected Coalition Government will make 3D printers available to every government secondary school that wants one.

3D printing is a cutting edge new technology. Making 3D printers available to schools will help to encourage studies in science, technology and design. It will enable students and teachers to explore the potential of this new technology and to learn about the advances 3D printing is bringing to design and manufacturing.

3D copiers are likely to become common tools across Victoria's manufacturing sector, and in many vocational training or university courses. The ability to use this new technology will help Victorian students to get ahead of the pack and ready themselves for advanced studies and the workplaces of the future.

This initiative provides \$2.2 million to buy or lease 3D printers for up to 316 secondary and P-12 schools across the state, plus 75 special schools with secondary students. The funding will also provide teacher training, support for software, and printer materials.

This initiative builds on the Coalition's commitment to provide modern education that ensures young Victorians are confident and competent in using new technologies for study and work.

This initiative will commence in 2015-16.



BOOSTING LANGUAGE STUDIES FOR YOUNG VICTORIANS

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Support young Victorians learning a second language.**

Victorians rightly celebrate our state's rich multicultural diversity. To support and maintain this cultural heritage, the Victorian Coalition will further encourage young Victorians to study a second language.

Learning languages will help create a smarter Victoria and equip our young people with the skills and confidence to better compete on the international stage.

Evidence shows that students who learn a second language often do better in other subjects. This improvement is more pronounced when the language education occurs in the early years. A re-elected Napthine Government will continue to support young Victorians learning a second language. Our \$11.4 million plan will encourage greater language learning by:

- Providing funding so that four year olds can join community language classes;
- Increasing the funding that community language schools receive per student; and
- Offering new grants to primary schools to help them start new language programs.

Tens of thousands of Victorians study languages at community language schools in Victoria which offer classes outside of normal school hours.

Traditionally, these community language schools have received funding for students from the age of five. A re-elected Coalition Government will lower the starting age to four so students can start learning at local community language schools before they commence primary school.

A re-elected Coalition Government will enable community language centres to become stronger and more accessible by increasing per student funding from \$190 to \$210. This measure will also help to support the new classes for four year olds. It builds on the increase from \$120 to \$190 delivered in the Coalition Government's first term.

We will also provide grants of between \$10,000 and \$50,000 to up to 400 government schools and school clusters. This will support the establishment of new language programs in Prep to Year 3 or extend programs across additional year levels.

Under Labor, primary schools offering language education declined dramatically, from 97 per cent in 1999 to just 69 per cent in 2010. Under the Coalition, this decline is already being reversed with three-quarters of government primary schools offering a second language in 2014.

The additional funding under these initiatives will begin in 2015-16.



SPECIAL RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION TRAINING SUPPORT GRANTS

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Reinstate training support grants for special religious instruction providers.**

The Victorian Coalition is committed to supporting religious instruction in schools for children whose parents wish them to receive it.

Over the next five years, \$3.2 million will be provided for grants to support training of special religious instruction volunteers, ensuring they are properly equipped to deliver religious education in Victoria's government schools.

Training support grants will be open to all accredited special religious instruction providers, regardless of denomination.

This initiative builds on training support grants provided during the Coalition's first term, enabling Victorian schoolchildren to receive religious instruction from appropriately trained volunteers.

Parents will continue to have the choice of whether they wish their children to participate.

The Coalition's special religious instruction training support grants will start in 2015.



SCHOOL SAFETY GRANTS

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Make Victorian schools safer through a \$4 million School Safety Grants program.**

The Victorian Coalition is committed to building a better, safer education system.

The Coalition will provide \$4 million in School Safety Grants for government schools over the next four years.

Schools needing extra funding, for example to build or fix a fence or repair a pathway to keep their students and staff safe, will be able to apply for additional minor works funding. Grants will be allocated on the basis of highest need.

The safety and wellbeing of students in government schools is a priority, and this targeted initiative will give schools the capacity to undertake minor works that will keep schools secure and students and families safe.

The Coalition Government stepped in after 11 years of Labor neglect, taking action to fix the \$420 million school maintenance backlog. While Labor cut maintenance funding by 20 per cent, the Coalition has increased it by more than 40 per cent to tackle Labor's under-investment, particularly in key growth areas.

The School Safety Grants initiative builds on the Coalition Government's \$1.1 billion investment in school infrastructure, delivering 24 new schools and upgrades to hundreds of existing schools, and action to fix the maintenance backlog.



SCHOOL FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Build the next generation of young leaders by establishing new campuses of the School for Student Leadership at Dunkeld and Woori-Yallock.**

The Victorian Coalition is committed to supporting young Victorians with leadership potential to build leadership skills.

The Victorian community needs leaders who will energise and encourage their peers to get things done and build a better Victoria. Business needs workers with strong leadership skills to empower teams and make them more efficient and productive.

To encourage young Victorians to develop their leadership qualities, the Kennett Government established the School for Student Leadership. It now has three campuses – the Alpine Campus at Dinner Plain, the Snowy River Campus at Marlo and the Gnurad-Gundidj Campus at Glenormiston. The Koori Academy of Excellence partners with the Alpine Campus.

The School for Student Leadership runs intensive programs for up to nine weeks, with a competitive application process to select Year 9 students to participate.

The School challenges students with new ideas, new ways of doing things and projects that build leadership skills in a disciplined environment.

The Coalition will deliver \$5 million to build each of the new School for Student Leadership campuses at Dunkeld and Woori-Yallock.



SAFEMINDS

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Help students' mental health by expanding *SAFEMinds* support training to 3,500 more teachers across all Victorian schools.**

The Victorian Coalition is committed to help students improve their mental health.

Young Victorians spend a huge amount of their time at school, so it makes sense to have teachers and other school staff trained to identify mental health issues early. The earlier issues are identified, the faster young people can get the support they need to get back on track.

The Coalition will work with the *headspace* National Youth Mental Health Foundation to ensure that every school has access to programs and training for staff to assist students with mental health issues.

headspace's primary focus is on mental health for young people, providing localised support to students at secondary schools affected by suicide. *headspace* assists young people from 12 to 25 with:

- General health;
- Mental health and counselling;
- Education, employment and other services; and
- Alcohol and other drug services

We will expand *SAFEMinds* - Schools and Families Engaging Minds – providing \$400,000 to support training for an additional 3,500 teachers across all schools, including independent and Catholic schools for the first time.

SAFEMinds facilitates early identification and intervention when mental health issues such as anxiety and depression threaten student wellbeing in primary and secondary schools. It educates and empowers the whole school community – parents, teachers and school leaders – enabling them to recognise the signs that a young person is dealing with mental health issues, and to know when and where to refer them for professional support.

By the end of 2017, an additional 3,500 Victorian teachers and school staff will have completed the *SAFEMinds* face-to-face training program, and parents and school staff are able to access online and face-to-face training sessions.

This initiative builds on the current success of *SAFEMinds*, mental health first aid training in the community and the Coalition's \$1.25 billion investment in mental health services. The *SAFEMinds* expansion will be delivered over the two years 2015-16 and 2016-17.



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

A re-elected Coalition Government will:

- **Intervene earlier for vulnerable school-aged children with a mental illness.**

The Napthine Coalition Government is committed to providing better support to Victorian children of school-age with a mental illness.

This increased investment will give local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services additional resources so they can try to intervene earlier in the development of a child's mental illness.

Many school-aged children with developing mental illnesses will go on to develop more significant and severe mental illnesses as adolescents, so it is critical that we intervene as early as possible to try and address the issues facing young children.

This funding will provide resources for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to better interact with the human services system so that children can get better support, earlier in the onset of their mental illness.

The Coalition Government has been focused on intervening earlier in the lives of vulnerable young children through initiatives including Services Connect as well as those outlined in the *Victoria's Vulnerable Children Strategy 2013-2022* and the *Out-of-Home Care: A Five Year Plan* which aims to improve health and well-being outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

This additional funding will be provided to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services from 1 July 2015.



BUILDING A SMARTER VICTORIA

Achievements of the Coalition Government

The Coalition Government has made major first term gains to build a smarter, more skilled Victoria for the 21st century.

Schools

Since coming to office in November 2010 the Victorian Coalition Government has:

- Delivered a record \$9.2 billion for schools in 2014-15, \$1 billion more than Labor's last Budget
- Delivered 24 new schools over 4 years
- Signed an historic school funding agreement with the Commonwealth
- Delivered our education reform agenda as set out in *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community* and *New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession*, with a concerted focus on curriculum, teaching, assessment and reporting
- Enshrined choice, opportunity and autonomy in our school system by supporting school specialisation, partnerships and increased professional trust
- Commissioned an independent maintenance audit of all Victorian government schools – the first clear, evidence-based picture of school assets and needs, according to the Auditor-General
- Made the largest single capital investment in special and autistic schools in over a decade
- Announced the first P-12 autism school in Melbourne's west
- Invested in digital infrastructure, connecting 1240 schools to the wireless network
- Launched *Languages – expanding your world: Plan to Implement the Victorian Government's Vision for Languages Education 2013-25*, that will see all students up to year 10 studying another language by 2025, starting with preps in 2015. This commitment includes funding of \$6 million for 210 scholarships, over \$16 million extra for community language schools and \$1 million in language start-up grants for schools, as well as our \$13 million China immersion program for 1,500 Victorian students.
- Delivered funding of \$31.2 million for 400 science teaching scholarships, training for 200 maths and science specialists, development of six specialist science and maths centres, and grants for schools to specialise in science, engineering, aeronautics, earth sciences, arts and languages
- Launched the *Bully Stoppers* anti-bullying in schools campaign and contributed \$10.5 million to the e-Smart initiative in conjunction with the Allanah and Madeleine Foundation



- Honoured our first term commitment to provide an extra 150 Primary Welfare Officers, and our commitment to support community expectations regarding the behaviour of students, parents and teachers through School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support, improved school attendance, training and resources for community behaviour management and a resilience framework
- Launched VCE (Baccalaureate), Industry Pathways, Specialist Pathways
- Delivered record numbers of providers and enrolments in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
- Saved Workplace Learning Coordinators
- Overseen record year 12 Indigenous student retention and record numbers of Indigenous students going on to university (40 per cent)
- Launched the Koori Academy of Excellence to raise the expectations of Indigenous families and to help close the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous attainment

Children and early childhood development

In just four years, the Victorian Coalition Government has:

- Invested an additional \$283.1 million in children's services
- Ensured all Victorians get the best start in life, with a 98.2 per cent kindergarten participation rate in 2013, a 3.1 per cent increase since 2010
- Made an ongoing investment in universal and enhanced Maternal and Child Health services, supported playgroups, home learning support and free kindergarten for vulnerable children
- Increased the early childhood budget by 31 per cent, to \$522.5 million
- Met growing demand for quality children services by investing \$32 million in the 2014-15 State Budget
- Made a commitment to ensuring vulnerable children participate in early childhood services, with a \$1.5 million investment to streamline access to services
- Delivered record investments in early childhood services, with \$94.9 million committed in the 2011-12 State Budget and \$103.7 million in the 2012-13 Budget to support vital services before school
- Invested more than \$120 million in early childhood infrastructure, a record investment which has already benefited more than 620 early childhood facilities across the state, and over 1,700 IT grants awarded
- Invested \$38.7 million to provide 1,150 Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) places, resulting in the lowest waiting list on record this year.
- Committed \$1.2 million in the 2013-14 State Budget to the ECIS Improvement project to streamline and improve the delivery of services



- Committed record funding of \$84.9 million to ensure the provision of world class Maternal and Child Health Services for all Victorian children
- Released the \$8.4 million *Early Years Strategic Plan* for the future of early childhood services in Victoria
- Improved the centralised enrolment arrangements for Maternal and Child Health Services and kindergarten programs, resulting in better access to key services for vulnerable families
- Boosted learning outcomes for children through the \$2.3 million Linking Learning project, coordinating partnerships between schools, children's services, councils and not-for-profits
- Supported the provision of kindergarten services in rural Victoria by providing small rural kinder grants to help ensure their ongoing viability
- Built and upgraded early childhood infrastructure in rural and regional areas to ensure all Victorian children get the best start in life
- Committed \$50,000 to enable young children in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the state to develop a love of reading
- Ensured vulnerable Victorian families in rural areas have access to playgroups through the \$1.2 million Rural Playgroup Initiative
- Allocated \$36.6 million to the early childhood education and care workforce. The Coalition has proactively supported the early childhood workforce with scholarships for educators to gain or upgrade their qualifications, and incentives to attract and retain educators in hard-to-staff locations.