



ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE And Equity in Canberra Schools

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The Greens understand that supporting our students and young people is an investment in Canberra's future. We believe in supporting our students' mental and emotional wellbeing. That means ensuring that every student, no matter which school they go to, can get the help they need. It also means investing in the best possible teachers and supporting leadership from our principals.

> Investing in our schools' infrastructure

The ACT Greens understand that the nature of education is changing - both in substance and style. Providing the best possible safe and supportive learning environments is critical to being a truly inclusive school community.

That is why we will:

- » **Increase annual base funding for capital upgrades** at public schools by an additional \$10 million per annum to address the obvious needs in ageing schools, remedy heating and cooling issues, and support longer term population pressures;
- » **Provide an additional \$10 million dollars** towards immediate capacity needs and work collaboratively with each school community to identify what infrastructure is needed by students and teachers to modernise ageing buildings; and

» **Enhance the existing “School Modernisation Program”**, by working closely and cooperatively with the school community to face the challenges of ageing infrastructure and population pressures.

> Balancing school based decision-making and a cohesive schools network

The ACT Greens believe that we must balance the ability of schools to make decisions about the needs and aspirations of their students and school community, with the best practice and efficiency that a cohesive schools system can bring. That is why we support reviewing school based decision making to ensure that it's working for the whole community.

The ACT Greens will:

» **Devote the next Ministerial Advisory Committee** to exploring how effectively the current practice of school based decision is supporting school communities achieving the best possible outcomes for student engagement and academic achievement.

The Committee will also consider whether enhancements to existing school governance arrangements (incorporating parent and citizens associations, school boards, student bodies principal administration tasks, centralized policy and procedure development and task/resource allocation) would assist in this regard.

> Supporting teachers and principals

The ACT Greens recognise that to get the best possible education our children need the best possible teachers and great leadership from our principals. However, modern schools are increasingly complex environments. Teachers should feel supported and professionally valued throughout their entire career, not just when they start out.

A key recommendation from a recent Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey was that the wellbeing of principals can be improved by "providing opportunities for principals and deputy/assistant principals to engage in professional support networks on a regular basis." To provide better practical assistance to principals and to support teachers who have been in the profession for some time, the ACT Greens will invest \$10,000 per year to:

» **Fund the development of a practical professional mentoring strategy** and financially support an ongoing peer network to support principals, in order to see the realisation of the 2015 Enterprise Agreements recognition of the need for real action on Principals Wellbeing;

» Ensure that starting in 2018, at every 10 years of service, teachers can develop a **Professional Learning Pathways Package**, and are supported to access advanced skills professional development opportunities; and

» Work collaboratively with teachers and principals through the Australian Education Union to ensure that the focus is on teaching, not administration, through the 2018 EBA negotiations.

The ACT Greens have already announced their commitment to:

> **Supporting students' in the classroom**

Evidence shows that a large percentage of our students will struggle with some aspects of learning, and we know that each and every student has different needs in the classroom. Right now, too many students are finding themselves accessing out of school assessments and tutoring, to "catch up" or overcome their learning difficulties.

ACT's public school teachers and principals have been working in 2016 to implement the recently released Great Teaching By Design in their day to day practice. The ACT Greens will provide an additional \$4.4m to help implement the strategy and provide further support teachers and students in the classroom.

The ACT Greens will increase support to students and teachers in the classroom by **funding four senior teachers** with expertise in pedagogy, learning difficulties, and literacy and numeracy programming, who will:

- » use a coaching and mentoring model to provide hands-on training and support across the school,
- » assist with programming and review the teaching strategies that are in place across schools;
- » help schools implement evidence-based teaching practices in classrooms; and

- » ensure the 'Response to Intervention' model is used consistently, specifically for children with learning difficulties, across classrooms and schools, including targeted individual support where required.

The ACT Greens will also fund **four additional school psychologists** in 2017 to build the assessment capacity for children with learning difficulties to ensure that families don't need to spend thousands of dollars undertaking tests privately.

> **Investing in student mental health**

To support children and young people with mental health issues the ACT Greens will commit to:

- » fund a comprehensive evaluation of the existing services available across government and non government support service;
- » \$4m over the next four years to fund counselling services in the community specifically for children and young people;
- » implement a streamlined referral process that can be utilized by all Canberra schools;
- » ensure resource materials are made easily available in all schools to ensure that students, teachers and principals are fully aware of services available;
- » work with experts in the field such and ACT Health Child and Adolescent Mental Health services and Headspace ACT to develop a school system-wide (including non government schools) referral process.

With more awareness of mental health, particularly depression and anxiety, young people are seeking help and finding all too often that services are not in the right place or available at the right time. The Greens believe that just like physical health, mental health is critical to our overall wellbeing.

That is why we will dramatically increase mental health funding available to young people, and support more appropriate interventions for schools and colleges students many of whom will reach out for help for the first time.

> **New Official Visitor for Education**

The ACT Greens believe that more can be done to provide support to carers and parents of school students. In 2012, we greatly strengthened and expanded the ACT Government's Official Visitor scheme which aims to detect and prevent systemic issues in government institutions. Official Visitors do this by visiting institutions, talking to officials and people in their care, inspecting records, reporting on the standard of facilities, resolving grievances and reporting to the Minister.

The ACT Greens will:

» create a new Official Visitor for Education, accessible to parents/carers of students at both government and non-government schools, to provide a genuinely neutral and objective perspective on issues, such as enrolments, suspensions, or complaints.

> **Enhanced languages program**

The ACT has only 3 dedicated Language Immersion Programs. In an age of increasing internationalism and mobility, the ACT Greens believe that we should be actively pursuing enhanced language studies for our public school system. That is why we will increase bilingual education opportunities in ACT Public Schools by:

» developing a new bilingual Mandarin school for the North of Canberra; and
» supporting more high schools to enhance their language programs.