



# Trish Doyle MP

## Member for Blue Mountains



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### New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

#### Higher School Certificate Standards

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The Labor Party firmly believes that an excellent education system provides young people with the best opportunities to succeed beyond school, but we do not support this Government's changes to linking year 9 NAPLAN tests with receipt of the Higher School Certificate.

This is a hurried and poorly planned policy. There seems to have been very little consultation with teachers and educational specialists. I am told that there are absolutely no resources to support students in meeting these new benchmarks.

At face value this initiative does little more than put increased pressure on 14-year-old students, their families and their schools to reach unrealistic benchmarks.

All qualified educational research points to the fact that academic improvement will be achieved only when considered within a holistic educational context, rather than a literacy or numeracy benchmark. We need to look at the whole student. We need to support the parents who are supporting their children through school and we need to support the teachers.

I say to Mr Piccoli, "When was the last time you spent a day in the classroom supporting children who are feeling anxious?"

Mr Piccoli and the current Minister pop into schools, have photos taken, shake some hands and everyone stands there nervously until they are gone. But do they know what it is like to be in the classroom? I remember very clearly being in the classroom over 25 years, and the pressure has increased. Parents and teachers are telling me they are anxious as a result of these proposed changes, which are absolutely ludicrous.

A concerned father, Russell, wrote to me:

*These decisions seem to have been made by someone out there without consulting with parents, without consulting with the schools and the amount of kids who are going to get to year 9 and fail this process and then give up will be huge.*

*Many kids, like mine, from low socio-economic backgrounds struggle as it is. What the hell have you done? Who is going to pay the extra money for my kid to meet this benchmark?*

Angry mum, Susan, says:

*My daughter is so upset, she came home telling me if she didn't get three band 8s or 9s in NAPLAN, she wouldn't get her HSC. She considers herself a failure already.*

These tests were always meant for diagnostic purposes only. They have progressively been used to punish schools and teachers since their inception. It is time that we stood back and listened to the community, because it is bad policy.