The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan
For
Education
THE LIBERAL NATIONALS COALITION PLAN FOR EDUCATION

Victoria’s government education system has traditionally been recognised as the most independent and diverse in Australia.

It is designed to afford school leaders sufficient resources and support to provide a unique and personal education to every student, within the accepted common curriculum.

By allowing principals and teachers freedom to create unique school experiences, Victorian government schools are designed to co-operate with and thereby become an organic part of their local community.

This model is based on the belief that a government education system can only foster lifelong values of learning, achievement and civic responsibility through real cooperation with each child’s parents, neighbours and community.

To be effective, local school freedom demands the highest standards from teachers and principals operating in a relationship of trust with the Government.

This is the only way to ensure each school becomes its best, and that every Victorian child is given the best possible start in life.

These are the core beliefs and ideals which will govern a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government’s stewardship of Victoria’s government schools.
LABOR’S FAILINGS

Over the last decade under Labor the natural evolution of Victoria’s government schools has stalled.

A creeping bureaucracy is smothering Victorian government schools, while other education systems thrive under decentralised bureaucratic models.

Parents recognise the difference with almost all growth in Victorian schools since 1999 occurring in Catholic and independent schools, where independence and autonomy are pursued relentlessly.

Labor’s creeping bureaucracy

Despite clear evidence in favour of school autonomy, Labor’s bureaucracy has increasingly sought to restrict and control government schools and school leaders over the last decade.

For example since 1999:

- “Local school networks” have been absorbed by the bureaucracy despite originating as forums for principals to share ideas;
- Regional offices have morphed from support agencies to outposts of the central bureaucracy increasing paperwork and restricting services;
- Principals are losing control over major disciplinary decisions; and
- School councils are increasingly forced to follow the dictates of regional officials instead of their local communities.

Labor increases control, but shifts costs

Like all overly centralist models, Labor’s bureaucracy has increased its control over schools while shifting costs and problems back onto parents and school staff. For example,

- Levies and charges are increasing for many parents who have no option but to send their child to a government school; and
A growing number of students with special needs are receiving less support, forcing principals and teachers to pick up the load.

Under the Labor Government school parents, teachers and principals are being asked to bear unsustainable personal and financial costs.

**Principals are suffering under Labor**

In the most recent education department survey of Victorian government school principals, Labor’s investment in education and school management was heavily criticised.

According to the *Your Job, Your Say* survey of Victorian government school principals:

- 71 per cent said too much ‘red tape’ makes it hard to get things done in their job;
- 77 per cent do not have all the necessary equipment and support required to do their job correctly;
- 77 per cent feel they do not have a sense of belonging to central office;
- 75 per cent do not have enough time to do their job effectively;
- 71 per cent are not told about upcoming changes in time to prepare for them;
- 68 per cent said change is not well managed by the government;
- 68 per cent said the government is not genuinely interested in the wellbeing of its employees; and
- 68 per cent responded negatively to their workload.

Based on the survey it is clear that Labor is failing to deliver on almost every measure in education, despite the commitment and goodwill of school principals.

Labor was so embarrassed by the results of the survey that no further *Your Job, Your Say* surveys were conducted after this one.

**Children’s Education is disadvantaged under Labor**

The ultimate victims of Labor’s bureaucratic incompetence and dysfunctional leadership are students.
Core education objectives like reading and writing are not being met, leaving many Victorian students without the tools to move from school to adult life. For example,

- Most Victorian students have failed to improve literacy and numeracy standards since 1997 despite Labor spending over $1.2 billion on programs; and

- Since the first NAPLAN literacy and numeracy tests were conducted in 2008, Victorian student results have gone backwards in more test categories than any other state.

Despite these signs of creeping bureaucracy and incompetence, the Minister is desperate to maintain the fiction that Education is Labor’s first priority.

Under Labor information is tightly controlled and principals are afraid to speak out, entrenching a culture of secrecy and bureaucratic incompetence.

And most disturbingly, these problems are occurring despite the genuine commitment and world class ability of many government school teachers and principals.

Under Labor Victorian government school students are missing out because they are trapped in a system that is dysfunctional, inflexible and incapable of providing the quality education they deserve.

**UNDER A LIBERAL NATIONALS COALITION GOVERNMENT:**

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will fix Labor’s mess.

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Support government school parents and free up principals and teachers to make our government schools the best in Australia.
To achieve real and meaningful education reform the Liberal Nationals Coalition will focus on:

- investments in child welfare and students with special needs;
- greater freedom for principals and school councils;
- better school discipline;
- evidence based investment in core literacy and numeracy; and
- better curriculum options including specialisation and languages.

It is time for a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government to free Victoria’s dedicated teachers and principals by reigniting momentum for school independence and autonomy.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition’s education policy sets out common sense reforms and new investments which give back to government schools the control and support they need to give every child a world class education.

Below are details of the Liberal Nationals Coalition’s common sense reforms and major new investments in Victorian government schools.

SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS

A Liberal Nationals Coalition will make a major investment in child welfare and students with special needs.

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Invest $113.7m over four years to increase the number of Welfare Officers by 150 and commit to providing Welfare Officers in every primary school by the end of our second term of Government.

For years Victorian primary schools have been calling for Primary Welfare Officers and under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government every government primary school will get access to them.
Under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government the extra Primary Welfare Officers will provide a range of services including counselling, behaviour management and referrals for students at all government primary schools.

At present less than half of Victoria’s 1,200 government primary schools have access to a Primary Welfare Officer.

Victorian schools are crying out to the Labor Government for more support to manage growing behavioural and classroom problems, but they are being ignored.

Under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government Victorian government primary schools will receive access to 150 extra Primary Welfare Officers over the next four years and extra officers within the next eight years, ensuring every government primary school in the state has access to this beneficial resource.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition commitment for 150 extra primary welfare officers will be in addition to the 256 welfare officers currently working in Victorian primary schools.

**A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:**

- Abandon Labor’s failed “triage model” for providing student support services and provide funding directly to principals.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition will abolish the failed “triage model” for delivering support to needy students in a major overhaul of student support services in Victorian schools.

Under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government control over funding for student support services including psychologists, speech pathologists and learning aids will be returned to principals.

Following a two month consultation in 2008 Labor stripped school principals of the power to decide how to spend funding for students with special needs, including learning and behavioural problems and a range of disabilities.

Under Labor’s rushed plan, Victoria’s student support services officers were put under the control of central bureaucrats. Because of this schools must request a service each time one is needed.
Victorian principals have since been forced to complete significant amounts of paperwork for each request and parents are waiting months for requests to be processed by the central bureaucracy, with no support for students in the interim.

Under the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition’s model for funding student support services, officers will be provided directly to principals or alternatively in some rural education regions resources can be pooled in the regional office.

Funding will be determined on the basis of need according to an updated resource allocation model, developed in consultation with principals.

Principals will then have the power to determine what mix of student support services best fits the needs of their school.

In rural education regions that decide to pool their resources, the regional office will be responsible for student support resources and will allocate them on an annual basis following discussion with principals in those regions.

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition’s model will return control and certainty to principals, and give parents security to know their children can access support services when they need them.

**AUTISM**

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Ensure that within its resources, students with autism will be able to access the educational option that best meets their needs. This could include specialist autistic schools, special schools, and mainstream schools with support, including base rooms or any combination of the above.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition believes that there needs to be a flexible approach to educating and supporting children in Victorian Schools who are autistic.

Just as there are many differences in the degree and manifestation of autism, there needs to be a range of ways to teach these children.
By freeing up schools to best meet their students’ needs, schools will be able to enter into cluster arrangements and use their own resources in a more flexible manner.

**BETTER SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Give principals back the power to suspend and expel students at their own discretion and, ban and remove banned items at school, including weapons.

- Invest $2 million in professional development for teachers to manage student behaviour.

- Legislate to increase penalties for crimes committed on school property.

- Apply the full force of the law against any person who commits a criminal offence on school grounds, in or out of school hours.

- Ensure funding provided to students in mainstream schools follows them if they are diverted to specialist schools for troubled students.

- Pilot and support selected models which will form the basis of a number of options schools can chose to better cater for their disengaged students.

Schools are increasingly feeling the effects of a more anti-social and violent Victoria. Children as young as ten are being caught with weapons according to Victoria Police. Violent attacks are increasingly occurring on school property and the education department is spending enormous amounts of money on secret payouts to teachers and students who have been victims of bullying and violence.

According to a recent study of Australian schools, teachers are spending as much as 45 per cent of their time trying to keep order in the classroom instead of teaching.
Despite this recognised and emerging problem, Labor recently developed plans to reduce principals’ powers to suspend and expel students. The clear position of the education bureaucracy in cases of misbehaviour and violence in schools is that it values the interests of perpetrators over victims. This is the unacceptable result of Labor’s refusal to acknowledge that school discipline and violence are real problems.

Under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government the network of schools which provide options for troubled students will be supported and protected.

**BULLYING AND CYBER BULLYING**

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Immediately conduct research into the extent, nature, cause and effect of all types of bullying in Victorian schools.
- Provide schools with a common definition, understanding and guidelines to prevent and deal with bullying, including all contemporary electronic forms.
- Ensure that all schools keep full records of all bullying incidents to inform research and allow the Department to support schools that have an obvious issue with bullying.
- Provide more resources and training for teachers on understanding, identifying and dealing with bullying.
- Ensure that all schools have a bullying policy based on statewide definitions and guidelines and that updates of this policy, statistics and survey results of parents, teachers and children be reported to the school community each year.

There is a growing problem with bullying both in society and in our schools. Its form has expanded from physical and verbal bullying to the more insidious forms of electronic and social networking websites. The community, parents, teachers and students need to be better educated about the cause and effect of bullying. Students especially need to feel confident to report bullying and teachers need the knowledge and expertise to tackle bullying in their schools.
CHAPLAINCY

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Provide increased resources and support for chaplaincy programs. We will increase funding by $200,000 per year to Access Ministries so that they can better meet the administrative and training needs of Chaplains in Victorian schools.

EDUCATION FOR SIGHT IMPAIRED CHILDREN

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Fund specialised equipment for sight impaired children studying at the new Insight education centre.

Since the closure of Vision Australia’s school for children with a vision impairment the Labor Government has neglected to fill the void. Victoria is now the only state not to provide specialist education for children with a visual impairment. There is also now no facility that provides training and specialist equipment for teachers.

Former parents from Vision Australia’s school have set up an education centre themselves, called Insight, which will commence operation in 2011. Although Insight will qualify for recurrent funding the parents are not in a position to apply for capital funding, especially for specialised equipment that they will require immediately.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition will invest over $2 million to provide equipment to allow Insight to begin operating immediately.

CURRICULUM

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Provide $2.5 million over four years for grants to schools to specialise in different fields.

Specialisation has been shown to help core curriculum performance. Some schools in Victoria have achieved enormous success by specialisation.
Specialisation fits within the Liberal Nationals Coalition’s broader policy theme of letting schools become unique and pursue their own and their community’s goals.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition will provide $100,000 grants to up to 25 schools to invest in training and skilling of staff and minor capital investments for equipment to specialise in fields such as robotics, multi-media, fashion, design or horticulture.

Grants will be awarded on application and some schools will be able to receive multiple grants to continue and expand existing projects. Successful grant applications will need to be supported by school councils.

MULTILINGUAL VICTORIA

Under the Multilingual Victoria plan a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Revolutionise language education in Victoria by creating one of the world’s most diverse and effective Language Other Than English (LOTE) programs.
- Introduce compulsory LOTE classes for every Victorian primary school, with a long-term plan to provide LOTE training for every government school student from prep to year 10 by 2025.
- Build a cohort of language teachers qualified and trained to world’s best practice standard.
- Enhance and support the role of community language schools.
- Increase the number of qualified language teachers by introducing scholarships of $20,000 for undergraduate teachers and $50,000 for qualified teachers to study languages.
- Invest $1 million in ‘start up’ grants to schools taking up LOTE for the first time to purchase specialist texts, DVDs and IT resources.

Victoria has the resources to become one of the leaders in multilingual education in the English speaking world, but under Labor we are increasingly falling behind.
A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will close the language gap and create a truly multilingual Victoria.

The plan will introduce compulsory Languages Other Than English (LOTE) classes for every Victorian primary school and fund 210 scholarships over the next four years for Victorian teachers to become qualified in LOTE.

By 2025 the Liberal Nationals Coalition plans to have every Victorian government school student in Prep to year 10 studying a compulsory language other than English.

The first group of Prep students to study a compulsory language other than English will begin in our first term after the Liberal Nationals Coalition has increased the number of qualified language teachers in Victoria.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

If Victoria is to fulfil the promise of an international and multicultural society, we must lift our goals and revolutionise the way we deliver language education.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition will invest in specialist language education to increase Victoria’s multilingual capacity and expand the pool of qualified language other than English speakers.

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Increase per student funding for community language schools from $120 to $190 per year.

Community language schools provide a valuable service to the Victorian community and are complementary providers of language education.

In 2009 there were more than 36,000 students studying 42 different languages in more than 180 community language schools in Victoria.

Community language schools are run by incorporated not for profit groups to provide classes after school or on weekends for students up to year 12 to study languages spoken at home and within their communities.
Enabling students to study in a targeted environment with smaller classes and access to fluent speakers means they will be able to advance their language studies to an expert level.

The $190 per student investment by a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will help to meet the cost of tuition, materials, books and classrooms.

By allowing diversity in the system, and supporting the vital work of community language schools, Victorian language students of all standards benefit from a more targeted language education.

Many community language schools use local school premises for educational purposes. In order to assist these community schools to succeed and thrive it is important that they do not pay excessive fees for the use of the classrooms.

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will also develop a framework agreement for community language schools to negotiate rental costs for accessing government school facilities after hours.

The Victorian School of Languages will continue to deliver language education programs in a range of regions.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

The Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- In co-operation and consultation with the Indigenous community, develop strategies for retention of indigenous students in school and training programs.
- Introduce educational programs aimed at improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes of Indigenous students.
- Encourage the Federal Government to provide more places for indigenous students at university campuses.
- Encourage and assist Indigenous students to stay at school and undertake further education and training through innovative programs implemented in partnership with communities, industry and government.
• Work with schools and families in an effort to reduce absenteeism in schools.

• Encourage young indigenous people to play sport and be involved in the arts, and provide greater opportunities for talented sports people and artists to pursue their careers.

Through targeted and effective funding, Indigenous students will be encouraged to complete secondary school and further education and training and to move into paid employment.

CURRICULUM/WHOLE SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

• Give school communities the freedom to retain the current professional development student free days arrangement.

This will give schools the option of providing three days at the beginning of the school year and one day in late Term Two or to adopt a model of four professional development student free days attached to any or all of the four term holiday breaks.

CURRICULUM

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

• Recruit 100 science and mathematics specialists to work in primary schools to increase students’ interest in science and mathematics.

• Fund one year Diploma of Education scholarships for 400 science graduates, over four years.

• Work with fellow state and territory governments as well the Federal Government in the further design and implementation of the National Curriculum.

• Ensure that the National Curriculum is delivered in a way that recognises that children learn in different ways and at different rates.
• Recognise and address the reduced numbers of students studying maths and science and the lack of teachers in these areas.

Curriculum must contain a balance of knowledge, specific skills and broader generic skills that will equip Victorian students with the armoury they need to adapt to a quickly changing workforce and to enhance ongoing education through their lives.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

At the 2006 State Election the Labor Government committed to rebuild, renovate or modernise every single Victorian government school across the state at a cost of at least $3.2 billion. This program according to the Government would be completed by 2016-2017.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition is committed to this program to upgrade all government primary and secondary schools across the state, but will reorganise the priority list to ensure that those schools in desperate need of an upgrade have funds committed to them earlier than under Labor’s program. These school projects will commence in the first term of a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government.

These schools include:

- Apollo Bay P-12 $7m
- Ashwood College $10.5m
- Aspendale Primary School $2m
- Auburn Primary School $4m
- Bairnsdale Secondary College $10m
- Beaumaris Primary School $0.095
- Belvoir Special School $6m
- Birralee Primary School $3m
- Blackburn Primary School $3.8m
- Brighton Secondary College $5m
- Castlemaine Secondary College $7m
- Colac College – Stage 3 $11m
- Dingley Primary School $2.5m
- Emerald Primary School $6m
- Fairhills Primary School $4m
- Ferntree Gully North Primary School $4m
- Gisborne Secondary College $3.5m
Kooweerup Secondary College $7m
Mirboo North Secondary College $6m
Montmorency Primary School $4m
Mountain Gate Primary School $3m
Mt Waverley North Primary School $1m
Narre Warren North Primary School $0.02m
Nepean Special School $0.1m
Patterson Lakes Primary School $0.05m
Pembroke Secondary School $9.2m
Pinewood Primary School $4.5m
Ringwood Heights Primary School $1m
Ringwood North Primary School $3m
Rosebud Primary School $3m
Sandringham College $6m
Sandringham Primary School $0.095m
Seaford North Primary School $0.875m
Seaford Primary School $0.875m
Sebastopol Secondary College $18m
Seymour Regeneration $1m
Templestowe College $5m
Toorloo Arm Primary School $3m
Wattleview Primary School $4m
Yarrabah Special School $0.1m

Further, the Liberal Nationals Coalition will complete those schools which have money budgeted to them in the 2010-11 Budget.

These schools include:

Bendigo Senior Secondary College $8m
Boort P-12 $5.02m
Burwood Heights Primary School $2.477m
Leongatha Secondary College $2.176m
Yarragon Primary School $0.7m

In addition, the Liberal Nationals Coalition has announced that the following schools will attract new money:

Boronia Heights College $50,000
Eaglehawk Primary School $2m
Kingswood Primary School $55,000
Proposed Laurimar Secondary College feasibility study $100,000
Mt Erin Secondary College $9m
Officer Secondary College (new) $20m
Officer Special School (new) $10m
Parkdale Secondary College $5.5m
Proposed Prahran Secondary Planning $200,000
Romsey Secondary College – Planning $250,000
Somerville Secondary College Technical Centre $4m
Timbarra Secondary College Year 10-12 Planning $200,000
Torquay Secondary College (new) $20m
Western Autism School $4m

There will be a further $10 million allocated for a School Improvement Fund.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition will immediately conduct a complete audit of the maintenance needs of Victorian Government Schools.

OVERHAUL BUREAUCRACY

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Overhaul the education bureaucracy to reduce the burden on all Victorian government schools

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government overhaul of education bureaucracy will occur as follows:

- Regional offices will become support agencies instead of bureaucratic outposts
- Regional offices will no longer control funding for student support services
- Control over school networks will be returned to principals
- School councils will be given greater power over principal selection
- Principals and school councils will be given control over capital works management
- Principals and school councils will be given greater control over professional development
ALLOWING TEACHERS TO TEACH AND PRINCIPALS TO BE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- In conjunction with teachers and principals review the growing testing, reporting and assessment requirements being placed on schools with a view to a substantial reduction in the time and disruption that these requirements are demanding.

- Reduce red tape and bureaucratic requirements imposed by the Department of Early Education and Childhood Development (DEECD).

A joint project of principals and DEECD will identify up to a 50 per cent reduction in compliance, emails and other red tape. Also any new Government program or requirement must be “paperwork neutral” through either a “no paperwork” requirement or offsets from existing requirements. Schools will also be free to negotiate agreed local reductions in red tape requirements.

NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Increase funding to non-government school students to 25 per cent of the recurrent cost of educating a student in a government school.

- Invest $240 million in addition to the $2 billion plus which is required to meet existing funding commitments for non-government schools over the next four years.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition’s commitment to meeting the 25 per cent funding benchmark was first made in 2008 but Labor only matched this commitment when it made a sudden backflip just weeks before the state election.
However the detail of Labor's election-eve promise showed that it will not provide any extra funding for non-government school students until 1 July 2011. Unlike Labor, the Liberal Nationals Coalition will increase funding for non-government schools from the start of the 2011 school year.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition has consulted with the sector about the amount of extra funding required to meet 25 per cent of the cost of educating a student in a government school, and will increase funding provided to the non-government education sector to meet that target into the future.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition has set aside $240 million over the next four years in additional funding to meet the 25 per cent target. This $240 million in new funding will be in addition to funding already committed under the current agreement.

Funding non-government school students at 25 per cent of the cost of educating a student in a government school will bring Victoria into line with other states, including New South Wales and Queensland.

The Liberal Nationals Coalition is aware of the limitations of the current non-government schools funding model and will review it to address equity concerns raised by member schools of Independent Schools Victoria.

Funding for students with a disability will also be addressed in the context of that review.

WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

TEACHER QUALITY

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- **Work with the Federal Government to pursue the National Partnership on Teacher Quality.**

- **Fund programs to improve professional support, reward high performing teachers, develop school leadership and provide incentives to employ teachers at hard-to-staff schools.**

Under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government funds under these programs will no longer be allocated by the central bureaucracy.
Instead individual schools will be able to evaluate models to deliver outcomes that best support the particular needs and expertise of their school community.

WORKFORCE

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Encourage former teachers to return to teaching on a full or part time basis, attract mature age and/or qualified adults through accelerated courses, on the job training and salaries which recognise their work experience and qualifications.

LEADERSHIP

A Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will:

- Utilise National Partnership funding to develop leadership skills in our principals and staff with positions of responsibility. One on one coaching for leaders will be encouraged and expanded.

Quality leadership is vital in delivering the highest standards in Victorian schools.

The current model for leadership training is important and will continue under a Liberal Nationals Coalition Government.

However under the current model there is not enough targeted coaching and assistance for principals at the school level.

Many schools have identified this need and are using limited funds from existing school budgets to access one on one coaching and leadership training in schools.

A Liberal National Coalition Government will enhance the current leadership training model by redirecting National Partnership funding toward coaching and assistance within the school on a one on one basis.
TOTAL COSTINGS:

Recurrent Funding

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Capital Funding

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