

Will Hodgman MP
Leader of the State Opposition
Saturday August 2, 2008

Commitment to hold the Government to account on education

The State Opposition will continue to unashamedly press the Bartlett Government to deliver the improved educational outcomes that are so desperately needed in Tasmania after ten long years of Labor Government incompetence.

The Leader of the State Opposition, Will Hodgman, will attend the Tasmanian State Schools Parents and Friends Association's Annual Conference, "Fit for Life", on Saturday in Exeter, and participated in a Panel Discussion with the Premier, David Bartlett, and Greens Leader, Nick McKim.

"The State Parents and Friends Association provides an invaluable link between state school and college students, parents and school communities and Government, and I am looking forward to attending the conference and engaging in constructive debate about the state of our education system," Mr Hodgman said.

"Above all, I want to emphasise that the current situation of educational underperformance in the State is not acceptable and that the Tasmanian Liberals are committed to working to fix that."

Mr Hodgman recently released the Tasmanian Liberals' policy towards a Smarter Tasmania and committed that within the first four years of a Hodgman Liberal Government, all children would be able to read and write within relevant national benchmarks for their age.

"Key education indicators reveal that too many Tasmanian students are underperforming and failing to achieve to an acceptable standard that will enable them to gain the qualifications and skills that they - and the Tasmanian economy - will need for the future," Mr Hodgman said.

"Whilst the annual Education budget has increased from \$523m to \$868m over the past 10 years, class size targets have not been met, the retention rate for year 12 has slipped to its lowest level since 1998 and year 3, 5 and 7 students are in a number of areas are going backwards and failing to reach Tasmania Tomorrow standards.

"And although the Tasmanian Liberals are delighted to see the adoption by the Government of part of the initiatives announced by us in March this year, including one-to-one and intensive support for children, the Government's initiatives do not go far enough."

Mr Hodgman said that while the Premier's Budget allocation of \$34.8m over 4 years to improve functional literacy and numeracy in Tasmania will only go to those schools who put up their hand and those in low socio-economic areas, it is Liberal policy that funds be available for one-to-one

support of all children who are at risk of falling behind when they need it, not just if they attend a particular school.

“We need all children to become literate and numerate. Where children are falling behind at any time, support and assistance should be provided to help unlock their capacity to achieve their potential,” Mr Hodgman said.

Mr Hodgman hopes that the conference will also discuss the Premier’s controversial post year ten *Tasmania Tomorrow* reforms, set to begin next year.

“The last thing that our education system needs is further upheaval that does not result in investment where it is needed – in the classrooms, on the ground – and that does not deliver the improved educational outcomes that are so desperately needed,” Mr Hodgman said.

“This is a major change and there is an alarming lack of detail about how the new system will work – everyone has just been told it is going to happen with no consultation or research and now questions are being asked as to the whereabouts of the legislation to back up the reforms.”

Mr Hodgman will also reiterate the Tasmanian Liberals’ commitment to provide free transport to and from schools for all Tasmanian primary, secondary and college school students – up to the age of 18.

“This initiative will be good for parents, good for the environment and will ensure that Tasmanian children have one less impediment to stop them attending school,” Mr Hodgman said.

For further information or comment please call

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