

Will Hodgman, MP
Leader of the State Opposition
Tuesday July 15, 2008

Labor's race to bottom mentality on education

The Leader of the State Opposition, Will Hodgman, has attacked the Premier's race to the bottom mentality when it comes to achieving educational outcomes for Tasmanian children.

At the Liberal State Council on the weekend, Mr Hodgman committed achieving the core objective of enabling every Tasmanian child to be able to read and write in line with the relevant national standards or benchmarks for their age, within the first four years of a Hodgman Liberal Government.

Mr Hodgman has already detailed several elements of Liberals' Smarter Tasmania education policy for achieving this. * (see below)

However, the Premier, David Bartlett, has scoffed at the commitment, and the Australian Education Union has been disgracefully negative about it.

Mr Hodgman said he was sick of the Labor Government's race to the bottom mentality.

"The bare minimum we should be aiming for is having our children being able to read and write in line with national standards," Mr Hodgman said.

"For the teachers union and the government to adopt such a negative attitude to this commitment to giving our children greater opportunities in life defies belief but it is what we have come to expect after ten years of Labor.

"No Tasmanian should not tolerate a situation whereby children being educated in their public schools are less literate and numerate than children attending public schools in other States. The former Premier, Paul Lennon, recently described the educational outcomes of Tasmanian children as unacceptable and we entirely agree.

“The Liberals will take action and we are committed to achieving results.

“Making the State a Smarter Tasmania is critical to achieving the Liberal vision of making Tasmania a magnet for young, innovative and creative people.

“People will increasingly want to visit, do business with, and live in Tasmania if the values that underpin our State relate to their own values.

“This means they feel good about Tasmania, and the government that leads them, and Tasmania must provide the opportunities for people to achieve their full potential, including being a place where children have the potential to achieve the highest educational outcomes.”

****Elements of the Liberals’ Smarter Tasmania policy released to date include:***

- By 2014, extra payments to teachers will be linked to educational outcomes. We will use a professional performance pay model recognising professional development, leadership, innovation and importantly evidence of performance improvement and achievement by students.
- To create a socially diverse, creative and innovative Tasmania, with high-wage, high-skill economy, the State Liberals will, as a matter of economic survival, adopt strategies similar to those used in Finland that ensure that the gap between high and low-performing students is reduced, by investing heavily in education and training to develop a "culture of innovation".
- In order to enable all children to aim high and close the gap of achievement, the State Liberals will provide one-to-one and small group special assistance for all children who are falling behind at any one time;
- The State Liberals are committed to ensuring that every teacher has the support that they need to offer high quality learning programs for all students. The State Liberals recognise that the most fundamental contributor to effective learning is quality teaching and that quality teaching can make the single biggest difference to students’ literacy and other learning outcomes. All teachers, including those teaching subjects such as mathematics and science, are teachers of literacy. It is integral to all areas of learning;
- The State Liberals will broaden the definition of special education to include those children who are demonstrating learning difficulties and learning disabilities, coupled with early diagnosis, specialist teaching and learning support, to enable proper intervention;
- The State Liberals will expand the Launching into Learning model to ensure that children who are identified as having learning difficulties and learning disabilities should be able to access full diagnosis support and early intervention strategies. We see child health nurses as playing a key role in assisting with this process;

- We will work in partnership with the University of Tasmania to ensure the best undergraduate programs for developing teaching are provided, and to establish a Centre for the Continuing Education of Teachers to help develop a program of ongoing professional development that will provide opportunities for teachers to extend their understanding of best practice, teaching and learning methodologies across all disciplines, particularly literacy, numeracy and science and areas within special education. To encourage teachers to work to achieve additional education qualification, and attain their Masters Degree and areas of specialist expertise, the State Liberals will implement a performance based professional pay model, which will support all educators' commitment to an evidence based model of teaching and learning, and their investment in relevant extended learning particularly in areas of high need;
- The State Liberals remain committed to a smaller class size framework, as well as adopting an intensive support model of one-to-one and small group support for those students who fall behind; and
- The State Liberals recognise the learning power for students and their surrounding communities to work and study in a model of environmental efficiency, which facilitates learning about environmental studies, reuse and recycling, energy efficiency systems, climate change and design and living best practice. We will ensure that every new capital works project in our schools and colleges will adopt Green Schools best practice.

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