



SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOLS CARING FOR STUDENTS

The Greens' plan for positive learning environments

The Greens have a proud history of supporting students. Our plan, improving student wellbeing and broadening curriculum opportunities, will inspire our young people to be resilient, creative thinkers equipped to engage with our changing world.

Improving our public education system is one of the best investments we, as a nation, can make. We know that education is opportunity and we can promote lifelong learning among students by fostering positive learning environments in schools.

The Greens have a proud history of standing up for students. We've worked hard to strengthen anti-discrimination laws, pushing to remove exemptions for religious schools who are able to expel students on the basis of their sexuality. We'll continue to be a strong, caring voice for students in the parliament as we fight to give all young people the right to be who they are, no matter where they attend school.

We've also announced \$2 billion more than the current government is prepared to commit for school funding reforms. Decades of underinvestment in public education has led to deep inequalities in Australia's school system which we must fix, to stop the widening gap between rich and poor.

In addition to this funding, and our \$548 million package for supporting teachers, we have a fully costed \$452 million package investing in a broader range of curriculum opportunities in schools and increased wellbeing support for students. The Greens believe a high-quality education is the right of all Australians and we must invest in our schools to make sure every child has the chance to achieve success.

The Australian Greens' plan will:

- **Develop and implement** a National Plan of Action for Asian Literacy.
- **Provide greater funding** for music in government schools.
- **Increase funding for science and mathematics** teaching.
- **Provide funding for Indigenous languages** in the National Curriculum.
- **Increase the number of qualified mental health counsellors** and social workers in government schools by redirecting

funding from the National Chaplaincy Program, with additional funding of \$80 million per year.

- **Provide a grants program to schools** for community and student wellbeing programs, costing \$20 million per year.

> LANGUAGES

The Greens support the teaching of Asian languages in schools to enable young Australians to contribute to the future international community in this Asian Century. Learning Asian languages develops students' appreciation and respect for other cultures, customs and history and improves their ability to communicate across diverse cultures. Investing in Asian languages is vital for social, economic and cultural wellbeing in Australia. Despite the benefits of learning Asian languages, only 5.8% of year 12 students completed an Asian language subject in 2008.¹

The Greens will develop and implement a *National Plan of Action for Asian Literacy* by implementing a grants program of \$60 million, over 3 years, to support the teaching of Asian languages in schools. We know that if we want Australians to be global citizens, able to play an active role in the Asian Century, we need to invest in Asian languages now.

We will also dedicate \$10 million a year to enhance the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Australia risks losing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages without a more concerted effort. The Greens will provide funds on top of current programs for schools to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages alive. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest the educational outcomes for Aboriginal kids are significantly improved when they can learn in their own language.

The funding will ensure education service providers working in remote communities are supported to become bilingual in an Aboriginal language, that teachers working in Aboriginal communities can receive on-going mandated training in



Aboriginal language concepts and that Aboriginal language courses are made available to all pre-service teachers who are intending to work in Aboriginal communities.

> MUSIC IN SCHOOLS

The 2005 *National Review of School Music Education* revealed that music is an important and significant part of a young person's education and should have a clear place in our school curriculum.ⁱⁱ Research shows music education contributes to the 'emotional, physical, social and cognitive growth of all students' and enhances creativity, allowing students greater capacity for self-expression.ⁱⁱⁱ

Based on this research, the Greens will provide \$20 million over the forward estimates as additional funding for music education in schools and establish a \$10 million fund to purchase musical instruments. We will also provide \$2 million to develop and review the implementation plan for the 2005 *National Review of School Music Education*. Our plan will safeguard the place of music in schools and give far more students the opportunity to experience quality music education.

> SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

The Greens have a clear vision for Australia's future where our strength will be in our minds, not our mines. This requires a significant investment in all levels of education, including targeted funding for mathematics and science education in schools. We have our eyes firmly fixed on Australia's future and know that protecting our environment and creating a new diversified, innovative and low-carbon economy will require strong, well-educated minds.

Boosting funding to maths and science teaching in schools is crucial if we are to grow young people who are creative, innovative, confident thinkers able to respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

That's why the Greens will boost funding for maths and science in schools. We will invest \$10 million per year to ensure students have greater resources for science and maths learning and are exposed to a broader range of opportunities within these learning areas.

> MORE WELLBEING SUPPORT

Research shows that a significant percentage of students experience social and emotional difficulties during their school years.^{iv} Findings of a student social and emotional health survey revealed 18% of students say they are lonely and 31% say they are very stressed.^v

Data shows Australia performs moderately in relation to child and youth health and wellbeing indicators when compared with other OECD countries.^{vi} The Greens know we must do more to improve the wellbeing of our young people and recognise that schools are a critical place to start.

Being a young person can be a difficult and tumultuous time with modern life throwing up complex issues. Mental health challenges require highly skilled, properly qualified support.

We will redirect funding for the National School Chaplaincy and School Welfare Program, to increase funding and support for qualified school welfare and family support professionals in public schools, investing an additional \$80 million per year and providing more support for our students.

We need to support students throughout their schooling so they can feel safe, positive about learning and well prepared for life beyond school.

Research shows young people with a positive state of social and emotional health are more likely to be able to negotiate physical, intellectual and social challenges.^{vii}

> WELLBEING GRANTS PROGRAM

Positive wellbeing is crucial to students' personal development, resilience and social and emotional development. The Greens understand the importance of fostering strong, lasting links between schools and their local communities so young people can be exposed to a variety of positive programs outside the school setting.

We will provide \$20 million per year in grants to schools for community and student wellbeing programs, enabling students to be immersed in learning projects they might not otherwise encounter.

Wellbeing programs which focus on arts, environmental sustainability, human rights or other unique learning areas, will give students the chance to foster and grow their individual interests, and take up important learning to benefit their wellbeing.

> CARING FOR STUDENTS

School can be a stimulating, exciting environment but it can also be a difficult and challenging place for young people.

Our initiatives are an investment in the wellbeing of our students. They will offer opportunities to grow, build resilience and form positive relationships both within school and with the broader community.



We know that wellbeing is crucial for optimal learning. Positive learning experiences will foster a lifelong love of learning and participation in the community.

Providing greater curriculum opportunities is central to building up young people who are creative, innovative and informed; able to find their own strengths, fulfil their unique potential and contribute fully to our society.

The Greens know just how important our young people are to the future of our country and we're choosing to invest in them. It's about more than money; it's about opening up opportunity.

ⁱ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2010), *The Current State of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean Language Education in Australian Schools: Four Languages, Four Stories*, <http://foi.deewr.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/the_current_state_of_chinese_indonesian_japanese_and_korean_language_education_in_australian_schools.pdf> (4).

ⁱⁱ Department of Education, Science and Training (2005), *National Review of School Music Education: Augmenting the Diminished*, <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/9459/1/music_review_reportFINAL.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Education, Science and Training (2005), *National Review of School Music Education: Augmenting the Diminished*, <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/9459/1/music_review_reportFINAL.pdf> (v).

^{iv} Australian Scholarships Group (2007), *The State of Student Social and Emotional Health*, <[http://www.asg.com.au/Assets/Files/ASG_State_Student_Social_Emo_Health_short\[2\].pdf](http://www.asg.com.au/Assets/Files/ASG_State_Student_Social_Emo_Health_short[2].pdf)>

^v Australian Scholarships Group (2007), *The State of Student Social and Emotional Health*, <[http://www.asg.com.au/Assets/Files/ASG_State_Student_Social_Emo_Health_short\[2\].pdf](http://www.asg.com.au/Assets/Files/ASG_State_Student_Social_Emo_Health_short[2].pdf)> (9).

^{vi} Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2013), *Report Card: The Wellbeing of young Australians*, <<http://www.aracy.org.au/documents/item/126>> (4).

^{vii} Australian Scholarships Group (2007), *The State of Student Social and Emotional Health*, <[http://www.asg.com.au/Assets/Files/ASG_State_Student_Social_Emo_Health_short\[2\].pdf](http://www.asg.com.au/Assets/Files/ASG_State_Student_Social_Emo_Health_short[2].pdf)> (2).