



VALUING OUR TEACHERS

ADDRESSING THE PRESSURES OF TEACHING

The Greens' plan for improving conditions for teachers

Teachers and school leaders are facing increasing pressure. A caring society values teaching for the profession it is. The Greens' plan to improve conditions for teachers will provide support and care for teachers, both inside and out of the classroom.

We rely on our teachers to do one of the most important jobs in Australia. There is a growing recognition of the need to treat teaching as we treat other professions. At the moment, teachers reach the highest pay level very quickly and the only way they can advance their careers is to move out of the classroom and into administrative roles.

The Australian Greens know that if we want the best and brightest to be teaching our students, we have to offer career opportunities and incentives to stay in teaching positions. We need to attract the best to teaching and keep them there, which means appropriate career structures and support for the challenging work they do.

The Greens will provide schools and teachers with the necessary resources to create supportive school environments and produce better education opportunities for students. The Australian Greens' plan to support our teachers will address the increasing pressures teachers and school leaders are facing.

Our fully costed package, totalling \$548 million over the next three years of the forward estimates from 1 July 2014, includes:

- **Placing an addition 2, 235 teachers** in government schools through an investment of \$162.65 million per year.
- **Providing enhanced mentoring opportunities** for teachers worth \$10 million per year.
- **Investing in professional development programs**, worth an additional \$10 million a year.

> MORE TEACHING STAFF FOR SCHOOLS

The Greens will invest \$162.65 million per year to place an additional 2235 teachers in government schools where they are needed most.

Current research has shown that Australian teachers and principals experience high levels of stress related to various aspects of their work.ⁱ Having more teachers in schools will help reduce teacher workloads and contribute to improved mental health and wellbeing.

It will also mean more time for professional development, lesson planning, and for working together in what is a highly collaborative profession. It will give schools more time to better engage with parents and the community and allow teachers to work more reasonable hours, instead of the 60-hour weeks many currently endure.ⁱⁱ

Most importantly, our plan will improve the wellbeing of teachers by reducing the high levels of stress in the profession. Reducing teacher workloads is likely to improve overall work performance, meaning more high quality teaching and learning for students.

Our plan will place an extra teacher in one third of government schools. The costing for this proposal also includes a review of the trial program after three years, ensuring appropriate reflection and evaluation.

The Greens know how demanding teaching is. An additional 2,235 teachers in government schools is a crucial investment in caring for teachers and improving outcomes for students.

> ENHANCED MENTORING PROGRAMS

The Greens' believe in the need to have dedicated and integrated mentoring programs, to support teachers in the early stages of their career right through to later years, including those who aspire to become school leaders. Our initiative would establish a capped mentoring grants program, by investing \$10 million per year.



New teachers often feel underprepared and under supported and there is a real concern among teachers about the prevailing disrespect for the teaching profession. We are proposing enhanced mentoring programs to assist with the pressures teachers face from increasing challenges in schools including demands on their time, long working hours and pressure from parents or school leadership.

Principals, in particular, feel as though they are being pulled away from students and are unable to spend time fostering a love of learning within the school. Studies have shown that the principals who have the highest levels of professional support are also the principals who have the best mental health.ⁱⁱⁱ School leaders need to be supported throughout all stages of their careers to ensure their workplace wellbeing.

Creating a supportive school environment will have positive flow-on effects for students. Teachers and school leaders will be empowered to achieve their best and provide greater educational opportunities for students.

> MORE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Greens believe in the need to give teachers better professional development opportunities, to support teachers who are going to become school leaders and ensure all teachers have positive work experiences. We will establish a capped professional development grants program by investing \$10 million per year.

If we are to attract and then retain the best and brightest teachers, we must offer career progression opportunities similar to those available to other professionals.

There is a sense of an increasing prescription on how teachers must teach, and when. These requirements can inhibit teachers' creativity and their ability to respond to the unique needs of their students. They can also take time away from teachers as they work to develop and define the type of teacher they want to be.

We are proposing more professional development opportunities to support teachers through their careers. These opportunities will not only help teachers to define their goals but also to see them realised through support provided along the way.

> ADDRESSING THE PRESSURES OF TEACHING

As part of our commitment to caring for teachers, the Australian Greens secured a Senate Inquiry into NAPLAN testing earlier this year after hearing reports that NAPLAN test results were being misused in a way that was detracting from learning.

The inquiry received an overwhelming community response from parents, teachers, students, advocates and academics who voiced their concerns about the pressure and stress caused by NAPLAN testing.

We learned that teachers are under pressure for their students to perform in the tests and feel they need to spend time teaching to the NAPLAN test every week to achieve the results by which they will be judged. This is detrimental to student learning in the long term and is not indicative of a teacher's performance, causing high levels of stress and placing extra demands on teachers' time and attention. It also conflicts with teachers' knowledge of what is best practice.

Our initiatives complement our existing work around caring for teachers. By investing in more teaching staff, enhancing mentoring programs and providing more and better professional development opportunities, we can begin to improve conditions for teachers.

> EDUCATION IS OPPORTUNITY

We recognise the need to give teachers the value and respect they deserve. Education is crucial for a fair, inclusive and productive society.

The Greens have already pledged \$2 billion more than the current government is prepared to commit for school funding reforms. We know that education is opportunity and we're committed to improving our public education system by supporting our teachers. This will be one of the best financial investments we make.

Extra support for teachers will benefit students by contributing to more positive learning environments and enabling greater contact with teachers.

The Greens are committed to supporting and valuing our teachers as they undertake one of the most important jobs in Australia.

ⁱ Australian, *Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey* (2013), <<http://www.principalhealth.org/2011%20Final%20Report.pdf>> (9).

ⁱⁱ Australian, *Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey* (2013), <<http://www.principalhealth.org/2011%20Final%20Report.pdf>> (24).

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian, *Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey* (2013), <<http://www.principalhealth.org/2011%20Final%20Report.pdf>> (13).