Investing in Indigenous students and teachers

A Shorten Labor Government will invest $100 million to support Indigenous students to succeed at school and to boost the number of Indigenous teachers in our schools and universities.

This is part of Labor’s commitment to Closing the Gap and ensuring that every Australian child has access to a world class education, no matter their background, or where they live.

We need to do more to close the gap

Despite recent improvements in some areas, the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students remains unacceptable.

Indigenous students are still:

- Twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable in their first year of school.\(^1\)
- Up to two years behind at school.\(^2\)
- Behind non-Indigenous students’ NAPLAN results.\(^3\)
- Less likely to complete Year 12.\(^4\)

The 2016 Closing the Gap Report found that while progress towards targets for Year 12 completion is on track, school attendance, and reading, writing and numeracy targets are not on track.

This gap is also evident in NAPLAN results. In 2015, for year three NAPLAN tests, 18 per cent of Indigenous students failed to reach the national minimum standard, compared to less than 6 per cent of non-Indigenous students. In the Northern Territory, 51 per cent of Indigenous students achieved below the national minimum standard in numeracy, while at least 61 per cent of Indigenous students achieved below the national minimum standard in spelling, grammar and punctuation.\(^5\)

This is simply not good enough. Students who fall behind at school find it harder to go on to further study or find employment. That is why a Shorten Labor Government
is committed to ensuring Indigenous students have the same opportunities in education as their non-Indigenous counterparts.

A contributing factor in this disadvantage is the underrepresentation of Indigenous teachers in Australian classrooms. While 5 per cent of students are Indigenous, just 1 per cent of our teachers come from Indigenous backgrounds. [6]

While some recent improvements are evident, the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in their access, participation, retention and educational success remain largely unchanged. These outcomes limit the post-school options and life choices of Indigenous people, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.

Source: Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, National Indigenous Education: An Overview of Issues, Policies and the Evidence Base, p2

Labor’s positive plan to invest in Indigenous students and teachers

Support for students

Labor’s Your Child. Our Future policy will deliver the needs-based Gonski reforms on-time and in full.

This will mean schools and teachers have the resources they need to invest in programs and support to improve results and outcomes for Indigenous students.

Labor’s needs-based funding is already improving outcomes in schools and it is vital this continues. Successes of the last few years cannot be unwound by short-sighted cuts. At the local level, schools are already using this investment to provide support for Indigenous students, including:

- Early intervention literacy and numeracy programs.
- Breakfast clubs.
- Attendance, parenting and family support programs.
- Targeted professional development and training for teachers.
- One-on-one tutoring and mentoring.

In the 2018 and 2019 school years alone, Your Child. Our Future will mean schools have an additional $96 million to invest in programs to support Indigenous students.

With Your Child. Our Future, each Indigenous student will benefit from an average of $1,873 in dedicated federal support per year by 2019.

Indigenous teacher scholarships
A Shorten Labor Government will invest $9.6 million over eight years to provide 400 teacher training scholarships to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in the classroom.

Scholarships will be valued at $5,000 per year of full time study and will be available for up to four years of continuous study. 100 scholarships will be offered each school year from 2017.

Providing 100 Indigenous teacher scholarships per year was a recommendation of the More Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Initiative. [7]

As noted by the COAG Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs in 2010:

"Leaders and researchers agree that increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators is a key factor in fostering student engagement and improving educational outcomes." [8]

A Shorten Labor Government will act to fix this problem, getting more Indigenous teachers into the classroom.

**Needs-based funding making a difference at Le Fevre High School**

Labor’s needs-based funding has enabled Le Fevre High School in Adelaide to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. The school has been able to:

- Deliver targeted language programs for Indigenous students.
- Employ additional Indigenous teachers and support staff.
- Implement a Year Eight literacy intervention program to catch students who are falling behind.
- Provide more individual support for Indigenous students – including participation in the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience.

As a result of these programs, Le Fevre High has moved from a situation where no Aboriginal students successfully completed Year 12, to one where the majority of Aboriginal students attempt it. And the vast majority of these pass successfully - continuing on to TAFE, traineeships or university.

**Labor’s record**

In Government, Labor introduced the needs-based Gonski reforms, providing the resources needed to close the equity and achievement gaps in Australian schools.

Labor also designed and implemented the Close the Gap Framework, the first ever national strategy for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

In opposition, Labor has committed to reversing all of the Government’s school cuts; and will invest $36 billion more than the Liberals over the next 10 years and over $3.8 billion more in the 2018 and 2019 school years alone.

This will mean every student in every school will get individual support and attention.
to achieve their best.

The Liberals are walking away from historic funding agreements

Despite promising before the last election that they would deliver the Gonksi reforms, the Liberals have cut $29 billion from Australian schools over the next decade.

This will mean Australian students fall behind their international counterparts and lock in inequality between students in different parts of Australia. Students with the greatest needs will be hit the hardest by these cuts. Schools will not be able to invest in new programs for students who need the most help. Progress towards closing the gap targets will be at further serious risk.

Financial Implications

Indigenous teacher scholarships

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
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The cost of the Indigenous teacher scholarships program is offset by Labor's announced improvements to the Budget.

Funding for the additional $96 million in targeted support for Indigenous students formed part of Labor's Your Child. Our Future package announced on 28 January 2016, and is offset from Labor's announced improvements to the Budget.

[9] Totals may not sum due to rounding

Show your support for Labor’s plan for innovation through education