



ARNDPELL ANGLICAN COLLEGE

"News Flash"

Friday 6 August 2010



From the Headmaster:

Mr Gareth Leechman MA MEd MACE MACEL

With two weeks to go, I thought it was very important that our parent body become well informed about the various education policies of the three major political parties. I want to make it clear that I am not telling you which way to vote nor am I going to push my own political barrow, but I passionately believe in quality education and educational choice. All three parties have differing education policies and these will all have a different impact on the services that we offer. So before you vote please read the information below as way of informing yourself on what the differences are and how this might impact the educational choices you make for your children. The information has been taken from circular distributed by the Association of Independent Schools NSW and is republished with their permission. It is also important to note that during the election campaign some of these positions will change and may have already done so, so please keep yourselves aware of changes to this position.

With the 2010 federal election just weeks away this newsletter is devoted to the various parties' policy positions in education based on the information currently available.

Firstly, to put the situation in context, we must acknowledge the government's school funding record since it was elected in 2007. Funding for recurrent, capital and targeted programs has been allocated as agreed and the sector has been closely involved in implementing the Trade Training Centres program, the Digital Education Revolution (DER) and National Partnerships (NPs) - although the model used to implement NPs is extremely bureaucratic and is not suitable for our sector.

The independent schools sector was also included in the Building the Education Revolution (BER) and is achieving the aims of the program. The BER is being administered by the AIS, is competently managed by individual independent schools, has provided the economic stimulus sought and provided excellent value for taxpayer dollars. It has been a wonderful boost to the development of infrastructure in independent schools.

While this has been something of a revolution for education, the question that must be asked is whether a re-elected Labour government will continue to treat non-government schools and parents as essential partners in the delivery of quality education in this country - or will it bow to pressure from anti-non-government school unions and lobby groups and revert to divisive policies which will remove much of the innovation and progressive competition that non-government schools provide?

The Prime Minister, Julie Gillard and the Minister for Education, Simon Crean has just announced that the current funding arrangements for non-government schools would continue until the end of 2013 and that these funding arrangements would be indexed in real terms. They also announced that capital grants would be maintained until 2014.

An examination of the current policy positions of the major parties sheds some light on the possible future funding environment for the non-government schools sector.

Australian Greens education policy

The Australian Greens current position, in short, is to end the current SES funding arrangements by the end of 2010; to revert to 2003-04 funding levels to determine a gross

allocation for low SES 'private' schools; to remove existing exemptions under anti-discrimination legislation; to remove funding from so-called 'wealthy' schools; and to remove indexation and its link to government school costs.

While the Greens' policy position has not changed significantly over the last few years, it is largely unknown to parent communities across the non-government schools sector since the media focus is more often on their environmental, social and human rights policies.

The risk to the independent schools sector is not a probable implementation of these policies as the Greens will not govern in their own right, but, as Kenneth Wiltshire from the University of Queensland Business School stated in an opinion piece in *The Australian* newspaper on 23rd July: *"these are dangerous hands to be holding the balance of power."*

Wiltshire argues that the Greens are likely to be part of the next government through their influence in the Senate, and questions whether they can be trusted since they have not articulated how they would wield their power if they hold the balance of power in the Senate.

If this scenario eventuates it appears clear, from their current education policies, in which direction the Greens would push the Government with regard to the funding of non-government schools.

Wiltshire makes a very interesting and sobering point in relation to exercising the balance of power. He reflects that in the past the Australian Democrats in this situation applied a principle that they would never 'trade off between issues, but would negotiate on each issue separately'. To date the Greens have not articulated such a principle.

To assist schools to appropriately inform their parents on the Greens' education policy in relation to 'private' schools, some extracts are reproduced in this newsletter (see opposite page).

Coalition education policy

The Coalition's education policy has so far focused mainly on a 'School Cost Tax Rebate' policy than on their school funding position.

However, discussions with the Coalition indicate that they would continue to fund non-government schools under the current SES funding model with 'some minor adjustments'. The Shadow Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, has publicly stated this position on several occasions.

It is clear that under the Coalition indexation would continue under the existing arrangements, ensuring that funding would be retained in real terms. It is unclear, however, whether there is an intention to address the issue of Funding Maintenance. There appears to be no change in their approach to capital or targeted program funding and the BER will continue in its present form for the non-government sector (due to the efficiency with which the program has been delivered). It appears, however, that the Digital Education Revolution (DER) program would be at risk

This latter program is proving extremely valuable for schools, particularly with the additional infrastructure support funding, and the sector will push for a guarantee that this program will continue.

We will also push for increased capital funding, possibly through a national interest subsidy scheme or similar, to assist schools to extend their capacity to account for future enrolment increases.

ALP education policy

Some of the ALP education policy positions have been clearly articulated over the past couple of years and are not expected to change substantially as a result of the election. Trade Training Centres, DER and the BER will continue in their current form.

Also, if elected, they would instigate a full review of the funding of independent schools during their next term of office. No-one expects the government to pre-empt the findings of its Review of Funding. Surely, however, the Review is about targeting additional expenditure to areas of greatest disadvantage and educational need.

This includes developing a better process for identifying areas of educational need that require additional resourcing; determining an accurate measure of the cost to governments of educating each child to a high standard; developing an index to accurately measure annual increases in education costs; developing a fairer and more appropriate method of funding children with special needs; and developing a capital funding program to plan for future infrastructure needs in both the government and non-government schooling sectors.

The Review should not be about reducing funding in real terms to any school or setting up a funding mechanism that penalises parents who choose to make significant sacrifices in spending their after-tax dollars on educating their child.

The Prime Minister has stated she is "committed to moving Australia forward by providing responsible, far-sighted economic management..." It is hoped that the significant contribution that independent schools make – both financially and in providing the highest possible quality of education – will be part of that plan. The retention of funding levels to the non-government sector, in real terms, is an essential element if the education sector is also to move forward.

What are the education policies of the main parties?

The Australian Greens believe that:

federal schools funding policy should prioritise the public education system to ensure that public schools are able to provide the highest quality educational experiences and set the educational standards for the nation.

The Australian Greens want:

schools funding to be placed on an equitable footing by reversing the excessive increases in Commonwealth funding to non-government schools in recent years.

increased funding to public education through funding models for all sectors of the education system to prioritise public education.

The Australian Greens will:

introduce the same accountability and transparency frameworks for government funding to non-government schools as applies to public schools and extend the anti-discrimination measures that apply in public schools to private schools.

- ensure the viability and diversity of existing public schools is not endangered by

the development of new private schools.

- end the current arrangement for recurrent funding to non-government schools by no later than the end of 2010.
- implement a new model for recurrent funding to non-government schools based on the following:
 - proper consideration of the resource levels of non-government schools and their financial capacity, including fees and other parent contributions;
 - an appropriate measure for indexation of the funding of non-government schools that de-couples it from spending on public schools; and
 - non-government schools to be fully accountable to the parliament and therefore transparent to the public on their use of government funds and their financial situation, including all income and assets.
- ensure that non-government schools in receipt of government funding:
 - do not discriminate in hiring of staff or selection of students;
 - have an admissions and expulsions policy similar to public schools including an obligation to enrol; and
 - demonstrate social and community engagement and benefit by offering community access to facilities and/or a fee waiver for a percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or with special needs.
- invest the money saved from ending public subsidies to the very wealthiest private schools into a national equity funding programme for public schools.
- support the maintenance of the total level of Commonwealth funding for private schools at 2003-04 levels (excluding that re-allocated under previous clauses), indexed for inflation.

The above points are taken from the Australian Greens Education Policy which can be found at: <http://greens.org.au/policies/care-for-people/education>

Calendar Dates for August

Monday 9	Tuesday 10	Wednesday 11	Thursday 12	Friday 13	Saturday 14	Sunday 15
College Sport Photos Yr 9 R AFL – Arndell	Assessments Due: Yr 10 Geography Yr 10 Maths HZSZ Prim. Athletics Carnival Pennant Hills Park Yr 10 PASS (Laser Skirmish) Rouse Hill Regional Park Yrs 7/8/9 Parent/Teacher Interviews' (M-Z) Gymnasium	Yr 12 Auditions – Arndell Talent Spectacular Yr 11 PE – Golf Killarney Golf Driving Range, Box Hill Yr 9 B/W AFL – Arndell HSC Performance Evening	Assessments Due: Yr 11 Timber & Graphics Yr 12 Timber & Graphics College Formal Photos	Snr. School Assembly Jnr. School Chapel Aid Learning Support Meeting Snr. Library Special Olympic Dance Evening Performance - JLPA Centre .	K. Toms Dancing Club Drama Rooms – JLPA Centre NSW Guide Dogs Centre Volunteer Service – Glossodia Community Church Triple F (Overnight Camp) JLPA Centre	Community Church JLPA Centre Community Church Triple F (Overnight Camp) JLPA Centre HICES Music Festival
Monday 16	Tuesday 17	Wednesday 18	Thursday 19	Friday 20	Saturday 21	Sunday 22
Assessments Due: Yr 11 Business Studies Yr 9R/W AFL - Arndell HICES Music Festival HSC Trials	ICAS Testing – Mathematics HICES Music Festival HSC Trials	HICES Music Festival HSC Trials	Yr 10 History Excursion The Rocks – Sydney Yr 9B AFL - Arndell Yr 9 2011 Information Evening 7.30pm JLPA Centre HSC Trials	Snr. School Chapel D O E Bronze Qualifying O'night Exp. – Blue Mountains Jnr. School Grandparents Day/ Jnr. School Awards Ass. HSC Trials	K. Toms Dancing Club Drama Rooms – JLPA Centre D O E Bronze Qualifying O'night Exp. – Blue Mountains Foundation Dinner – Hawkesbury Race Club	Community Church JLPA Centre International School of Music - JPLA Centre
Monday 23	Tuesday 24	Wednesday 25	Thursday 26	Friday 27	Saturday 28	Sunday 29
HSC Trials	Assessments Due: Yr 9 Food Tech Yr 8 Geography HICES Primary Athletics – Homebush Rehearsal for PA Broadway (JLPA centre) Yr 10 PASS (Lawn Bowls) Richmond Club, Richmond HSC Trials	Assessments Due: Yr 7 Geography Yr 11 Legal Studies HZSA Athletics Carnival (Secondary) – Olympic Park Arndell Talent Spectacular Auditions HSC Trials	Assessments Due: Yr 11 Textiles & Design Arndell Talent Spectacular Auditions HSC Trials	Senior School Assembly Jnr School Chapel Evening Performance 'A Night on Broadway' JLPA Centre HSC Trials	K. Toms Dancing Club Drama Rooms – JLPA Centre Evening Performance 'A Night on Broadway' JLPA Centre	Community Church JLPA Centre
Monday 30	Tuesday 31					
HICES G & T Camp HSC Trials - Music	Assessments Tasks: Yr 10 Commerce HICES G & T Camp					