

# Policy Document



## Education Reform

Education is a growing concern across Australia, yet successive governments have failed to implement meaningful reform. Despite numerous promises, little progress has been made, and Australian schools continue to decline in international rankings.

This stagnation stems from a political deadlock between the Left and Right. The Left advocates for increased funding for public schools, despite evidence showing that additional funding alone does not improve outcomes. The Right acknowledges declining standards but lacks a clear strategy for improvement and often prioritizes private education. As a result, reforms are stalled, teachers are overburdened with administrative tasks, and parents struggle to find suitable schools, often at great financial cost.

For over a century, the divide between private and public schooling has been deeply entrenched, fostering social divisions and undermining educational effectiveness. To address these challenges, we must embrace innovative solutions that provide greater autonomy to schools while ensuring high standards of education for all students.

### **A New Approach: Independent Public Schools**

Western Australia has led the way in educational reform through its Independent Public Schools initiative, introduced in 2009. This opt-in model grants public schools greater governance and operational autonomy, allowing them to be managed by independent school boards rather than the Department of Education. These schools retain their non-fee-paying status while benefiting from greater flexibility in curriculum delivery and staffing decisions. Currently, 575 Independent Public Schools in WA serve 80% of students, demonstrating the success of this approach.

### **Lessons from the UK: Academies and Free Schools**

The UK has implemented similar reforms, allowing state schools to transition into Academies, which operate with increased autonomy over curriculum and staffing. Additionally, the introduction of Free Schools—public schools established by parents, teachers, and community groups—has expanded educational choices, particularly in disadvantaged areas. These reforms have correlated with improved international rankings for England, while Scotland and Wales, which did not implement such changes, have experienced declines.

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## Policy Agenda

To revitalise Australian education, the following policy initiatives will be implemented:

1. **Student Learning Plans** – Every student and their family will have access to a digital, portable Student Learning Plan outlining year-specific core knowledge requirements, teaching methods, and learning tools. This will facilitate collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting student progress.
2. **Core Curriculum Teaching Plans** – Teachers will have access to structured, online teaching plans that specify essential curriculum components, methodologies, and resources. This will ensure consistency and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens on educators.
3. **Expansion of Independent Public Schools** – All Australian states and territories should have the option to transition public schools into Independent Public Schools, modeled on WA's successful framework. After eight years, these schools may gain additional flexibility in curriculum design and teacher recruitment while maintaining high educational standards.
4. **Encouraging New Public Schools** – Parents, teachers, and community organizations will be empowered to establish new public schools, following the UK's Free School model. Regulatory barriers to new school formation will be removed, ensuring a streamlined process for communities seeking alternative educational options.
5. **Discipline and Student Support** – Public schools will have the authority to expel students who display persistent disruptive behavior. State governments will be responsible for providing intensive support programs to reintegrate these students into mainstream education.
6. **Teacher Performance and Accountability** – Schools will be granted the ability to dismiss teachers who are deemed unsuitable for the profession, with appropriate transition support provided. Industrial relations barriers must not prevent necessary staffing adjustments in the interest of student learning.
7. **Parent-Directed Funding** – Education funding will be allocated directly to parents, enabling them to choose the best educational environment for their child. This approach is particularly vital for students with disabilities or learning challenges, ensuring they have access to suitable support and tailored programs.
8. **Minimum Inclusion Standards** – All schools receiving public funding, including private institutions, must meet baseline inclusion requirements for students with learning and developmental needs.
9. **Fee Caps for Publicly Funded Private Schools** – A ceiling of \$20,000 per year will be imposed on private schools receiving public funding. Schools that charge above this threshold must operate without taxpayer support to prevent public funds from reinforcing social stratification.
10. **Incentives for Socially Inclusive Schools** – Additional funding will be provided to schools that enroll a diverse student body, encompassing various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. These financial incentives will encourage schools to foster inclusive environments and reduce educational segregation.

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## **A Vision for the Future**

Australia's education system requires bold and pragmatic reforms to halt its decline and restore public confidence. By promoting autonomy, accountability, and choice, we can create a system that serves all students effectively, regardless of their background. These policies will pave the way for a more dynamic and inclusive educational landscape, ensuring every child receives the quality education they deserve.

**YOUR Vote, YOUR Voice.....**

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