

Major Parties Policy Responses



Supporting school choice

1. As the Commonwealth is the predominant funder of Catholic schools, how will your party ensure Catholic schools remain affordable for Australian families, specifically in relation to:

- **Funding certainty** by continuing the 10-year agreement and the current level of indexation to reflect increasing educational costs
- **Refining loadings** for student need, school size, regional and remote location
- Maintaining the **Choice and Affordability Fund?**

Under the Coalition Government, funding to the Catholic sector has increased by 69.8 per cent and will increase a further 25.1 per cent by 2029. The Morrison Government remains committed to providing Australian families with choice and equity in education. The Morrison Government will continue to support parent choice in education through the Choice and Affordability Fund (CAF) which was introduced in 2020 and provides an estimated \$725.9 million to the Catholic school sector over 10 years to 2029. The Morrison Government has ensured the school resourcing standard (SRS) grows annually to provide a minimum base and certainty for schools and parents while ensuring that funding reflects real changes in wages and inflation costs. A re-elected Morrison Government will review indexation arrangements in partnership with the non-government sector in 2023 to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and support schools, parents and students with real funding growth.

Labor believes a great education is the ticket to a lifetime of opportunity. We want every Australian child to receive a world class education. We believe that parents should be able to choose the type of education that best suits their child and family. If Labor is fortunate enough to win the federal election, Catholic schools will have funding certainty. When the Liberal Party moved to cut funding from Catholic schools in 2014, Labor opposed the cuts. We stood side-by-side with your schools and forced the government to give up and retreat on their cuts to non-government schools. Under a Labor Government, the funding arrangements that exist for non-government schools under the Government right now, will continue in full under Labor. There will be no cuts to Catholic school funding.

The Greens believe that federal funding to the school education system should be on the basis of need and equity to ensure that all Australian children have the opportunity to fulfil their best educational outcomes.

2. Will your party commit to bringing forward the **review of the Capacity to Contribute formula** to 2024, currently 2027, to ensure fairer parent contributions sooner?

A re-elected Morrison Government will bring this review forward to 2024, following the introduction of the next National School Reform Agreement. Doing so will ensure funding to the Catholic and independent school sectors is fair and representative of individual school communities.

Labor believes families should be able to choose a faith-based education in a way that doesn't put unacceptable pressure on the family budget. When the Government moved to cut funding from Catholic schools and change the Capacity to Contribute formula, Labor stood side by side with the Catholic School sector in opposing the Government's cuts. We will continue to work with schools to ensure funding fairly and accurately reflects a school community's capacity to contribute to the cost of students' education.

The Greens believe in ensuring fairness and equity in our schools and would support any legislative measures or reviews that ensure all schools are funded fairly, based on need.

3. What support will your party provide to improve **capital funding** to help Catholic schools adequately resource learning environments, keep pace with enrolment growth and address rising costs?

The Morrison Government remains committed to ensuring the Capital Grants Program provides funding for non-government schools to meet the needs of their students by supporting new equipment, construction of buildings, maintaining land and buildings, and improving schools. Between 2014 to 2021, the Coalition Government has provided approximately \$1.2 billion of capital grants to non-government schools; of which Catholic schools received almost two-thirds (\$758 million). In 2022, the Morrison Government will provide an estimated \$188.7 million of capital funding to non-government schools (an increase of approximately \$9.9 million from 2021) of which approximately \$111 million will be directed to Catholic Schools. We have also ensured that priority Capital Funding can be made available to any schools impacted by the recent flooding in New South Wales and Queensland, particularly where insurance costs are not able to fully cover the damage. The Morrison Government remains committed to annual indexation of the Capital Grants Program, so that funding increases in real terms and is in line with changes in building prices and wage costs.

We also believe that all students should be able to learn in great schools with world class facilities. Labor has announced a Schools Upgrade Fund for building upgrades and to support better ventilation, so students can learn in a COVID-safe environment. As part of the fund, Catholic schools will be able to apply for small grants totalling \$50 million in extra funding in 2022. Schools will be able to use the funding for school improvements, and to improve ventilation and air quality by buying air purifiers, upgrading heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, building outdoor learning spaces and replacing windows and doors so they can let fresh air in. Labor will continue to deliver capital funding for Catholic schools under the Capital Grants Program and we'll work with States and Territories as part of the next school funding agreements so that school systems have the facilities they need to teach growing numbers of students.

The Greens will increase the Capital Grants Program funding to \$400 million a year and expand it to include public schools so that all schools can build the teaching and learning facilities they need.



Enabling faith-based education
4. How will your party prioritise appropriate legislation and educational policy to enable **Catholic schools to operate and teach within a religious ethos**, including finalising legislation for Religious Discrimination within the first 100 days of the new parliament?

The Government remains committed to protecting religious belief and activity from discrimination in a similar way to other attributes protected by legislation, including race, age, disability and sex. The Morrison Government sought legislation to protect those of faith which is fair and balanced and undertook extensive consultation before introducing the legislation. The legislation that was introduced to Parliament sought to protect what we value as Australians: diversity, fairness, choice, charity, and if we are not hurting others, the right to live our lives as we see fit. The right to believe and to practice faith must be respected and protected, not just in our homes and workplaces, but in our schools and in our communities. A re-elected Morrison Government will pursue passage of the Religious Discrimination Bill as standalone legislation in the next parliament and will not accept any attempts to make changes to other laws that undermine protections for religious institutions. Our Government is committed to respecting the freedom of Australians to live free from discrimination on the basis of their faith, and to revisiting this matter again in the next Parliament.

As you know, Labor believes all Australians have the right to live their lives free from discrimination, including people of faith. We commit to you that we will act on this as a priority if we form government after the coming election. I reiterate that an Albanese Labor Government will act to:

- Prevent discrimination against people of faith, including through the introduction of religious anti-vilification protections.
- Protect all students from discrimination on any grounds.
- Protect teachers from discrimination at work, while maintaining the right of religious schools to preference people of their faith in the selection of staff.

Labor is committed to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) process. If elected, we would recommence the ALRC's Inquiry into the Framework of Religious Exemptions in Anti-Discrimination Legislation, which the Morrison Government has placed on hold, and would carefully consider what the ALRC recommends in formulating legislation.

The Greens support legislation that protects the rights of people to hold and practice their religious beliefs, and would support religious discrimination legislation with a similar approach to other anti-discrimination legislation, operating as a shield not a sword.

Delivering national priorities
5. Will your party commit to extending the **Non-Government Reform Support Fund**, in an ongoing way to support the delivery of the National Education Reform Agreement and emerging priorities?

The Non-Government Reform Support Fund is an important Coalition Government measure that supports true needs-based funding reforms to the non-government school sector. In the 2022-23 Budget, the Morrison Government committed to provide an additional \$40.3 million to extend the fund for 12 months to December 2023. Of this, \$23 million will go to the Catholic Sector. The Morrison Government is committed to ensuring ongoing reforms in the non-government school sector beyond December 2023 are supported and resourced appropriately. A re-elected Morrison Government will continue to work with the Catholic and Independent school sectors to ensure an appropriate funding mechanism is provided, whether that be an extension of the Non-Government Reform Support Fund or a new fit-for-purpose fund.

Under a Labor Government, the funding arrangements that exist for non-government schools under the Government right now, will continue in full under Labor... we'll work with States and Territories as part of the next school funding agreements so that school systems have the facilities they need to teach growing numbers of students. We will consider ongoing support for the Non-Government Reform Support Fund as part of this process.

The Greens believe in ensuring fairness and equity in our schools and would support any legislative measures or reviews that ensure all schools are funded fairly, based on need.

6. How will your party support **Early Childhood Education** in the two years prior to school, capital funding to grow the number of services, and enable improved alignment for schools to deliver early childhood services?

Since 2013, the Coalition Government has invested more than \$3.2 billion through National Partnerships with states and territories to deliver 15 hours a week (600 hours a year) of high-quality preschool in the year before full-time school. Ongoing funding for preschool... guarantees certainty of funding each year for around 300,000 children in around 12,000 services. The new Preschool Reform Agreement, 2022-2025 is a \$2 billion Performance Agreement with funding linked to improved participation, measured by attendance, and the implementation of an outcomes measure. The Agreement also includes a commitment that funding follows the child from 2023, with states responsible for the implementation. The Morrison Government recognises many Catholic schools run high-quality, integrated Early Childhood Education and Care environments for three and four-year olds, and many of these are approved child care providers. This allows families to access the Child Care Subsidy

In early learning and care, Labor will focus on implementing our \$5.4 billion commitment to make early education and care more affordable for working families as a priority. This commitment will improve access to affordable, high quality early learning and care for 1.2 million Australian families. A number of early education providers affiliated with the National Catholic Education Commission will benefit from Labor's changes to the Child Care Subsidy, which will leave 96% of families better off by raising the maximum subsidy rate for the first child to 90%.

The Greens will make childcare universal and free for everyone. We will also extend universal early childhood education to 3-year-olds, and extend the available hours of preschool from 15 to 24 hours per week.



<p>Early Childhood Education <i>continued</i></p>	<p>to reduce their out-of-pocket costs, while also enabling those schools to offer more flexible hours and days to families. Around 65.6 per cent of Australian three-year-old children are in approved child care, and their families receive on average around \$4,700 a year in 2021-22 in Child Care Subsidy to support their participation.</p>		
<p>7. How will your party enable better access to Catholic schools for Mental Health and Wellbeing programs to address the increasing challenge of student mental health and wellbeing, particularly for educationally disadvantaged students?</p>	<p>Our Government fought to ensure the Australian Curriculum specifically strengthens mental health, with additional updates to the Curriculum expected in 2022 after expert consultation... a re-elected Morrison Government will work with the non-government school sector in the next National School Reform Agreement to review in-school access to mental health and wellbeing programs for students and greater support for teachers and school leaders. The Morrison Government's National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, announced in the 2021-22 Budget, represents the single largest Commonwealth investment in mental health and suicide prevention in Australia's history-a record \$2.3 billion in the 2021-22 Budget and a further \$650 million in the 2022-23 Budget. The Morrison Government launched the world's first Child Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for children aged 0-12 and backed this up with a \$317 million investment to start implementing the Strategy. Our Government also provides funding for several school-based wellbeing programs, including \$61.4 million annually for the National School Chaplaincy Program, which assists more than 3,000 schools each year to engage the services of a school chaplain.</p>	<p>Every Catholic systemic school in the country will benefit from Labor's Student Wellbeing Boost in 2022, with schools, on average, receiving \$20,000 in extra funding. Schools will be able to use the additional funding to get their students' mental health and wellbeing back on track, with funding able to be used for extra school mental health professionals, like psychologists and school counsellors; proven student wellbeing and mental health initiatives; and camps and excursions, as well as sporting and social activities that improve kids' wellbeing. Labor will invest \$10.5 million in a new voluntary mental health check tool that primary schools will be able to use, with parents' permission, to identify kids who are struggling and make sure they can get the help they need. We will also work with states and territories on the implementation of the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.</p>	<p>The Greens have, and will continue to, advocate for more measures to support the mental health and wellbeing of students and staff in all schools, including through the provision of professionally trained counsellors. The Greens will also invest \$4.8 billion to ensure mental healthcare is fully covered under Medicare by providing unlimited sessions with a psychologist or psychiatrist with no out-of-pocket fees so everyone can get the support they need.</p>
<p>8. How will your party enable better access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Catholic schools to Closing the Gap initiatives that support the complex needs of students?</p>	<p>The Morrison Government is investing \$26 million to create partnerships between high-performing city schools and regional and remote schools which will improve leadership, teacher practice, and student outcomes; \$17.3 million to extend the... grants program to assist Indigenous boarding providers to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students and improve their educational outcomes... To support improved classroom outcomes, the Morrison Government has provided \$10 million to implement targeted teaching practices and increase attendance in remote Western Australia schools; \$8 million to grow the Multilit program; \$5 million to expand the pilot run by Good to Great Schools Australia; \$81.8 million to expand the Connected Beginnings program in 27 new sites, which will help ensure an additional 8,550 children are safe, healthy, and ready to start school by the age of five.</p> <p>Full Liberal National Party response available via www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/federal-election-2022</p>	<p>Labor established the Closing the Gap framework and we're committed to funding the policies and programs required to deliver change. We know Catholic schools do an excellent job around the country educating First Nations students. In many remote towns, the Catholic school is the only school. We're always open to working with you on how we can improve education for First Nations students. We've recently announced our First Nations languages program, which will benefit Catholic schools.</p> <p>Full Australian Labor Party response available via www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/federal-election-2022</p>	<p>The Greens have a systemic approach to justice for First Nations, and that includes ensuring better and more equitable access to education at all levels, from early childhood to schooling and university and TAFE.</p>

Make education a priority this federal election - Vote for a party that does too.

www.ncec.catholic.edu.au
www.cspa.catholic.edu.au