

First Class Education

Government School Education Policy

Canberra**liberals**

July 2008



Smaller classes

Maximum 21 students for all primary school classes

Policy Overview

A Canberra Liberal Government will extend the maximum of 21 students per class through all years of primary schools, extending the support given from K-3 right up to year 6 students.

The policy will be supported by a range of associated policy initiatives that address teacher numbers, extra classrooms and the provision of tailored teacher support.

Benefits.

Our aim is to ensure that the ACT has a world class public education system where every student can be given the attention they need, be assisted to achieve at their best and will develop an early enthusiasm for education.

Research has shown that class size reductions are beneficial for students and teachers across the spectrum. A study undertaken for the New South Wales Government by Professor Bob Meyenn identifies the extensive benefits:

- Smaller class sizes allow students to develop literacy and numeracy skills faster than their peers in larger classes.
- Student behavioural problems and learning difficulties are identified earlier and more easily corrected.
- Student confidence was boosted.
- There is increased morale, job satisfaction and enthusiasm among teachers in small classes. Teachers found they were able to spend more time with individual students, get to know their students better and use different and more effective teaching methods.
- Teachers and Principals reported that students spent more time 'on-task' and were generally more attentive in class.

Costings

As a share of the ACT Budget, Labor has decreased recurrent revenue expenditure on education. This policy will introduce a modest, but significant boost to education funding, targeted in a way that brings the most benefit to the most people.

The funding requirements to support smaller class sizes across years 4, 5 and 6, are set out below:

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Additional Teachers to Support Smaller Class Sizes (recurrent funding)	838	3,016	7,632	13,022
Additional classroom space (capital funding)		935	963	992

The Canberra Liberals will recruit 150 additional teachers and 20 Teacher Assistants over the next four years at a cost of \$24.5 million. At its peak, the recruitment program will involve an increase of 50 new teachers per calendar year while the increase in class sizes is being phased in.

Funding of \$2.9 million will also be provided to add additional classrooms where there are currently none available. The new class space will initially be delivered through modular classrooms to permit early delivery of smaller classes across the whole primary school system. In subsequent years, permanent structures that integrate with existing school buildings may be built as appropriate.

There are some underutilised classrooms in ACT public schools, so the amount of capital investment required is limited.

Priority for accommodation will be based on an assessment of the latest enrolment data together with the latest statistical data on population change within the relevant Priority Enrolment Areas. Unlike Labor, we will ensure that school capacity is there to meet the population growth of the future.

Some of the requirement for additional class space may also be delivered through the reopening of schools that were closed by the Stanhope Labor Government

Implementation


The first wave of funding for smaller classes in 2009 will commence in schools where there is already additional available classroom space and greatest need for support to bridge the divide in student outcomes.

This targeted deployment of the first wave of teachers will provide time to tender contracts for new classrooms for remaining schools, complete recruitment activity and complete demographic analysis to underpin the remainder of the policy rollout.

The policy will be implemented in three stages.

1. To deliver on smaller class sizes, we will phase in the reduction in year 4 sizes over the 2009 and 2010 school years.
2. Next we will reduce year 5 class sizes in the 2011 year.
3. Finally we will reduce year 6 sizes in the 2012 school year.





More equity for students.

Providing support for all students,
no matter what their needs.

Since 2006 Labor has dismembered large parts of the public education system, stripping the system for spare parts and dollars. They have merged schools and forced students to consolidate into larger campuses and larger classes to achieve ever greater efficiencies.

Our school system also has one of the largest gaps in student achievement between students with higher socioeconomic backgrounds and those with lower socio economic backgrounds.

- Research commissioned from the Australian Educational Research Council shows that the achievement gaps in the ACT are the highest in Australia, except for the Northern Territory.
- The ACT's noticeably large achievement gap applies across the areas of reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy.

It is not just disadvantaged students who are being sold short under Stanhope Labor's education system. There has been a significant decline in the overall reading literacy performance of ACT students between the years 2000 and 2006, as measured in the Programme for International Student Assessment. The decline in ACT results was caused by a fall in literacy performance among the best performers in reading literacy – students at the 75th, 90th and 95th percentiles.

The reduction in class sizes will benefit close to 8,000 students and hundreds of teachers. In the 2008 ACT Schools Census, there were 7,926 public school students in years 4, 5 and 6. These students comprise 59% of all enrolments in the government and non-government primary systems from years 4 through to 6.

There is a compelling need for students at both ends of the performance spectrum to get more individual attention, to help them achieve to the best of their potential. Smaller class sizes can provide an important contribution to meeting this need.

More support for Teachers.

Providing Teachers with resources and professional support.

The commitment to smaller classes will be supported by other reforms. The ACT Government has the budgetary capacity to address the significant large achievement gaps in the ACT public schooling system which the current Stanhope administration has not seriously addressed.

We will direct teacher professional development programs in part towards supporting our smaller class size policy, by delivering training programs that are designed to assist teachers in working effectively with smaller classes. These programs will include methods for assisting children with particular needs in the class, including those with poor educational outcomes and gifted students. The programs will also assist teachers to improve their practices for managing difficult student behaviour.

In New South Wales an evaluation of smaller classes has found that many teachers report that smaller classes made it easier for them to implement what they had learned through professional development activities.

The Canberra Liberals have already released policies to support teacher professional development, including training courses and scholarships. During the Stanhope Government's time in office, annual funding for teacher support has been cut by \$280,000 in real terms. We have said we will more than restore Labor's cut to funding with a funding boost of \$500,000 this financial year and real annual increases thereafter.

- ❖ Labor has followed our initiative by copying us with increased funding in the 2008 budget. But their injection is a cosmetic fix for the election, which is scheduled to cut out at the end of the 2010 school year.
- ❖ By the final year of a Canberra Liberal Government, we will be spending \$577,000 more per annum on teacher professional development than would a re-elected Stanhope Labor Government.

Costing Comparisons.

The Canberra Liberals guarantee long-term real growth in ACT Government funding for professional teacher training. Unlike previous governments, we will not use support for professional development as a bargaining chip in negotiations on pay and conditions. We view investment in maintaining and enhancing quality teaching methods as a non-negotiable element of a world class education system.

Labor Funding for Teacher Professional Support	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Teacher Professional Learning Fund	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Scholarships Allocation	250	250	250	250
2008 Budget One-off Funds	976	974	428	

Liberal Funding for Teacher Professional Support	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Teacher Professional Learning Fund	1,500	1,515	1,530	1,546
Scholarships Allocation	255	265	273	281
Matched Budget Funding	471	444		

Net Liberal Funding Increase			125	577
-------------------------------------	--	--	------------	------------

FURTHER BACKGROUND

Canberra Liberals, *Protecting Public Schools Policy: Reviving Communities and Rebuilding Lives*, 2008.

Canberra Liberals, *Professional Support for Teachers Policy: Empowering and Supporting Teachers Through Enhanced Professional Learning*, 2008.

Professor Alan Kreuger & Diane Whitmore, *Would Smaller Class Sizes Help Close the Black-White Achievement Gap?* Princeton University Working Paper 451, March 2001.

Professor Bob Meyenn, *Class Size Reduction Program Evaluation*, conducted for the NSW Government by Charles Sturt University Dean of the Faculty of Education, November 2005. Also see *Interim Evaluation* 2004.

S Thomson & L de Bortoli, *The Performance of Students in the Australian Capital Territory on PISA: Report to the ACT Department of Education*, February 2008.



More High School Teachers

Attracting High School Teachers
in areas of skills shortage.

Policy Overview

A Canberra Liberal Government will attract more High School teachers, especially in the high demand areas.

We will restore the 35 high school teaching positions cut by the Stanhope Government in early 2007.

We will create attractive pathways into teaching for mature age professionals who bring valuable skills from outside teaching.

We will also provide incentives for high quality graduates to join the ACT government schools system.

Restoring 35 High School Teachers

In the 2006 Budget the Stanhope Government cut high school staff by the equivalent of 35 positions (2 per high school) at the beginning of the 2007 school year. This cut was exacerbated by a cut to college resources equivalent to 25 positions.

The removal of 35 teacher positions was particularly damaging because it was combined with a program to close schools across the Territory, which has placed greater pressure on the schools that have survived.

For the past three years the Stanhope Government has failed to deliver on their promise for pastoral support staff.

The Canberra Liberals will reappoint 35 teaching staff to the ACT's public High Schools. We will restore 10 positions in the 2009 school year, 10 in 2010 and 15 in 2011. We will support our commitment with funding of \$7.5 million over four years.

The Canberra Liberal policy to reinstate front-line teaching staff will help enable ACT Public High Schools to cope with the missions given to them.

In placing the 35 restored teaching positions, the focus will be on recruiting staff in areas of teaching skill shortage and on placement of staff in year groups where they may be most effective in reducing class sizes. Within this mandate, principals and senior staff in each school will be responsible for determining where the extra staff positions are best deployed.

Costing

The new staff will also be supported by enhanced funding already announced by the Canberra Liberals for teacher professional development programs that assist teachers in working effectively with smaller classes.

The funding provided in support of this policy is outlined below.

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Additional teachers for High Schools	419	1,307	2,492	3,298

More teachers equate to better learning environments, more specialisation, better morale and improved educational outcomes.

High School Teachers: attracting professional experts into teaching

Policy Overview

A Canberra Liberal Government will broaden the sources for teacher recruitment to tackle the particular challenge of attracting sufficient teaching graduates in priority areas such as secondary science, mathematics and information technology (IT).

Fortunately Canberra has the natural advantage of being home to a large number of professionals skilled in all three fields of science, maths and IT. There are hundreds of experts in these fields working in Commonwealth Government agencies such as the CSIRO, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Taxation Office and in IT support companies.

The Rudd Labor Government is shedding a considerable number of staffing positions from a number of federal agencies as part of its 2008 budget cuts, with a further round of staffing and budget cuts to be unveiled near the end of this year. The Canberra Liberal Government will be seeking to entice public servants with relevant skill sets into the teaching profession, as a core component of our effort to transform the ACT Public School system into a world class model.

Altogether around 3,200 Commonwealth jobs will go over the remainder of this financial year and, of these, around 35 per cent of the job losses are expected to be in Canberra. Some examples of the anticipated Commonwealth staffing losses are set out below.

- 85 jobs from the CSIRO
- 166 jobs from the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- 1,137 jobs from the Australian Taxation Office
- 142 jobs from the Department of Industry, Science and Research
- 24 jobs from the Productivity Commission
- 32 jobs from the Department of Finance

The ACT Government's current approach to teacher recruitment is focussed on new graduates. They have failed to look to the wealth of talent from experienced professionals right here in Canberra. We can attract people from this talent pool into the teaching profession by providing attractive pathways.

A Second Career with a government that values the profession of teaching.

In Canberra a number of public servants are forced to resign, because of their superannuation arrangements, at the relatively young age of 54 years and 11 months. With this said they still have many years of active participation in the workforce ahead of them and often seek a change in career.

A recent research article in Professional Educator titled “*Teacher Quality it's Not Academic*” noted that:

“...a growing number of teacher education students are mature age entrants, and in most cases their selection is based partly on their prior experience, interviews and referee reports. Some universities are also broadening selection criteria for teaching courses as part of their equity and access policies. Given these trends, and moves towards national accreditation of teacher education courses, consideration should be given to a broad-based national system of admission to these courses.”

A Canberra Liberal Government will establish a program to retrain talented mid-career professionals who are keen to share their skills and experience with the next generation. The program will be provided via a tertiary institution in the ACT, with the tender to be awarded to an institution early in 2009 and the first intake to commence in 2010. The training will include school-based teaching practice and school visits.

Training will be available through a Diploma of Education program that will be delivered through flexible study options. Flexible study options such as online study and distance education will enable participants in the program to undertake the study in ways that are compatible with other work obligations. The program will be open to full-time and part-time study. Online study will be a key component, as will periodic face-to-face learning and classroom experience. The aim is to provide talented and well-qualified professionals with an attractive pathway into teaching that clears away the unnecessary hurdles.

The program will take into account Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for previous university study, TAFE or industry training and industry experience. Both University staff and Department of Education staff will assist with the evaluation of RPL for applicants.

We see a real opportunity in Canberra to attract some of these former public servants and other professionals who can bring a wealth of life experience into the teaching profession. These individuals can have up to another decade of service in them that they may wish to invest back into the community.

Programs similar to this have been successfully run interstate and internationally. In those cases, a new stream of dedicated, effective teachers has emerged and added to the benefits of the entire education system.

Attracting professionals with the rights skills.

Anticipated areas of skill shortage may include mathematics, physics, computing studies, technology and vocational education. The program will be a very competitive one and priority will be given to individuals with the most outstanding performance in their professional field and with skills and aptitude suited to teaching.

The incentives and costings.

A Canberra Liberal Government will support entrants in the program by

- **funding HECS fees and other course fees;**
- **providing an allowance for books and materials;**
- **guaranteeing an offer of employment as a teacher in an ACT Government secondary school on graduation; and**
- **recognition of prior experience with commencement at an advanced salary band upon initial placement.**

To assist with recruitment for this program, the Department of Education will run information sessions and school tours for interested professionals allowing them to observe lessons relevant to their subject expertise and to discuss the curriculum for their area of specialisation with classroom teachers. The Department will be given a mandate to head-hunt and lure the best brains they can find for this pioneering program.

Total funding of \$2.2 million will be provided over four years.

Costings

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Teacher Training for Mature Age Subject Specialists	200	373	780	800

High School Teachers: attracting top graduates.

HECS scholarships to secure Australia's Most Valuable Teaching Graduates

The ACT is already an attractive destination for teaching graduates, but our ambition is for our city to become a magnet for the very best of the best.

As a second initiative to attract exceptional talent into the ACT public secondary system, a Canberra Liberal Government will offer twenty HECS forgiveness scholarships per year to teaching graduates with outstanding records of academic achievement who also have tertiary qualifications in the fields of science, mathematics or IT.

Applicants for the Outstanding Graduate Scholarships will include graduates who are in the final year of their teaching degree or combined degree. Eligible graduates will include those with double degrees that combine teaching with a relevant speciality; those with a secondary teaching degree specialising in one of the required fields; or those with a base teaching degree with an honours speciality.

The best applicants will be selected not only for their academic excellence, but also for their extra curricular engagement, life skills and experience. For instance involvement in youth groups, sports groups, public speaking and business will be considered in the assessment of applicants.

This scholarship program will commence in the 2009 school year. The scholarship holders will have one third of their HECS debt paid for each completed year of service in the ACT public education system.

The HECS write-off will be a significant financial incentive to attract the best and brightest teaching graduates from around Australia into the ACT public secondary schools. Funding of \$480,000 will be provided over three years in support of this policy.

Taken together, the Teacher Training Program for mid-career professional experts and the Outstanding Graduate Scholarships will inject an average of around 40 top talented teachers into the ACT system each year.

	2008-09 \$000	2009-10 \$000	2010-11 \$000	2011-12 \$000
Graduate scholarships		80	160	240