



# Tim Mulherin

## Labor for Queensland

telephone: 3844 8101 address: 16 Peel St South Brisbane Qld 4101

web: [abetterwayforqld.com.au](http://abetterwayforqld.com.au) twitter: @timmulherinmp

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Mrs Lynne Doneley

Executive Officer

Associated Christian Schools

Via email: [ldoneley@christianschools.org.au](mailto:ldoneley@christianschools.org.au)

*Dear Lynne,*  
Dear Ms Doneley

Thank you for your letter to the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Leader of the Opposition, concerning the main policy issues facing the members of Associated Christian Schools in the 2015 Queensland election. Ms Palaszczuk has asked me to respond on her behalf.

### **1. Public and political recognition and support for independent faith-based school communities**

Queensland Labor believes a strong independent school sector is vital to the Queensland education system. A future Labor Government will work closely with Associated Christian Schools to ensure your member schools receive the support they deserve.

While the majority of Queensland children attend state schools approximately one-third of families choose to send their students to Catholic and Independent schools. Queensland Labor supports the ability of parents to choose the best place for their children to learn and that is why we want to see a strong non-government schooling sector into the future.

### **2. Recurrent funding to be increased in line with real costs and state department funding**

If elected Labor will continue the existing method of providing state funding to non-government schools through the basket-nexus formula. As the cost of educating a child increases in the state system there will be a commensurate increase in per student funding in Christian schools

It should be noted that due to policy decisions made by the Newman Government, funding per student has fallen over the last two years which will have a flow-on effect on the independent education system. Under the LNP, funding in the state system has fallen by \$165 for every primary school student, \$203 for every high school student and \$1770 for every student with a disability.

Given the Newman Government's record it is reasonable to assume that per student funding will continue to fall if they are re-elected. Labor will ensure that Queensland school children are funded to receive the very best education whether they are in the state, Catholic or Independent sectors.

### **3. Increased support for disadvantaged students**

Queensland Labor supports a needs-based education funding system which recognises the additional costs involved with educating disadvantaged students.

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We strongly supported the reforms proposed by the former Labor Government which included loadings for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students with a disability, Indigenous students, lack of English proficiency and rural and remoteness.

The task of caring for and educating children with special needs has become harder under the Newman Government due to a number of cruel and unfair policy decisions. The 2013-14 Annual Report of the Department of Education, Training and Employment shows that funding has fallen by \$1770 per student with a disability. The LNP has also reduced services for students with a disability in the non-state system by introducing fees for advisory visiting teachers. There is no doubt that children with special needs are receiving fewer services and less support under this Government.

The challenges of raising and educating a child with a disability are difficult wherever you live but they are exacerbated in rural and remote areas when services are less close. In government, Queensland Labor will examine the possibility of creating teams of specialists to ensure all children in our state, whether they are educated in State, Catholic or Independent schools are assessed for disability support and are provided with the help they need.

#### **4. Capital funding assistance for schools; equitable funding for professional development across sectors**

Queensland Labor appreciates that the schools planning process currently underway has widespread support among education stakeholders and we will continue this collaborative process. We also believe there is an appropriate role for government to provide capital grants to the non-state schooling sector for the construction of new schools and upgrades of existing schools.

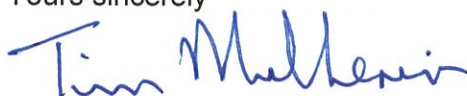
A Labor Government will provide an additional \$37 million in capital grants for the non-state schooling sector in each of the 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 financial years. In government we will also work closely with the non-government school sector to lower the cost of building new schools. We will ensure proper planning is undertaken so that neighbouring schools, whether they are government-run, Catholic or independent, can share sporting facilities – lowering the cost of purchasing large tracts of land. We will also investigate the provision of low-interest loans or loan guarantees to non-government schooling bodies.

We will consider whether further support is required to ensure teachers receive appropriate access to professional development regardless of the sector in which they are employed.

#### **5. Ongoing discussion around the core business of education**

Labor has always supported the provision of a well-rounded education to Queensland students. While education needs to have a focus on providing students with the necessary skills to secure employment it should also be personally enriching. We understand that receiving a high-quality education can completely change a child's life outcomes, not only financially but also by increasing life expectancy and general wellbeing.

Yours sincerely



Tim Mulherin MP  
**Deputy Leader of the Opposition**