

Socialist Alliance policy

<http://www.socialist-alliance.org>



Education

Education is a fundamental right for all people, yet the policies of successive governments has been to turn education into a privilege; with wealth as the main entry qualification. At all levels, the public education system has been systematically dismantled, while private schools enjoy billions in taxpayer subsidies.

Early childhood education is increasingly out of the reach of most working people, leading to increased pressure on parents, in particular mothers, to exit the workforce. This is in fact privatisation by stealth. From the beginning of primary school to the end of secondary school, parents are required to pay for what is ostensibly a “free education system”.

Public school buildings are often in disrepair, class sizes are too large, and the virtual monopoly of text book publishers leads to vastly inflated prices for essential education materials. Higher education is becoming a lottery where the winning ticket is a wad of banknotes.

The Socialist Alliance will fight to restore public education at all levels, creating a universal, free, quality secular system open to all those who need and want it. This would preclude the need for taxpayer subsidies to private institutions, which would be fully funded by those who choose to provide and use them.

The Socialist Alliance stands for:

- Universal, free access to quality childcare and preschool and after. School programs for all; recognise the skills of childcare and early education teachers and mandated wage parity with other education professionals.
- Free, quality, secular education. No upfront university fees; abolish the Higher Education Contribution Scheme; abolish all TAFE fees and fees for post graduate and overseas students; Stop public schools from imposing fees in the form of “voluntary” levies.
- A guaranteed independent income for students. A fully indexed, living wage for students set well above the poverty line; abolish the student loans scheme, pay apprentices at least the base rate for a qualified tradesperson during their training.
- Increased funding for public education. Fund tertiary and TAFE places for all who qualify; end government funding of private training providers and schools; halt forced amalgamations and school closures; increase corporate taxes to fund education and training.
- Needs-based, diverse staffing of public education from kindergarten to university. Improve quality through hiring more permanent teaching staff to reduce teacher workload and class sizes; end the casualisation of employment in all sectors of education; no discrimination in employment; affirmative action programs to train and hire more Indigenous educators and more women in non-traditional areas; stop the harassment of union activists and other dissenters.
- Guaranteed access for all. Develop, fund and enforce policies to ensure that women, migrants, Aboriginal people, gays and lesbians and people with disabilities have access to an education free from harassment, stereotyping and discrimination; education in an atmosphere of respect for all viewpoints and for dissidence and non-conformity. Full funding for literacy programs: every person has the right to learn to read and write. Ensure full funding for English as a Second Language programs; provide courses in Indigenous and other community languages;

fully fund resources to integrate students with disabilities; expand childcare places at universities and TAFE colleges.

- Curricula which serves the needs of students. Eliminate stereotyping in curriculum materials and resources; run courses which explore and teach about the history of oppression, including women's studies, Indigenous studies, ethnic studies, gay and lesbian studies and labour studies; education for life, not just for work; quality, factual and non-moralistic sex education in schools; education programs to counter homophobia and anti-gay violence in schools.
- Students, staff and community control of education-student control of student affairs. Independent student unions; replace business representatives on governing councils with elected union, student and community representatives.