Our policies for the 2010 Victorian State Election

- Per capita voucher funding for all schooling to ensure a just distribution of taxes levied and allocated for education, to safeguard the inalienable right of parents to choose, without financial penalty, the kind of education or moral upbringings the children shall receive and to give parents an effective veto over school policy and curriculum decisions that infringe parental standards and values.

- Federal funding for the education of students attending non-government schools to be based on an equitable distribution that counteracts the gross imbalance in current State funding, which advantages wealthy parents using better-financed government schools at the expense of struggling parents exercising their fundamental right to choose non-government (in most cases less well financed) schools for their children.

- A higher education deferred payments scheme with full tax deductibility of contributions when deferred payments are met.

- Educational diversity through voucher-based funding for schools and other centres of learning to promote greater localisation of education institutions and their administrations and to provide avenues for the development of education-based cooperatives managed by the people most directly concerned with the process and outcomes of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels - the parents, the teachers and, in later years, the students themselves.

- An education system based on the promotion of competence appropriate for the age and status of each student in a range of skills, including numeracy, literacy, social and civic participation, health skills and knowledge and an informed appreciation of the moral and ethical codes to which the mainstream community adheres.

- A reordering of State and Federal funding priorities in tertiary education to promote increased enrolments in TAFE courses offering applied professional training and trades apprenticeships as preferred career paths for school leavers.
Policies suggestions under development

**Goals and Actions – Funding**

1. Increased transparency in funding and opportunity for all children.
2. Fairer support of schools and families. Funding to be linked to the students choice of school.
3. Funding to be equal for all students, regardless of the school that a child attends, modified only according to family means and the special needs of a particular child.
4. State and Federal Funding to be displayed simultaneously to overcome chronic confusion and improve transparency.
5. Schools to be given the authority to manage their own budgets, with annual financial audits.
6. When schools are required (by the Federal Government) to publish private sources of income, then the figures published must simultaneously show both taxpayer funding and all other sources of income. These figures must be presented in a contextually relevant manner, and need to be within a framework that allows consistent and accurate reporting across all school sectors.

**Goals and Actions – Compliance**

1. Compliance reviews of schools should focus on the quality of the education being delivered – are the children happy, are they being well socialised and are they learning.
2. Education professionals are to be trusted to do what they do best – run schools. Currently, school principals spend more time on compliance than anything else, which seems like a waste of their skills, energy and abilities.
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3. A reduction in the volume of compliance that is imposed on schools. The NAPLAN has removed much of the rationale for burdensome compliance bureaucracy as it gives a clear picture of a school’s level of performance.

4. Schools that exceed objective and transparent national benchmarks by a significant margin to be exempt from compliance reviews. (As per some overseas educational jurisdictions).

5. An independent compliance body to be established to monitor all schools, with the scope within its rules of operation to allow Government Schools, Catholic Schools and Independent Schools to fit within individual branches of this body. Monitoring to respect the diverse mission statements of schools.

6. Compliance measures to be drafted and imposed only where the issue is widely held to be serious and where independent research proves that the compliance measures actually raise the standard of the educational service sufficiently to justify the interference. When independent research shows current compliance requirements to be hindering best-practice, they are to be withdrawn.

7. Self-regulatory mechanism to be developed in the areas of student welfare, discipline, attendance and reporting to ensure that these are appropriate to the academic, cultural and philosophical aspirations of each school and its student body. Self-regulation in these areas will allow greater diversity, and thereby increasingly appropriate educational settings, a change that will bring about increased attendance, retention, academic success and the overall enjoyment of the whole school experience.

Goals and Actions – Teacher Quality

1. To increase the supply of able, inspiring and capable teachers through moving the training process away from time spent at university toward competency based assessments and the demonstration of professional standards.

2. Prospective teachers to meet minimum literacy and numeracy requirements. Testing and assessment of these skills to be conducted by the Institute of Teaching. All aspiring senior years subject teachers to be tested by the Institute of Teaching in all subject areas they wish to teach.
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3. School Principals to be allowed to trial as trainees those who have passed the Institute of Teaching assessments. When these trainees have demonstrated effective mastery (in the classroom) of all of the Institute of Teaching’s Professional Standards they are to be awarded full registration by the Institute of Teaching.

4. The Institute of Teaching to be re-established as a truly independent, professional body.

Goals and Actions – New Schools and Progressive/Alternative Approaches

1. A positive attitude to new ideas in schooling, in particular new schools.

2. Victoria should uphold the right of new schools to open and not impose arbitrary minimum enrolment numbers – some of the best performing schools in Australia are small schools.

3. A ‘New Schools Body’ to be created to aid the establishment of new schools. School establishment grants to be re-introduced.

4. A simplified ‘provisional registration system’ to be applied to new schools, with prospective parents made aware of this. Full and ongoing registration to be granted when national benchmarks and reasonable compliance measures are met.

Goals and Actions – Curriculum and Standardised Assessments

1. As a minimum requirement, schools are to include the national curriculum for core subjects.

2. Curriculum compliance to be measured against NAPLAN assessments and MySchool data.

3. All schools to participate in NAPLAN English and Mathematics assessments.

4. These tests are to be conducted in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

5. The development of a set of NAPLAN style tests for other core subjects. These tests to be non-compulsory and made available to all schools free of charge for use when and where they see fit.
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Goals and Actions – Facilities

1. Allow schools to plan and develop their buildings in the most appropriate, timely and cost effective manner.

2. All schools to be allocated an ongoing funding allocation for building works and maintenance, based on a means test and enrolment numbers.

3. Decisions on facility maintenance and development to be made at school level.

4. All schools to be permitted to receive grants and donations for buildings, libraries and scholarships from individuals and organisations. These gifts to be tax-deductible.

5. Schools to be encouraged to pool their funding allocations and share facilities and resources where possible.

6. Planning exemptions enjoyed by the state sector to be extended to all school sectors.

7. Public Parks and publicly owned sporting facilities to be made available to all schools during school hours free of charge.