Minor party policy on school education

The minor parties may have an influential role in the next Australian Parliament through the possible holding of the balance of power in the Senate.

To date, only the Family First Party has been publicly supportive of the non-government schooling sector.

This policy list has been sourced from publicly available information on party websites.

Australian Democrats

The Democrats Action Plan for school education includes:

- Increase Commonwealth per capita funding for primary schools to the same level as for secondary schools (currently 10% of AGSRC)
- Replace the SES model of non-government schools funding with a funding model that takes into account existing and historical resource levels including whole-of-school income and assets
- Introduce a common financial reporting instrument for government and non-government schools
- Link non-government school funding to compliance with the same obligations as government schools in reporting, providing for students with special needs, delivering an agreed minimum set of curriculum options to all students and in FOI and non-discrimination
- A Building Basics Program to bring school facilities such as buildings, classrooms and equipment up to the national benchmark
- Universal access to free preschool for three and four year olds
- Support a fair and rigorous system to adequately reward quality teachers, including multifaceted assessment of teachers’ practice and improved pay scales
- Provide an Educational Needs Supplement of 50% for schools meeting agreed educational disadvantage criteria in line with recommendation of the Australian Primary Principals Association
- Redirect the funding for the $700 private tutoring voucher to schools to be used for specialist literacy and numeracy trained mentors to work with staff in classrooms
- Specialist programs for gifted children
- Establish a Curriculum Expertise Program that supports professional development and high-quality multi-disciplinary curricula grounded in contemporary issues such as global warming, salinity, future energy demands and cloning
- A ‘Primary Specialist Program’ to fund coordination and resource material for science, visual and performing arts and physical education in all primary schools and guarantees of adequate access to specialist teachers in physical education, languages, and the arts for primary schools
- Incentives to encourage maths and science graduates to move into teaching
- Teaching assistants for secondary schools to help with administrative tasks
- Fund the National Safe Schools Framework to address bullying in schools
- Extend the National School Chaplaincy program so that schools can use the funding to choose the most appropriate professional to provide social and emotional well-being support for their student population
- Provide incentives for the states to provide school-based expertise such as psychologists, counsellors and/or nurses in all schools
- Run a national marketing strategy for public schools

Democrats policies on education, including schools, preschool, VET and TAFE are available at http://www.democrats.org.au/
Australian Greens

The Greens policy documentation outlines a number of measures in school education. They will:

- Support funding mechanisms that prioritise public schools
- Abolish the Commonwealth Government’s ‘inequitable’ schemes for funding private schools, which link private school funding to the cost of educating students in the public system, including the socioeconomic status (SES) and ‘funding maintained’ formulae
- Invest the money saved from ending public subsidies to the very wealthiest private schools into a national equity funding program for public schools
- Support the maintenance of the total level of Commonwealth funding for private schools at 2003–04 levels (excluding that re-allocated under previous clauses), indexed for inflation, with a review at the end of the 2005-08 quadrennium
- Reintroduce the New Schools Policy to prevent the development of new private schools that would threaten the viability and diversity of existing public schools in the same area
- Institute a broad-ranging investigation into the funding of school education
- End government funding for schools that operate for private profit
- Extend to private schools the anti-discrimination measures that apply in public schools
- Fund reduced class sizes in all public schools that suffer socioeconomic disadvantage, starting with those that recruit students from communities that have a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and those that cater for children with special needs
- Substantially increase specialist support services for students with special needs, including those with a disability, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Work for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the school curriculum, and the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the training and development of all teachers
- Improve funding for teacher training and professional development
- Introduce accountability frameworks for government funding to non-government schools to create the same minimum level of public accountability and transparency that applies to public schools
- End the public ranking of schools in ‘league tables’
- Oppose any national tertiary entrance qualification system which reduces standards as compared to current state tertiary qualification systems
- Reject the use of education funding vouchers
- Support decisions about curriculum, testing, reporting and teaching methods being made by experts in consultation with teachers, parents, students and the community
- Increase capital works and maintenance budgets for public education infrastructure, while ensuring public ownership and control and the minimisation of environmental impacts

Family First

Family First education policies include:

- Defend parents’ rights to choose schooling that supports their family’s values
- Seek the introduction of character and life skills development into schools’ curriculum
- Improve and broaden the provision of financial life skills education, including a free savings account for primary school children, administered by schools
- Defend the right of independent schools to employ staff who uphold the values of their school community
- Promotion and support for measures to reduce class sizes and increase literacy levels
- Continue to promote recognition of governmental responsibilities to support parental choice in education and parents’ role as the primary educators of their children
- Support for funding equity between private and public education to ensure no child is disadvantaged because of geographical, social or economic factors or regardless of whether children have been placed into the private or public education system
- Needs-based funding that takes into account the incomes of parents at each school
- Students with disability to receive the same funding and support for their disability as children at government schools
- Promotion of increased levels of accountability to parents and community and national standards in all schools
- The Family First policy also includes a commitment to the provision of tax deductibility for school education expenses up to a limit of $3,000 per year per family whether the child attends a public or private school.