



Michael Berkman MP
For Maiwar ▲

16 September 2020

Mr Graham Moloney
General Secretary, Queensland Teachers Union
Via email: gtu@qtu.asn.au

2020 Queensland election - policy commitments

Dear Graham,

Thank you for your email of 3 September 2020, outlining the Queensland Teachers' Union's (QTU's) policy priorities for the 2020 Queensland election.

Your members are the lifeblood of Queensland's education system, and I have enjoyed working collaboratively with you to advance the priorities of teachers in Queensland.

This government's key reforms for workers, like portable long service leave in the community sector and taking action on wage theft, reflect long-standing Greens policy and advocacy. These were very heartening to be involved with.

I've also been very glad to work collaboratively with the government on securing a new public school on Brisbane's west side. Hopefully this addresses the systemic overcrowding and capacity issues at Toowong, Ironside and Indooroopilly State Schools. I have been calling for a new school on the west side since 2018, and the recent \$65 million announcement of a new primary school with a start date of 2023 will be a huge asset to our public education system. I am also hoping that new high school capacity can be added to help ease the pressure on Indooroopilly State High and Kelvin Grove State College.

On the other hand, I was dismayed to see Labor legislate a wage freeze for public servants even as Australia slips into recession and strain on households is growing. It was particularly shocking to see these laws tacked on to the portable long service leave legislation. As I outlined in my [speech](#), it was terrible to see the government give to workers with one hand and take away so much with the other.

I have addressed the questions in your election survey with corresponding headings below. All statements are complementary to statements by the Greens' spokespeople, including myself, and other policy documents that are on the public record.

1. Increasing the state government expenditure to TAFE (as the public provider) to 80 per cent of the state Vocational Education and Training (VET) expenditure

The Greens are committed to funding TAFE as a priority, because we don't believe government funding should go to providers operating for private profit. Nationally, we've announced a [policy](#) to fund TAFE at 100% of the state's VET expenditure, and at the state level we want to see the same.

Visit Us
1/49 Station Road, Indooroopilly
Open: Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

Contact Us
Tel: (07) 37374100
maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au
www.michaelberkman.com.au

2. Reducing teacher and principal workload to less than 42 hours per school week during the term of government

The Greens have a [plan](#) for fully funded health and education. We will [fully fund Queensland state schools with an extra \\$7 billion over four years](#) for smaller class sizes, more teachers, better resources and no fees. With more teachers and smaller class sizes, we want to see the QTU's proposal to reduce workload become a reality.

3. Increasing state government expenditure on state schools to more than 69 per cent of the Schooling Resources Standard (SRS) during the term of the government

The Greens have a plan [for fully funded public education](#). Queensland state schools are the most underfunded state schools in the country because the Queensland Government only provides 69.26% of needs-based funding to state schools. The Greens will increase the Queensland government's share of the needs-based SRS to 80%. Combined with the 20% that the federal government has committed, this would fully fund our state education system.

This additional funding to get Queensland public schools to 100% of the SRS is the equivalent of 13,000 extra state school teachers, resulting in smaller class sizes, better resourced schools and higher quality education for our children.

4. Protecting teachers, principals and TAFE educators from occupational violence, including physical, verbal, cyber- and sexual abuse and harassment

The Greens are dismayed to hear of increased reporting of occupational violence against teachers and principals by both adults and students. We will work with the QTU to close the legislative and administrative gaps which stand in the way of adequately responding to these incidents.

5. Provision of alternative learning settings for disengaged students or students with persistent behaviour problems

The Greens support the establishment of alternative learning centres to address student behaviour and separate centres for students who are unable to engage in learning in traditional school settings where those changes are supported by the best pedagogical evidence.

It is important to note that for students with disabilities the Greens strongly support the Queensland Department of Education's Inclusive Education Policy and are committed to lifting all public schools to 100% of the SRS to make sure that policy can be implemented.

6. A capital works program (including a share of stimulus funding) to:

- a. replace ageing school buildings**
- b. upgrade the ICT capacity of all schools**
- c. construction of new schools to cater for growth across all sectors, including special education.**

The Greens want to see a significant capital works program for schools, including replacing school buildings, upgrading ICT capacity and constructing new schools.

As part of our [plan](#) to fully fund public education, the Greens will create a \$250 million yearly public school infrastructure fund to upgrade existing state schools and build new schools in areas of need. This is additional to the \$7 billion over four years for schools' operating costs.

These are part of the Greens' COVID-19 economic recovery plan which will create 78,000 jobs per year by investing in public services and infrastructure: <https://greens.org.au/qld/recovery>.

7. The abolition of National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in its current form

It is clear: standardised testing comparing schools does not create the right conditions for good public education. It promotes competition between public schools, 'teaching to the test' and enormous pressure on teachers and students.

While standardised testing may have value as a diagnostic tool for individual students, we believe NAPLAN should be abolished in its current form.

8. The review of school curriculum to remove excess content and focus on essential learnings for the future

We support a streamlined curriculum which equips students for the 21st century and, as per our national policy on Education, is based on the best evidence from teachers, their unions and educational experts: <https://greens.org.au/policies/education>. The Greens support a review of the curriculum to ensure it aligns with these guiding principles, not influence from politicians or commentators.

9. Maintaining and maximising permanent employment for teachers, principals and TAFE

The Greens believe everyone should have the right to secure, ongoing, meaningful work if they want it. We want to see a guarantee of permanency of employment for all levels of the teaching service, including principals and TAFE educators. I recently supported the Queensland Government's Public Service Bill on the basis that it would offer better pathways to permanency for long term casual staff.

Nationally, we have proposed legislation to ensure gig economy workers and other people on contracts get the same legal minimum wages and conditions as traditional employees, and last year, ahead of the 2019 federal election, we released a [policy](#) to provide a pathway for insecure workers to request ongoing part-time or full-time work.

10. At least one Head of Department (Curriculum) in every primary school above 200 and every special school

We support additional promoted positions in primary and special schools, to complement the heads of department which have existed in secondary schools for some time, as well as the head of curriculum positions which were funded some time ago. Our abovementioned plan for fully funded public education including reaching 100% of the SRS within 4 years would support extra Heads of Department and other positions.

11. A full-time teacher aide (30 hours) in every primary and secondary school classroom

We support a full-time teacher aide in each classroom as part of our [plan](#) for fully funded education. We will fully fund Queensland state schools with an extra \$7 billion over four years for smaller class sizes, more teachers, better resources and no fees. At a time like now when Australia is officially in a recession,

providing employment in such a critical sector helps to boost the workforce, while ensuring better resourced classrooms.

We have also publicly supported the United Workers Union's campaign to stop outsourcing of teacher aides and school cleaners and make sure they are employed directly by the Department of Education.

12. Continued payment of employer superannuation contributions during unpaid parental leave

Yes. I would be happy to work with the QTU to ensure these priorities guide the government during the next parliamentary term.

The Greens are determined to close the gender wage gap, including the gender superannuation gap. Last year we released a national [policy](#) which includes significant reforms to ensure the superannuation system is more fair and doesn't put women at a disadvantage. In Queensland, we would support continued payment of employer superannuation contributions during unpaid parental leave.

Our paid parental leave policy at a federal level would extend the current paid parental leave arrangements to six months, paid at 100% of the primary carer's regular wage, capped at \$100,000 per annum. Superannuation payments would be paid on this. We are calling for a Productivity Commission review into what further reforms are needed to value unpaid caring work, including parental leave.

I hope that this information is of assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact my office on 07 3737 4100 if you would like to discuss this matter in more detail.

Kind regards,



Michael Berkman MP