

Government Media Statement

12 June 2008

DAVID BARTLETT

Premier and Minister for Education and Skills

Education A Budget Priority

A record investment of \$1.06 billion will be injected into the Tasmanian education and training sector to drive an improvement in the literacy and numeracy levels of school children and adults.

The Premier and Minister for Education and Skills, David Bartlett, said today that \$34.8 million would be spent over four years on two significant and far-reaching new literacy initiatives as part of a record 2008-09 Education Budget.

"\$32 million has been allocated over the next four years for the *Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap* initiative, specifically targeted to support primary school children with functional literacy and numeracy skills," Mr Bartlett said.

"This is the single biggest investment in literacy funding in this State's history.

"The *Community Adult Literacy Coordinators Initiative* will receive \$2.8 million over four years to appoint literacy professionals to support trained volunteers in providing a program of community-based literacy support for those Tasmanians most in need.

"Both these initiatives are targeted at literacy improvements in schools plus a program of community literacy support for adults and families with very low literacy.

"These funds are on top of the \$22.3 million already included in the Education budget for a range of literacy and numeracy initiatives throughout the State.

"This Government recognises that one of the best ways to alleviate poverty and encourage economic growth is to provide Tasmanians with better educational opportunities.

"It is widely acknowledged that literacy and numeracy skills are the foundation upon which all other educational achievement is built.

"The Government is determined to take action to improve the educational outcomes of Tasmanian students. This improvement is not something that can be achieved with short-term quick fixes. It requires a comprehensive strategy and a commitment to long-term work and real results.

"This is the beginning of a new way forward for Tasmania. Now is the time for new ways of thinking and new ways of doing."

Mr Bartlett said that \$16.8 million has also been allocated to improving resources for students with high and additional needs.

"Current staffing level for students in this category will be increased with an additional 29 teachers to be employed allowing for an extra two hours targeted teacher support per week for each student on the Register of Students with Disabilities.

"The eligibility threshold for the Register of Students with Disabilities will also be broadened to include some students whose IQ falls in the range from 50 to 70 and who require educational intervention."

"The 2008-09 Education budget delivers a range of new and continuing education initiatives that will provide increased opportunities to Tasmanian children and families, and provide skills required by the growing Tasmanian economy," he said.

Other initiatives in the 2008-09 Education Budget include:

- \$7.2 million to continue the Government's drive to improve skill levels of Tasmanians, including the establishment of the Connect to Work initiative and the provision of 2000 new training places.
- The Government will make a \$1 million contribution over two years to establish a Tasmanian-based foundation to promote and enhance the value of education and learning in the Tasmanian community.

- \$1 million will be spent to establish a process of recognising child care qualifications and provide a qualification pathway that will significantly increase the number of qualified child carers in Tasmania.
- \$200,000 will be provided to support the purchase of musical instruments to enhance school music programs.

Mr Bartlett said that a massive \$152 million will be spent over four years to improve the state of the Department of Education's buildings and the per-capita levels of capital investment in schools relative to national levels of investment.

"The Department's Capital Investment Program will increase from \$26.9 million in 2007-08 to \$41.8 million in 2008-09.

Major projects within this four-year program include:

- \$30 million will be invested to provide contemporary educational facilities in Bridgewater and the Southern Midlands;
- \$11.3 million to develop four new Learning and Information Network Centres (LINC)s across regional Tasmania to integrate community learning, libraries and technology access with other government services;
- \$7.8 million in infrastructure to continue progressing the restructuring of Tasmania's post-compulsory education and training sector through the Tasmania *Tomorrow* education reforms;
- \$6 million for the refurbishment and renewal of existing facilities at a number of secondary and district high schools around the State;
- \$30 million to build a new Kingston High School to meet the future educational needs of students in one of Tasmania's fastest growing municipalities; and
- A further \$61.5 million over four years will be invested in 39 projects across the State to redevelop existing areas in schools, libraries and TAFE facilities.

Mr Bartlett said that the 2008-09 State Budget also delivered on a range of Labor promises, including the partnership with the Australian Education Union to build a stronger public education system.

"I am committed to making better education the key to a clever, kind and connected Tasmania," Mr Bartlett said.

"This Budget builds on my Government's strategic vision for education and is a significant investment in the future of all Tasmanians."

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