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COALITION TO RESTORE BALANCE ON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS FUNDING

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition will restore education funding stripped from Catholic schools by the Brumby Government and improve conditions across the Catholic education system in Victoria if elected to government.

The Coalition's Catholic Education Plan, *Restoring the Balance* gives Catholic schools a better deal to enable the Catholic education sector to help meet future challenges.

On average, parents of an Victorian Catholic school student pay the highest fees of any state except South Australia because Labor has not acted to secure the future of the Catholic education sector.

More than one in five Victorian students are taught in a Catholic school, and a Victorian Coalition Government will build on this essential cornerstone of our education system by restoring the funding stripped from Catholic schools.

After eight years of Labor, funding to Catholic schools as a percentage of income has fallen to historic lows, with Victoria now providing the least funding per Catholic student of any state.

Parents, families and students in Catholic schools should not have to bear Labor's legacy of chronic neglect and under-funding.

This is about planning for tomorrow and restoring choice, diversity and balance to the Catholic school system.

Under this policy, funding to Catholic schools will be tied to the cost of educating a child in a government school, rather than falling further and further behind as at present.

This funding will increase state government grants to Catholic schools to around 25 per cent of the cost of educating a child in a government school, in line with arrangements which apply in New South Wales.

This funding will be directed towards improving the education of students in the Catholic education system, particularly for in needy schools and for students with a disability.

Policy

Labor's erosion of Catholic school funding over the last eight years has added to the pressure on families already struggling with the increased cost of petrol, groceries and housing.

This package represents a fundamental and necessary change to the funding treatment of Catholic schools in Victoria.

A Victorian Coalition Government will reduce the burden on families who choose to send their children to a Catholic school.

This year there are more than 185,000 students in nearly 500 Catholic schools across Victoria and the Catholic education sector deserves a much better deal.

Victorian Catholic students are the victims of the historical decline in funding under John Brumby's Labor administration and the Victorian Coalition will end this neglect if elected to government.

Restoring the Balance commits the Coalition to investing \$390 million over four years in Victorian Catholic schools to ensure a strong and diverse education system, and support the choices made by parents.

The Coalition will restore funding that has been stripped from Catholic schools and increase state government grants to Catholic schools using a needs-based formula tied to the cost of educating a government school student.

Restoring the Balance will enable Catholic schools to:

- provide funding to ensure that Catholic school teachers are paid more, in line with the recent Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) with government school teachers;
- increase funding for students with a disability, who currently receive only one-third of the funding that a student with a disability in a government school receives;
- boost funding for needy schools in disadvantaged areas;
- undertake capital works and maintenance to repair existing classrooms and improve facilities;
- improve internet access and bandwidth to the same level as government schools;
- cover the cost of complying with state government accountability requirements and improve teacher and principal professional development.