GREENS EDUCATION POLICY A THREAT TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Greens Leader Senator Bob Brown – campaigning in Adelaide today – must come clean on his education policy and a letter he wrote last week to South Australia’s Independent schools.

The Independent Schools Association of SA is alerting its 96 member schools to the Greens education policy and its serious consequences for Independent schools and parents, particularly if the Greens hold the balance of power in the Senate.

The Association’s Executive Director, Garry Le Duff, said the Greens would cut funding in real terms to many Independent schools, severely disrupt the finance plans of all schools, block the creation of new Independent schools, duplicate State Government legislation and threaten the viability of many school communities. The Association also has written to all Greens candidates to alert them to the ramifications of their education policy.

"The Greens education policy is an artefact of the 1950s and an affront to the one-third of South Australian parents with children at non-government schools,” Mr Le Duff said.

"In a letter to principals last week, Senator Brown tried to reassure Independent schools about the Greens intentions but did not tell the full story of what’s in his policy. Greens policy will wind back the clock to destroy parental choice, cut non-government school funding, create a funding hit-list against certain schools, force up school fees, reduce school choice for parents and duplicate existing State legislation on the establishment of new schools.

"We urge our school communities to carefully consider the education policies of minor parties – hidden behind worthy environmental objectives are some frightening ideas on education.”

The Greens would:

- Abolish the Commonwealth Government’s schemes for funding private schools, including the socioeconomic status (SES) and funding-maintained formulae
- Redirect the money from ending subsidies to some private schools into a ‘national equity funding program for public schools’
Maintain total level of Commonwealth funding for non-government schools at 2003-04 levels 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 threaten the ‘viability and diversity’ of existing public schools

Introduce ‘accountability’ frameworks for government funding to non-government schools

“The concepts that underpin the Greens education policy were debated and rejected long ago,” said Mr Le Duff.

“Accountability associated with Commonwealth funding is already the same for Government and Non-Government schools.

“The Greens’ policy would punish parents who send their children to Independent schools and generate uncertainty for families of children across the State. These are families that make a significant contribution to educating their children.

“It is a policy that would restrict choice of school for many parents, discourage parental investment and duplicate State legislation.

“It is policy that looks for things to destroy and to control, not build and sustain.”

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