

Towards 2020 Submissions  
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Dear Sir/Madam

My son presently attends The Canberra College. I have read and support The Canberra College Association submission on Towards 2020.

I am greatly distressed by the way the Government has approached the announcement and consultation phase of its plans for ACT government education and at the total lack of foresight shown, especially for young people who need the most support to complete their schooling.

I recall the Labor Party being warned, when it announced that it would better the then Liberal pre-election promise to reduce K-2 class sizes across the board, of the recurrent cost of doing this. At the time, it was estimated that costs to the education budget could escalate to the order of \$30 million per annum. With this kind of investment, a lot more could have been done to improve equitable education outcomes for all ACT Government school students had the same money been better targeted. The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to K-3 class sizes<sup>1</sup> but has made no such commitment for Years 4 to 12 post Towards 2020. Instead the Government has put numerous schools and the teachers, in particular at Colleges, under increased pressure with threats of mass closures and the imposition of severe teacher number cuts as high as 13% flagged for next year.

With the Government's drive to cut its costs, it is now hitting the College years the hardest, hardly fair given the above history. It also appears to go against the Government's Priority 5 in its Social Plan to "Lead Australia in education, lifelong learning and training" and the goals to:

- Reduce inequalities in children's first five years and improve the transition between home, early childhood settings and kindergarten.
- Increase education participation, engagement and achievement of children and young people.
- Increase literacy and numeracy levels, particularly for students at risk.
- Improve the transition between school, further study, and the workforce.
- Provide opportunities for lifelong learning."

While, on a personal level, I advocated smaller class sizes at the schools attended by my children, it was because my daughter started her formal schooling in a Kindergarten class of 34 at the time when the normal capacity for Kindergarten was supposedly no more than 30 in a class.

Down the track my son was in classes that generally exceeded 30 for much of his High School years. Teenagers also need a great deal of individual attention or, at the very least, deserve to be in subject lines of their choosing with like minded students. Their teachers require realistic preparation time and time outside of class to deal with the different educational, emotional, and social issues presented by teenagers; and parents deserve to be alerted to problems while they are minor rather than being advised at reporting time at the end of semester, way too late to be involved in a solution.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Government is committed to small class sizes, especially in the early years of school. Class sizes are set at 21 for K - 3 classes, for example, these classes will not increase in size."  
<http://www.decs.act.gov.au/2020/faq.htm#em4>

I do not trust the Government's words or calculations on 'capacity' and, given the Education Minister's public statements on so called 'empty desks', I am of a firm view that he has no commitment to the stated goals under Priority 5 of the Social Plan.

Yours sincerely

Robyn Cummins