

Improved support for students with a disability

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The Plan to rebuild essential services

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## Improved support for students living with disability

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will establish an independent review of education for students with a disability.

We will also invest \$1 million over four years into a long-term strategy for improved autism care, including introducing the American-based *Rethink Autism* program to Tasmania.

### Getting the right data for evidence-based decisions

The Labor-Green Government has failed to support the education of students with special needs in our schools. A Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby survey of 77 families with children with disabilities showed 60 per cent were not happy with the level of support from the Education Department.

The Liberals support the right of the parent to choose the right education for their child, whether that is in a support school or in a mainstream school.

Our independent review will look at the limitations for families in being able to exercise that choice, including the barriers faced to secure in-school support for their child and access to the Severe Disability Register.

It will also assess learning strategies and the provision of educational materials in alternative formats, how best to report on educational outcomes for students with a disability, disability awareness training for teachers, and transition planning for post-school options for leaving students.

This review is particularly relevant given the additional funding for students with disabilities flowing from the Australian Government under the Gonski reforms.

### Unlocking the learning potential of children with autism

All around the world, evidence-based programs are delivering early intervention to young children with autism using Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) as the key to unlocking the ability to learn.

A majority Hodgman Liberal Government will invest \$1 million to kick-start a longer-term strategy to implement best practice autism care to Tasmania, including introducing the American-based *Rethink Autism* program to the state.

The prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has increased dramatically, and is growing at a faster rate than any other disability.

The Liberals' investment in bringing an innovative and proven web-based platform *Rethink Autism* to Tasmania is an investment in our future.

The program, based on Applied Behaviour Analysis, is individually tailored and can be delivered in the home, in child care centres, in schools and

anywhere the child goes. It is user-friendly for teachers, parents and Teacher Assistants, ensuring continuity of treatment and care for the child.

The *Rethink Autism* program will help put Tasmania at the forefront of autism support nationally. Despite numerous requests from families of children with autism, the Labor-Green Government refused to even allow a pilot of this program.

The Liberals also commit to building a state-wide continuum of care from birth to adulthood for children with autism.

We will convene an expert team to develop a long-term strategy which may include -

- examining and recommending the earliest practical tests for autism so that early intervention can begin as soon as possible. We will aim for diagnosis to occur within the first two years of life;
- building a register of all those with autism in Tasmania to inform the first prevalence study in the state and allow for future planning and the development of a research industry in Tasmania;
- assessing the viability and benefits of clinics that test for, and treat, the many co-morbidities of autism, working closely with established services such as epilepsy support services;
- the professional development of health and education workers in relation to autism, including the introduction of *Autism Speaks* protocols; and
- the best means of delivering education and practical help for parents.

In addition, we will pilot the establishment of an autism-specific satellite unit attached to a local school in the south of the state, so children with autism are given the best opportunity to learn and reach their full potential, while still being included in a mainstream school environment.

#### Costing:

\$1 million over four years.