Academic Standards Will Not Improve Under Labor’s Plan.

Changes to secondary curriculum, (similar to those proposed in the Territory), in both South Australia and Western Australia will lower academic standards.

The overhaul of the South Australian Certificate of Education, if adopted, will mean that students will not be able to fail exams. The worst a student could achieve would be an assessment result of ‘not yet achieved’

“The new approach, which will affect NT students if adopted, may give students a ‘warm and fuzzy’ feeling but is no preparation for the real world.” Shadow Education Minister Terry Mills said.

"Rather by ensuring no child fails we are ensuring they do fail. They are failed by a system that provides an unrealistic and inadequate preparation for the real world."

In an attempt to increase retention, year ten students will be able to commence study for their SACE a year earlier in the proposed new approach. While driven by a desire to get more students to compete the SACE it does so at the expense of academic standards. The curriculum is ‘dumbed’ down to ensure that everyone is guaranteed a pass-eventually.

“What’s the point of keeping kids at school longer if we fail to improve basic standards or prepare them for life beyond school?” Mr Mills asked

Western Australia is in the process of adopting a similar approach which has suffered fierce community criticism for lowering academic standards.

“In an embarrassing move for the WA Labor Government, whose restructure of the secondary curriculum has won the ire of teachers, a respected senior examiner, Dr Niall Lucy recently resigned in protest.” he said.

“Dr Lucy resigned and hit out at the poor quality of exam papers that failed to penalise year twelve English students for incorrect spelling, punctuation or syntax. Dr Lucy could not support a curriculum that did not require students to read a book, spell or write continuous prose.”

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“Behind the move to middle schools in the Territory lies a strengthening of the outcomes based approach, an approach that focuses on process rather than knowledge and devalues academic rigour and external assessment. This is an approach other countries determined to improve academic standards have long since abandoned.

“While this current approach may make kids feel good for a while it will not raise academic standards nor prepare them for employment. Too many employers continue to complain of students after years at school being unable to read, write or spell adequately and have problems with simple maths.

“Minister Stirling is yet to convince me that academic standards will rise under Labor’s restructure of secondary education.”