THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Peter Chandler MLA

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The Henderson Government should admit its decision to turn its back on bilingual education was a mistake and work towards restoring Indigenous language as a key component of learning English in remote communities.

Shadow Minister for Education, Peter Chandler, said the Labor Government’s prescriptive approach to language development in early education is affecting student development and the capacity of teachers to improve student outcomes.

“The decline in attendances at a number of schools where bilingual education was scrapped speaks volumes about Labor’s flawed, confused approach to Indigenous education,” Mr Chandler said.

“The policy change in 2008 was poorly thought out and ill conceived by a Labor Government struggling to come to grips with almost a decade of failure addressing Indigenous education.

“When Labor won office, one of its core commitments focused on education outcomes in Indigenous communities.

“Instead, what we’ve seen is poor outcomes and falling attendances, and it would appear scrapping bilingual education has only made this worse.

“The reality is, many families in Indigenous communities speak very little or no English at home and to then expect young children to speak English at school is nonsensical.

“Traditional languages should be part of the bridging process towards speaking English, as is regular school attendance.

“The Government must stop pussy-footing about and take a tough stance on the families of Indigenous students who don’t attend school – including issuing fines if the failure isn’t reversed.”

Mr Chandler also questioned whether two days was long enough to properly prepare teachers earmarked for postings to remote Territory communities.

“I know of one private nursing agency that undertakes a month long orientation program for staff going to remote communities,“ he said.

“Life in a remote community can be challenging for outsiders and I’m not convinced two days is enough to provide teachers with the proper skills. Teachers need the full support of the Education Department backed up by adequate resources if they are to succeed.”

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