

Education

For  
the  
Future

Supporting  
wellbeing  
in schools



South  
Australian  
**Labor**



#### Acknowledgment of country.

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians whose ancestral lands we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect their deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country. We also pay our respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their nations in South Australia, as well as those across Australia.

# Foreword



Our children deserve the best start in life.

Supporting every child to get the most out of their school experience is at the centre of Labor's education policy.

For children with additional challenges, Labor wants to be there right alongside them.

It may be that it is only in the school environment that it becomes apparent a child is dealing with anxiety, depression or other mental health issues, which can have a negative impact not only on the child's wellbeing, but also on their school participation and academic achievement.

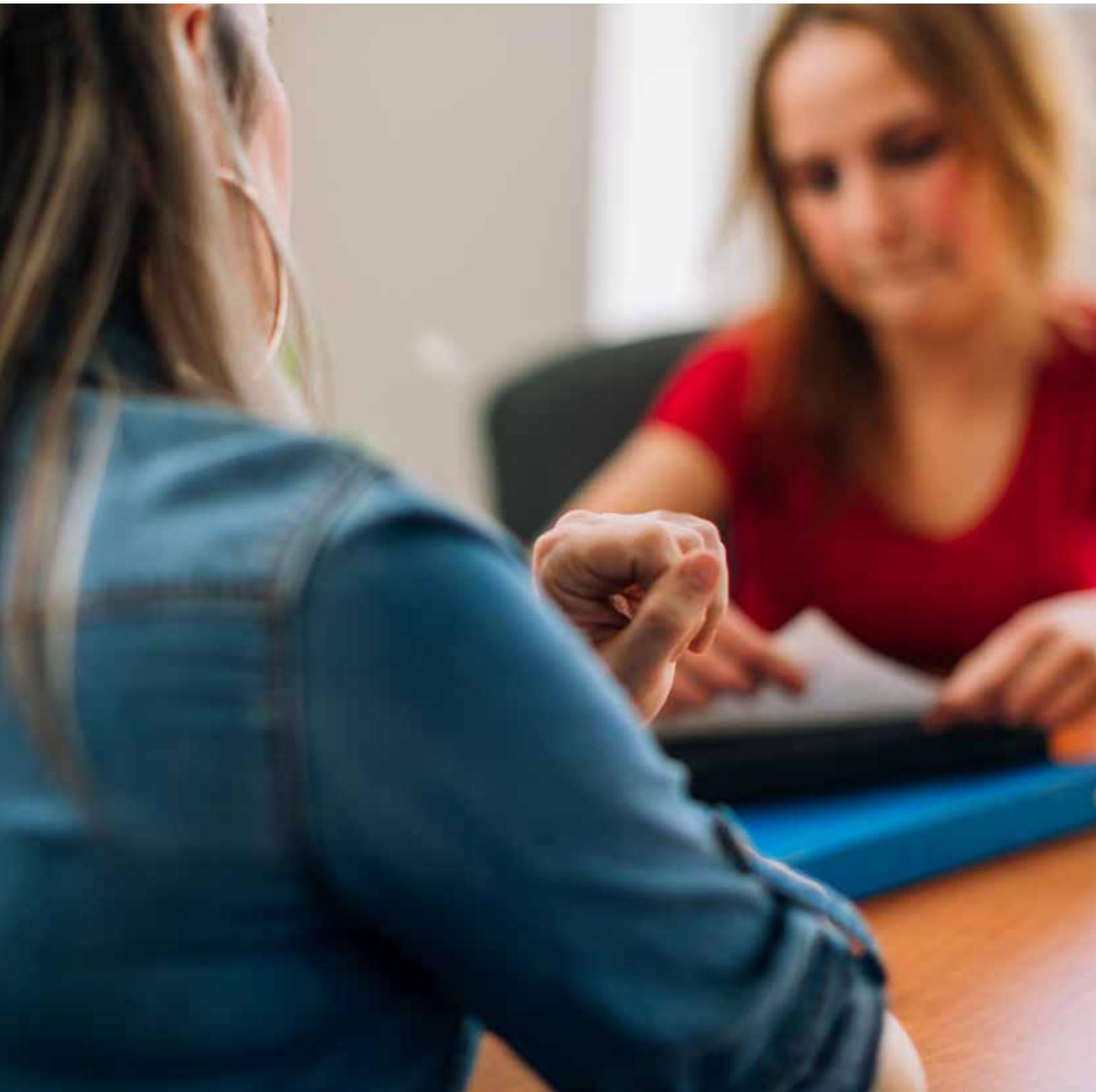
One student struggling can also impact on other students, creating disruptions to the whole class learning environment.

We have a duty to not only support the educational needs of our children, but also their wellbeing needs. That means identifying the challenges these children face early and putting in place the professional support around them so they can grow and thrive in the school environment like their peers.

Labor will commit an additional \$50 million to employ a central pool of 100 new mental health and learning support specialists to be deployed to primary and secondary schools and provide the kind of timely support students so desperately need, as well as guidance for school staff on how to provide ongoing assistance for the child.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Malinauskas'.

Peter Malinauskas MP  
SA Labor Leader



# Mental health and learning support for students

It is a common refrain from experienced classroom teachers that the prevalence of poor mental health amongst primary and secondary age school students has increased dramatically. Anxiety and depression-related mental illnesses are on the rise, but there are also growing reports of suicidal ideation amongst primary age children. In June 2020 the national Headspace youth survey reported that 34% of respondents experienced high levels of psychological distress. This is incredibly sobering data and it is clear that parents and carers are not able to access the professional support their children need to treat these issues in the public or private health systems where they are met with long-wait lists.

These factors have a negative impact not only on wellbeing, but also school participation and academic achievement. One student struggling can affect others in the class, creating disruptions for others' learning. COVID and all the uncertainty it has brought just serves to heighten these issues. At a time when more and more young people need support from mental health services, they are instead faced with an under-resourced system incapable of providing the timely support they so desperately need.

In the absence of this care, teachers are being left with no choice but to step in and try to provide this support on top of teaching duties. This is not an ideal situation for students or staff and has the unwanted side-effect of negatively impacting the learning and achievement of all students in the classroom.

The wait time for students to receive assessments through the current system can be more than a year – this is patently inadequate.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will commit an additional \$50 million to employ a central pool of 100 new mental health and learning support specialists to be deployed to primary and secondary schools and provide the kind of timely support students so desperately need, as well as guidance for school staff on how to provide ongoing assistance for the child.

The program will employ mental health psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, social workers, youth workers and other learning support specialists. They can be requested by primary and secondary schools in regional and metropolitan Adelaide to provide one-on-one support to students and work with teachers, school support officers and principals to help develop programs that improve the mental health and resilience of the whole school community.

An investment in mental health support for school-age children will benefit everyone in the classroom and prevent those issues becoming more acute over time.



# University student placements to support school students

University courses often require students in professional courses, like occupational therapy, speech therapy and counselling to undertake work placements. These students, while they are learning and developing their skills, can make an important contribution to schools, working alongside professionals.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will negotiate agreements with the three universities in South Australia to create a program that is useful for university students and will provide much needed additional support for students.

# Making support simple

When your child needs additional support at school, that should be straightforward: for the child, for the parents and for the school. The Marshall Liberal government has brought in a highly complex process which can take a teacher nine hours per child to work through – and even then not receive the support the student needs.

Labor will fix this by empowering schools to manage the process of allocating support, ensuring that the process is simple and fast and reduces bureaucracy, overheads and ensure procedures are kept to a minimum.

Labor knows that schools are where the students are, so schools are where the resources should be.





