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Year 7 merged into high school if Liberals win State Election

DANIEL WILLS STATE POLITICAL EDITOR • THE ADVERTISER • JANUARY 21, 2014 12:00AM

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The SA Liberals say Year 7 would be moved into high school if they were to win government. Source: News Limited

YEAR 7 will be merged into high school if the Liberals win power in March in a move they say will deliver better results for students by providing earlier access to specialised teaching.

Opposition Leader Steven Marshall has told *The Advertiser* the transition would begin as early as 2016 after an audit of state schools to determine which have capacity to take on extra students.

The major restructure would be phased in over up to eight years. Additional funding would be provided to build extra space in some schools and provide more high school teachers, he said.

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The Opposition says the move would also produce smaller Year 7 class sizes.

South Australia is the only state that insists Year 7 remain at the primary school level. Queensland and Western Australia in 2011 decided to implement the change from 2015.

More: [What Opposition Leader Steven Marshall really wants for his birthday](#)

The State Government categorically ruled out the move last night, setting up a significant point of difference between the two major parties over education ahead of the March 15 election.

It is the Liberals' second major education policy release in the week before school returns after the Australia Day holiday.

National testing results released in September showed SA behind the national average in 19 out of the 20 categories despite students recording some improvement in three quarters of the areas.

Mr Marshall said South Australian students "can no longer afford to be left behind" and could be "brought back into the forefront of education once more" with better-targeted instruction.

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"Already the national curriculum has a lot more science and maths in it, and it's being taught at a primary school level by teachers that aren't necessarily trained in maths and science," he said.

"At a high school level, you have science labs and classrooms with specialist maths teachers."

Mr Marshall said documents obtained under Freedom of Information showed 37 of the state's 68 high schools were currently under capacity and well-placed to begin the transition.

Pasadena, Seaview and William Light were among those with most spare capacity, he said.

Government figures show about 11,300 Year 7 students are currently enrolled in SA.

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The Liberals argue the move will result in smaller Year 7 classes as high school classes have an average 29 students, compared to 31 in primary, under industrial agreements with teachers.

Mr Marshall said there were unlikely to be significant costs attached to the plan within the current four-year Budget period.

He said most could be met by restructuring existing resources and a timetable for construction works to expand schools would be laid out after the audit.

"Most of that, obviously, will be beyond the forward (Budget) estimates," Mr Marshall said.

The Opposition also says the move would help unlock additional cash for the school system as national funding arrangements provide extra for students studying at the secondary level.

The SA Association of State School Organisations has previously complained the inconsistent status of Year 7 across the country had caused problems for children moving across borders.

The State Government has previously indicated willingness to consider moving Year 7 into



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secondary school but raised concerns over the likely cost and inconvenience.

It estimates the total cost of new buildings at more than \$300 million.

It also argues some parents may be concerned at 17-year-olds and 12-year-olds sharing a campus.

"The Labor Government has reviewed moves interstate to place Year 7 students in high schools and has rejected it," a Government spokesman said late yesterday.

"There is no evidence that bringing Year 7s into high schools brings better educational outcomes and there hasn't been significant demand from parents for such a move."

Premier Jay Weatherill in November [announced a major education policy aimed at increasing training levels for teachers](#) by mandating new recruits obtain master's degrees.

At the same time, he announced [plans to construct a second city high school](#).

Expressions of interest have been sought but a site has not been confirmed.

The Opposition this week also [revealed plans to create capacity for an extra 1000 students on a second Adelaide High campus](#), linked to the existing site by a footbridge across West Tce.

Today's Liberal education announcement follows earlier plans to establish an "entrepreneurial curriculum" in three existing state high schools.

Under the scheme, the SACE board would be charged with tailoring subjects that produce students with "practical knowledge and skills to plan, establish and grow a business".

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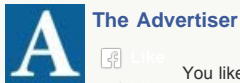


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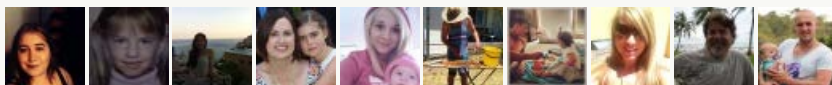
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