

Principals' meagre support for laptops

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PRINCIPALS are opposing the \$70 million Labor plan to give laptops to high school students and fewer than half of parents and school staff back it, a survey has found.

And large majorities of respondents want Year 7 shifted to high school and an independent education ombudsman.

One of the Government's major education pledges is to fund laptops for all Year 10 students in public schools, so all Years 10-12 students will have one by 2021 that they can keep after graduating.

The state's peak public school parent group surveyed more than 1100 parents and school staff, including nearly 100 principals, finding more than seven in 10 principals did not support the laptop rollout.

"Comments showed school leaders were concerned about the ongoing cost imposition to

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SURVEY RESPONSE

their schools," the survey report from the SA Association of State School Organisations said. "Principals, teachers and parents all expressed concern that there were many other ways \$70 million could be better spent in school(s).

"Many were of the opinion that laptops were outdated."

The laptop policy drew 48 per cent support of all respondents. Comments included "Laptops? Why not give them a Commodore 64 Jay (Weatherill)?" and "As a principal I understand the benefits of computers but the money could be spent on far more useful resources."

The survey did not specifically state the policy, which received widespread publicity, would be confined to public schools, attracting some mistaken comments that private students should be excluded.

More than 60 per cent of respondents backed Year 7 moving to high schools, in line with the rest of the country, including 80 per cent of principals, though there was no breakdown of primary and secondary school leaders. Teachers were less enthusiastic.

Almost 70pc overall favoured an education ombudsman which has support of parties across the political spectrum except for Labor.

Education Minister Susan Close said SAASSO had "released survey after survey critiquing government policy, yet not once has the organisation sought to meet with me on any of these issues". She said the "highly popular" laptop plan would help prepare students for "jobs of the future". SAASSO maintains the minister has shown no interest in meeting.