



# DEMAND YOUR RIGHT TO LEARN!

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### AONTAS Pre-Election Campaign 2007

AONTAS, the National Association for Adult Education, makes the following demands in advance of the General Election 2007:

- 1** The Minister of State for Adult Education should have a cross-departmental focus and budget, incorporating the Department of Education and Science; the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; and the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
- 2** The government must put in place – as a matter of urgency – an overarching national structure for adult and community education. Coordinating structures at local level should also be put in place and should be led out by the VECs.
- 3** Investment in adult education should increase by 1% of the overall education budget each year between now and 2013. A capital expenditure budget for adult education should also be put in place, with an initial spend of €12m, allocated through the VECs. The government must also double investment in community education and in adult literacy, and provide at least €45m between now and 2013 to develop and expand the Adult Educational Guidance service.
- 4** Fees for part-time learners in higher education should be abolished.
- 5** Paid educational leave should be introduced for workers with Junior Certificate qualifications or less.
- 6** A childcare allowance should be integrated into all adult and community education programmes. The existing childcare allowance provided by the government to participants on some adult education courses must be doubled to €127 and reviewed on an annual basis.
- 7** The Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) must continue to receive increased investment. People earning less than €35,000 should not have to pay any course fees to participate in the BTEI.
- 8** The eligibility criteria for the Back To Education Allowance (BTEA) must be revised to include low-paid workers, and BTEA payments should be for a full 12 months, rather than the existing practice of making payments for the academic year only.
- 9** As recommended in the White Paper on Adult Education seven years ago, the Inter-Agency Working Group on qualifications for adult education workers should be established immediately. An integrated training budget and integrated training supports for adult education workers should also be provided, under the remit of the VECs.
- 10** A national forum must be established for all parties involved in the education and training of adults with special educational needs.

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