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# Josh Willie to put education at heart of Labor leadership in budget reply



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Tue November 11, 2025 5:00am

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Tasmanian Labor leader Josh Willie. Image / Pulse

Tasmanian Labor leader Josh Willie will use his first major speech in the role to declare education the foundation of his leadership – drawing on his decade-long career as a primary school teacher.

Delivering the address to parliament today, on the 50th anniversary of former prime minister Gough Whitlam's dismissal, Willie will outline a personal vision shaped by his time in the classroom.

"I didn't come to politics through a party machine. I came here through the classroom,"  
**PULSE TASMANIA** (<https://pulsetasmania.com.au>)

"Every day I saw how the right opportunity could change a child's life."

"That's why education isn't just another policy area to me. It's who I am."



Tasmanian Labor leader Josh Willie. Image / Pulse

The speech centres on Maya, a former Grade 6 student with Down syndrome whom Willie taught about a decade ago and who will watch the address from the public gallery.

Willie has maintained contact with Maya and her family over the years, including visiting her in hospital with former teaching colleagues after a serious operation.

"Seeing her grow into a confident young adult reminds me why I got into politics in the first place," he will say.

"Because every child, no matter their circumstances, deserves that same chance."

Maya's story will anchor a sharp critique of the government's handling of education, with Willie's teaching background to question whether students like her are being adequately supported.



Tasmanian Labor leader Josh Willie. Image / File

“Teachers are burnt out and crying for help. They recently lost confidence in the education minister to support them,” he will say.

“Support staff are stretched to breaking point. I know those classrooms. I’ve been in them.”

Willie will also frame Labor as the party of nation-building, pointing to landmark achievements such as the Hydro, Basslink and the first Spirit of Tasmania ferries.

“When Labor governs, Tasmanians do better,” Willie will say.



Tasmanian Labor leader Josh Willie. Image / Pulse

“Those opposite see government as something to just manage and sell off. Labor believes governments should lift people up.”



He will pledge to put “fairness, inclusion and opportunity” at the heart of his leadership.

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“That’s what Labor has always stood for and it’s what we will stand for again – a government that builds, includes and believes in the power of education and community to transform lives, he will say.



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