

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS (ACSSO)

The national voice of parents of children in Australia's public schools and their school communities

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

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Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acsso.org.au

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HOT TOPIC: SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP

Public education is not just the government's business

Professor Brian Caldwell, Sydney Morning Herald 21 June 2007

An expanded role for business in schools has been placed on the agenda in recent weeks, yet Australia has a long way to go before we match what has been accomplished elsewhere.

Resistance is strong in large sections of the educational community and at one end of the political spectrum. There is still the view that business has no place and, at least in the public sector, schools should be built, funded, owned, operated and supported from the public purse and that policy and practice should be solely determined by the provider.

England is an exemplar of how schools can establish partnerships with business. Some 2700 of about 3100 state secondary schools have achieved such an arrangement, on a limited scale under the Conservatives but comprehensively under the Blair Labor Government.

These schools have changed from a standard comprehensive to a specialist schools model, offering at least one of 11 specialisations while still addressing the broad national curriculum. The specialisations are technology, arts, business and enterprise, engineering, humanities, language, mathematics and computing, music, science, sports and special education.

Each school has at least one partnership with business in its area of specialism. Except for small schools, business contributes £50,000 (\$118,000) in cash or in-kind support, generating from the Department for Education and Skills an additional £100,000 capital grant and a per-student recurrent grant.

Read more at <http://www.acsso.org.au/caldwell070626.pdf>.

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BUDGET ROUNDUP

In the first part of this roundup of State and Territory Education Budgets published in last week's Digest, we brought you a summary taken directly from each jurisdiction's own Budget Papers. Not surprisingly, each of these published documents presented the issues in the most positive way.

Equally unsurprisingly, other commentators have pointed out the negative implications for young people's learning and development within the various Budgets. Some are presented below. More will be published as they become available to us.

Australian Capital Territory

All Bricks and Mortar – Nothing to Improve Student Outcomes

By Save Our Schools, a Canberra-based education advocacy group

Save Our Schools says that the Budget is all 'bricks and mortar' and fails to address student learning needs in government schools. SOS spokesperson, Trevor Cobbold, said that the ACT Government continued to ignore major inequities in education and had reneged on its election promise to increase staffing in government high schools.

"The Stanhope Government has made 'bricks and mortar' the centrepiece of its education policy instead of funding increases in staff and programs that are needed to improve student outcomes, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"The priority should be to improve high school outcomes. Literacy problems almost double between Years 7 and 9. About 20 – 30 per cent of Year 10 students drop-out before completing Year 12. There is a high level of student dissatisfaction about the curriculum, teaching practices and student/staff relationships.

Read more at <http://soscanberra.com/news/media-release-6-june-2007-all-bricks-and-mortar-nothing-to-improve-student-outcomes>

New South Wales

State Budget Shortfalls

Maree O'Halloran, President, NSW Teachers Federation

The NSW Labor Government announced a surplus budget but the funding for public education still falls far short of what is required.

The State Government has fulfilled its election commitments which, of course, the electorate would expect.

However, there are significant outstanding matters.

School maintenance. There is a huge backlog because this area has been ignored over many years ...

Private school funding. The changes to the private school interest rate subsidy scheme do not in any way affect the more than \$1 billion still flowing to private schools from this government ...

TAFE. TAFE continues to be starved of funds at state and federal level. The State Government only increased its TAFE funding by 6.5% between 1997 and 2005 ...

Pre-schools. There is no additional funding for public pre-schools. NSW has only about 60% of the potential student population in pre-schools ...

Read more

at http://www.nswtf.org.au/media/latest_2007/20070619_Budget.html.

South Australia

Schools forced to make big cuts

Public schools will soon forcibly cut funding for major resources - ultimately disadvantaging students - in response to new taxes outlined in the 2006-2007 State Budget.

Principals have warned the new taxes, which include a 1 per cent WorkCover levy on total staff salaries, mean they have the tough choice of either slashing funds for learning resources or increasing school fees.

The warning came as Premier Mike Rann denied Labor MPs were concerned about losing their seats because of the cuts. One school has detailed to The Advertiser the direct impact of the cuts on their resources, which they estimate would total \$50,000 from discretionary funds out of their annual budget.

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,21940933-910.00.html>

AWARDS & PRIZES

National Online Photographic Competition

'Reconciliation: It's All About Us' is a national project that will gather photographic images to illustrate positive aspects of reconciliation seen through the eyes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students across Australia.

Schools may upload their photos to the Reconciliation Australia website and 50 of them will be selected to be in a national exhibition.

Closing date is 2 August.

Read more at <http://www.reconciliationaustralia.org/i-cms.isp?page=477>.

38th Annual Japanese Language Speech Contest

The Consulate-General of Japan presents the Victorian state finals of the 38th annual Japanese language speech contest on 4 August 2007.

Students in years 11 and 12, and recent school leavers are encouraged to enter. There are four divisions to compete in, including Senior, Open Beginners, Open and Background Speaker.

First place winners will proceed to the Australian National Finals in Sydney where they will compete for return air tickets to Japan.

Registrations close 25th July 2007.

Read more at http://www.melbourne.au.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/speech_contest.html.

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EVENTS

The Health and Wellbeing of Refugees in Rural and Remote Australia -

World Refugee Day (20 June) recognises the indomitable spirit and courage of the world's refugees, and provides an opportunity for their voices to be heard in the communities in which they are rebuilding their lives.

The often oppressive, violent and dangerous experiences faced by many refugees can take a heavy toll on health. For those who settle in rural or remote areas, this situation is compounded by the fact that health services there are less accessible and more expensive than in the major cities. There are also financial, language and cultural barriers to be overcome in managing their health needs and isolation.

These are some of the issues that will be discussed at a Public Seminar on the health and wellbeing of refugees in rural and remote areas, to be held on **7 August** at the Australian War Memorial (1.15-5.00pm). The Seminar will highlight the challenges faced by refugees in rural and remote areas and the positive steps being taken to support them.

Read more at

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/seminars/Refugees%20in%20Rural%20and%20Remote%20Australia/Agenda%20Rural%20and%20Remote%20Seminar.pdf>.

National Outdoor Education Conference

The Victorian Outdoor Education Association on behalf of Outdoor Education Australia will be hosting the 15th National Outdoor Education Conference in Ballarat, Victoria from 20–23 September 2007.

The conference theme is **Sustaining our Spirit of Place**.

Teachers and educators interested in utilising outdoor learning as part of their practice are encouraged to attend this biennial event.

Speakers include:

- **Professor Noel Gough** – inaugural chair of Outdoor Education and Environment at La Trobe University;
- **Jesse Martin** – sailor, adventurer and author;
- **Professor Margaret Somerville** – Professor of Education at Monash University with a research background in the influence of place on student learning; and
- **John Marsden** - Best selling author and educator

Read more at <http://www.outdooreducationaustralia.org.au>.

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POLITICS

Exploring Geography in Our Schools

By The Hon Julie Bishop, Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, 18 June 2007

The Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, today announced a new study into the teaching of geography in Australian schools.

"The Australian Government has committed funding of \$45,000 for this important study, which will investigate why there has been a decline in the quality of the content and rigour in the teaching of geography in our schools," Minister Bishop said.

"The Institute of Australian Geographers and the Australian Geography Teachers Association have raised concerns with me that too little geography is being taught in schools, and that in some cases, environmental and political studies are masquerading as geography.

"Parents have also raised concerns about the lack of rigour in the teaching of geography."

Read <http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2007/06/b001180607.asp> more at

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REMI NDERS

Flame Awards - nominations close 29 June - www.abc.net.au/classic/flame/

Australian Rural Education Award - closing 30 June 2006 contact Sheila King king@usq.edu.au or John Boserio John.Borserio@twb.catholic.edu.au

AUCEA Conference: the Scholarship of Community Engagement - Alice Springs 2-4 July - www.aucea.net.au/conference.

Microsoft Innovative Teacher's Award - nominations close 31 July - www.microsoft.com/australia/education/pil/innovativeteachers/awards.msp

Regional Achievement & Community Awards - nominations close 3 August - www.awardsaustralia.com

HP Fun in the Classroom Competition - nominations close 6 August - http://www.hp.com.au/edu/funinclassroom/default.asp?jumpid=em_r4176_au_en/hpeducation/accelcomp/funclassroom

Associations Forum National Conference - Sydney 29-30 August - www.associations.net.au.

Engaging the Learner - Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools - Brisbane 19-21 September - <http://www.aades.edu.au/cms/display/general/index.php>.

Linking Latitudes India Conference - New Delhi & Agra, India 30 September-4 October - www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/our_work/school_education/international_programs/conferences.

Humane Education: a compassionate ethic for animals - Gold Coast 5-6 October - www.griffith.edu.au.

Anti-Poverty Week - 14-20 October – www.antipovertyweek.org.au.

ACSSO National Conference - Darwin 22–23 October – www.acsso.org.au/natconf.

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