

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

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NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK

National Science Week, held 18-26 August 2007, is an annual nationwide celebration of Australian achievements and capabilities in science. It aims to increase community awareness and understanding of the role of science, engineering, technology and innovation in maintaining and improving our society, economy and the environment.

These are education issues central to the future of all young people across Australia, and to our national future sustainability and prosperity.

To assist schools in their celebration of National Science Week, the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) through the assistance of the Australian Government produces the Schools Kit, the ASTA Teacher Resource Book and makes grants available to schools through the state/territory Science Teachers Associations.

Read more at <http://www.scienceweek.info.au/schools/>

Plan to Expand Science in Schools

The Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, released on 16 August an action plan to raise the profile of science teaching and learning in Australian schools.

"The **Australian School Science Education Action Plan 2008-2012**, produced by Professors Denis Goodrum and Leonie Rennie, identifies challenges and opportunities in school science education in Australia, and proposes collaborative national action to address them," Minister Bishop said.

"Australian students need to know about the importance of science and to have their imaginations sparked by the wonder of science. Australia needs more scientists to ensure we remain internationally competitive and economically strong."

The plan calls for a greater national focus on curriculum development (including digital resources), improved student assessment, innovative approaches to teacher professional development, implementation of teaching standards, improved financial rewards for teachers, and more time devoted in schools to science education.

"In line with many of the Plan's recommendations, the Australian Government has already invested substantially to improve science education in schools, and is again providing leadership in this vital area of school education," Minister Bishop said.

This Action Plan is part of the response to a project, commissioned by the Minister, to map key school science initiatives across the country, to identify gaps and recommend actions to improve science education.

"I encourage the States and Territories to get involved and to re-vitalise the teaching of science in schools," Minister Bishop said.

Download the plan from

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/pr/files/status_and_quality_of_science_schools.htm

National Launch Celebrates Science Week's 10th Birthday

Students, scientists and community members are preparing to celebrate the 10th annual **National Science Week**, launched on 17 August at Eastern Fleurieu School in South Australia by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP.

"Over the past 10 years National Science Week has been a great success, growing into one of Australia's largest annual festivals, with around 5000 events and more than 1 million participants," Minister Bishop said.

This year, National Science Week will run between 18 to 26 August, with Australian Government funding of \$1.2 million to help raise awareness of the impact that science has on society and our economic prosperity.

Minister Bishop also launched the new **Scientist in Schools** initiative, which has received \$370,000 in funding and is designed to link school communities with local scientists, building ongoing relationships to bring real world science to students.

"Through this exciting programme we aim to place 100 scientists in 100 schools during Science Week, increasing this to 500 during the initiative's pilot stage," Minister Bishop said.

"The Eastern Fleurieu School is a good example of a school that has worked successfully in partnership with scientists from the University of South Australia for a number of years, and is currently developing a prototype hydrogen fuel cell powered vehicle, believed to be the first such project at an Australian school."

A number of prominent scientists joined Minister Bishop at the National Launch, including Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Jim Peacock, who is an ambassador for school science education, and Professor Martin Green from the University of New South Wales, who specialises in the use of solar energy and photovoltaic cells.

Read more about National Science Week at <http://www.scienceweek.info.au/>

Read more about Scientists in Schools at <http://www.scientistsinschools.edu.au/>

Australian Science Festival Celebrates Amazing World of Science

The Canberra based **Australian Science Festival** was launched on 15 August by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP.

"The Australian Science Festival has presented new and innovative ways to communicate science for the past fifteen years, creating a buzz about science in the nation's capital," Minister Bishop said.

With National Science Week coming up between 18 to 26 August, the Festival will again make a strong contribution to celebrating science by presenting more than 100 events this year.

"The Australian Government has a strong record of supporting events which celebrate Australia's scientific achievements."

Festival events funded by the Australian Government include:

- The Luck Factor - a visiting UK psychologist, Professor Richard Wiseman, will uncover why some people are blessed with good luck;
- Science in the Shops - an extravaganza of science presented in four shopping centres over four weekends in Canberra;
- Above, Below and Beyond - a fun science show for the preschool-aged audience which explores the moon, deserts and oceans; and
- On the Edge of Silence - a unique event using drama, poetry and music to examine climate change science.

For information about the Australian Science Festival events held from 15 to 27 August 2007 see <http://www.sciencefestival.com.au/>

For information about National Science Week activities see <http://www.scienceweek.info.au/>

To participate in the Science Week National Fear Survey go to <http://www.nationalfearsurvey.net.au/>

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POLITICS

Federal: Celebrating Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Australian Schools

The Hon Julie Bishop MP, The Minister for Education, Science and Training, 16 August

The Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, announced today exceptional winners of the **National Literacy and Numeracy Week (NLNW), 2007 Excellence Awards for Schools**.

Celebrating the awards at a ceremony in the Great Hall of Parliament House in Canberra, the Minister proudly presented each of the winning schools with their \$10,000 award.

"The theme for NLNW this year is 'Making a Difference' and I commend all these schools for making a major contribution to Australian education. They are highlighting the

benefits that come from meeting the literacy and numeracy needs of their students, and achieving significantly improved outcomes," Minister Bishop said.

"Literacy and numeracy are foundation skills for a successful education and productive life. Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes encourage higher school retention rates, lead to improved employment opportunities, enhance engagement in society and support future economic prosperity."

The Australian Government provided \$355,000 for the Awards. As well as the Excellence Awards for School, 41 schools nationally will each receive \$5,000 Highly Commended Awards.

"I congratulate the staff, students and communities of all these award winning schools. I also invite everyone to participate in NLNW, which runs from 3 to 9 September and will be celebrated in all states and territories," Minister Bishop said.

Read more at <http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au>

Federal: Education Minister Out of Touch and Motivated by Politics not Good Policy

Stephen Smith MP, Opposition Education Spokesperson, 7 August

In an interview with The Age published today, the Minister for Education, Julie Bishop states that:

- Teachers are leaving the profession due to "high community expectations";
- The Howard Government will continue to push its so-called 'performance pay' for teachers; and
- The Government has no plans to overhaul the socio-economic status (SES) formula as the basis for schools funding.

The Minister's comments about teachers and the factors forcing them to leave the profession reaffirm just how out of touch the Howard Government has become.

The Minister says that teachers are getting out because they can't live up to "high community expectations".

Apart from the insult to teachers, the truth is that in recent historical times, as a nation we have undervalued teachers. We haven't paid them enough respect. We haven't paid them enough regard. And we haven't paid them enough money.

We are now suffering the adverse consequences of this, one of which is the fact that we are struggling to attract and retain teachers.

We need to rebuild respect and regard for teachers and the teaching profession. One thing we can do to help this is to reject so-called 'performance pay' and instead have a programme to reward quality teaching.

Read the release at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0807/msedut070.php>

ACT: No Educational Merit in Move to External Exams

Minister for Education and Training, Andrew Barr, today said the ACT Government opposes a move to external examinations for year 12 students in the ACT, saying there is no educational merit in changing the ACT's extremely successful college system and continuous assessment model.

Mr Barr said he believed he had the support of parents, students and teachers in the ACT, who do not want to see students sitting a HSC-style examination.

"The ACT Government opposes any move to an external examination for all ACT students at the end of year 12. There is no educational merit in changing from our continuous assessment model," Mr Barr said.

"The ACT has the best education system in the country and our college system and model of continuous assessment serves our students well as they move beyond school into further education or the workforce.

Read more at

<http://www.chiefminister.act.gov.au/media.asp?media=2779§ion=56&title=Media%20Release&id=56>

TAS: More School Days from 2008

Students will spend three more days at school from 2008, the Minister for Education, David Bartlett, announced today.

Mr Bartlett said that currently there are four student free days that are reserved in the school year for moderation or professional development for teachers.

"I am reducing these to only one day that will be set aside for moderation," he said.

"Having consulted with stakeholders I have made this decision based on what I believe is in the best interests of Tasmanian school children.

"My number one priority is to put the student at the centre of everything we do.

"I believe these changes are vital if we are to improve student's outcomes at a time of increased focus on the performance of Tasmanian students in literacy and numeracy and poor retention rates."

Mr Bartlett said that Tasmanian students already attended school for fewer days than the Australian average and also spend less time being taught during the school week.

"We need to work together with the teaching community as partners in order to achieve the improvements that are so vital to the future prosperity of Tasmania," he said.

Opening the **Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends** annual conference at Nixon Street Primary School in Devonport today, Mr Bartlett also paid tribute to the TSSPF, saying it was a key stakeholder in Tasmanian education.

"A major focus of my approach to schools is to increase parent activity and involvement in school decision-making - which certainly fits in very well with the theme of today's conference 'Celebrating 60 Years Supporting Parents'," Mr Bartlett said.

"Parental involvement in schooling adds richness to their child's experience and gives parents a meaningful role in their education.

"The three key priorities for Tasmanian education over the next four years were improving our literacy and numeracy performance, providing more support for early years education, and improving the retention of students to Year 12 or equivalent.

"Our Tasmania Tomorrow reforms will help address our retention rates by revitalising post-year 10 education."

VIC: New Focus on Early Childhood and Education for All Victorian Children

Victorian children will now get an even better start to life with the creation of a new super department to integrate children's and education services across the State.

Premier John Brumby today announced the Government would bring the Office for Children into the Department of Education - creating the **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**.

The new department will be led by two Ministers: the Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike, and the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Maxine Morand.

"This initiative marks the beginning of a new era in the education and development of our children," Mr Brumby said.

"We know that a child's learning starts from day one and that a child's early experiences have a direct impact on their future prospects.

"We also know the transition into school is a critical stage of a child's life. The task of the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will be to give Victorian children the best possible start in life by streamlining the transition into Prep.

Read more at http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/newsroom/news_item.asp?id=1102

OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHERS

POSITION VACANT - with Climateschools, based at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, for a Teacher with PDH-PE experience to join the Climate team and manage Climateschools.

Climateschools provides health lessons via the web. The sets of curriculum compliant lessons teach years 7-10 how to manage emotions (stress, anxiety, depression) and manage drugs and alcohol (alcohol, cannabis, stimulants). The first three sets of lessons on stress, anxiety and alcohol are available on <http://www.climateschools.tv>, the remaining three sets are in preparation.

Duties:

- Liaise, by email and phone, with teachers registered to use Climateschools
- Prepare classroom support materials for Climateschools website
- Give presentations at meetings and conferences

Hours: Flexible part time, negotiable

Location: St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, 390 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010

Salary: \$47, 689 full time equivalent

Appointment: 1 year in first instance

Enquiries to Gavin Andrews on 8382 1726 or Jennifer Till on 8382 1731,
j.till@unsw.edu.au.

Please register your interest before Friday 7th September.

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COMPETITIONS

National Safe Schools Competition - Closes 30 September 2007

Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, announced on 14 August the details of a **National Safe Schools Competition**, to build on the success of the **2007 National Safe Schools Week** earlier this year.

"The National Safe Schools Competition will involve students submitting essays which outline why their school is a leading example of a safe and supportive school. The competition will acknowledge and celebrate the excellent work that many schools are undertaking to create safe and supportive environments," Minister Bishop said.

The competition reflects the Australian Government's continued commitment to promoting safe schools and continues the momentum created by the successful National Safe Schools Week initiative.

"National Safe Schools Week 2007 ran from 25 May - 1 June and focused on the efforts of schools to provide students with a learning environment free from all forms of bullying, harassment, violence, abuse and neglect," Minister Bishop said. "The National Safe Schools Competition further celebrates the achievements of many schools and school communities across Australia.

"The competition is now open and will close at midnight on 30 September 2007. I encourage all schools to participate."

The competition is open to all primary and secondary schools in the government and non-government sectors. Prizes include \$5,000 each for the two winning schools, \$2,000 each for the eight runner-up schools, and iPods for all ten student finalists.

Read more at <http://www.safeschoolsweek.dest.gov.au>

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EVENTS

Humane Education Symposium Program Released

International Symposium: "Humane Education - A Compassionate Ethic for Animals"

Griffith University Brisbane 5-6 October 2007

This unique event brings together teachers, academic researchers and educators, government and animal welfare representatives with the purpose of defining humane education initiatives in Australia, and draw upon examples from overseas, to explore perspectives and implications for various sectors of education.

Discussion will consider the concept and application of "humane education" within a national framework of Values Education. It will examine the practical application of humane education to the primary and secondary school sector in terms of values education in action; plus issues for other sectors in terms of such elements as: teacher training; agriculture; law; science and ethics. Active participation by teachers will be encouraged.

Speakers and presenters include:

Dr Gail Tulloch, Griffith University
Phil Brooke, Education Officer, Compassion in World Farming, UK
Joy Verrinder, Animal Welfare League, Qld
Nichola Kriek, SAFE, New Zealand
Senator Andrew Bartlett, Australian Democrats
Rosalie Shawcross, Education Queensland
Corinne Hanlon, Griffith University
Prof. Terry Lovat, Newcastle University
Dr Tania Signal, University Central Qld
Dr Di Evans, Dept Primary Industry, WA
Prof Clive Phillips, University of Qld
Stephen White, Griffith Law School
Prof Deborah Cao, Languages & Linguistics, Griffith University
Elaine Morris & Elizabeth Usher, Voiceless

Read more at <http://www.ciwf.org.au> and
<http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/cpci>

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REMINDERS

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

Queensland Association for Gifted and Talented Children Inc 2007 Regional Conference - Emerald - 30 August
www.qagtc.org.au/regconf2007

SPERA National Conference - Perth - 30-31 August - <http://www.spera.edu.au>

Flexible & Distance Learning Conference - Brisbane - 19 to 21 September -
<http://www.aades.edu.au>

National Outdoor Education Conference - Ballarat - 20 to 23 September
www.outdooreducationaustralia.org.au

Linking Latitudes India Conference - New Delhi & Agra, India - 30 September to 4 October - http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/index_flash.htm

Humane Education: a compassionate ethic for animals - Brisbane - 5 & 6 October - www.ciwf.org.au

2007 ACEL International Conference - Sydney - 10 to 12 October
<http://www.ancelconference2007.com>

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

UNICEF Day for Change - 24 October - <http://www.unicefdayforchange.org.au/>

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

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RESOURCES

Fundraising Directory - www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au and
www.fetesandfestivals.com.au

Drug Awareness Website - www.drugawareness.com.au/

Australian Schools Directory - www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au

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