

# AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 1 Number 34, 20 November 2007

Having trouble reading this email? Read it on the web at <http://www.acsso.org.au/AED071120.pdf>  
Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at [letters@acsso.org.au](mailto:letters@acsso.org.au)

=====

## FEDERAL ELECTION 2007

*For Coalition and ALP responses to ACSSO questions on education policy, go to <http://www.acsso.org.au>.*

*See also ACSSO's editorial at <http://www.acsso.org.au/elect07acsso.pdf>*

=====

## Kevin Rudd Highlights Education Issues in Labor Campaign Launch

### *A School Computer For Every Student In Years 9-12*

Federal Labor's National Secondary School Computer Fund will allow every Australian student in years 9-12 to have access to their own school computer.

Under Federal Labor's plan, every secondary school in Australia, Government, Catholic and Independent will be equipped with the education tools of the 21st Century to teach the lessons of tomorrow.

The National Secondary School Computer Fund will allow secondary schools to apply for capital grants of up to \$1 million to acquire new or upgrade information technology equipment.

Under Labor's plan, 99 per cent of school children will also get access to broadband connections of speeds up to 100 megabits per second at school through fibre to the premises (FTTP) broadband infrastructure. The other one per cent of students will get improved access at school, via the best available fixed line, wireless and satellite technologies.

Every secondary student in Australia will graduate into a digital world and a digital economy: that means every secondary school in the country needs to be a digital school.

Read more at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msloo140.php>

-----

### *Skilling Australia - Fight Inflation By Closing The Skills Gap*

Skilling Australia will increase and deepen the skills capacity of the Australian workforce and ensure demand for skills and skills training are matched.

Federal Labor's plan for our future skilled workforce will close the skills gap in the Australian economy in three key ways:

- Fund an additional 450,000 skilled training places over the next four years - 200,000 more than the Howard Government
- Ensure that 90 per cent of these places lead to a higher qualification than the Howard Government's proposed new training places.

- Place industry demand at the heart of the skills training system – so that training providers equip Australians with the skills that industry needs.

Twenty times in the last three years the Reserve Bank of Australia has warned that capacity constraints – including skills shortages - are driving up inflation.

Under Skilling Australia, skilled training places for those outside the workforce will be available from April 2008. This will ensure that some of these courses could be completed as early as June 2008 thus stimulating participation in the workforce.

One-third of the additional places will be allocated to people currently outside or marginally attached to the workforce; to equip them with the skills they need to gain employment.

The remaining places will be dedicated to training people who are currently employed but who need to upgrade their skills.

Skilling Australia will support up to 65,000 apprenticeships over the next four years.

Read more at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msloo141.php>

---

### ***Keeping Our Best And Brightest In Australia - Future Fellowships***

Federal Labor's Future Fellowships program will offer four year Fellowships valued at \$140,000 a year to 1,000 of Australia's top researchers in the middle of their career.

In addition, each researcher's institution would receive a \$50,000 grant to support the purchase of related infrastructure and equipment for their research project.

Future Fellowships will be targeted at researchers working in areas of national priority - such as renewable energy, manufacturing technologies, the sciences, medical research, and education.

Importantly, preference will be given to those researchers who can demonstrate a capacity to build collaboration across industry, research institutions, and with other disciplines.

At least 10 per cent of Federal Labor's Future Fellowships will be targeted to encourage outstanding Australian researchers currently based overseas to come home to Australia.

Federal Labor's Future Fellowships Plan builds on Labor's plan to double the number of Australian Postgraduate Awards available in our universities by 2012.

Read more at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msloo142.php>

---

### ***Improved And Expanded Commonwealth Scholarships***

Federal Labor's \$202 million Scholarships for a Competitive Future policy will significantly boost the research and development capacity of Australia's universities.

Increasing the research capacity in our universities will ensure Australia can stay ahead in an increasingly competitive global economy.

Over four years from the start of the 2009 university year, Federal Labor's Scholarships for a Competitive Future will:

- Double from 44,000 to 88,000 the number of undergraduate students receiving a Commonwealth Learning Scholarship, including accommodation bursaries; and
- Double from 4,800 to 9,600 the number of postgraduate students receiving an Australian Postgraduate Award for their PhD or Masters by Research.

- Scholarships for a Competitive Future will also create two new categories of Commonwealth Scholarships open to Australian undergraduate students:
- National Priority Scholarships – for students in priority areas such as nursing, teaching, medicine, dentistry, allied health, maths, science, and engineering.
- National Accommodation Scholarships - for students relocating interstate to study a specialist course not available near their home.

Australia cannot afford to stand still while our competitors in the region are making significant progress in expanding their research and development capacity. We need to act now just to keep up.

Read more at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msloo144.php>

-----

### ***A Clean Energy Plan To Help Tackle Climate Change***

Federal Labor's Clean Energy Plan will help ensure all Australians reap the benefits of the latest clean energy supplies and energy saving technologies.

Expanding the cost effectiveness of clean energy will be critical to meet Federal Labor's science based target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent by 2050.

The new elements of Federal Labor's Clean Energy Plan announced today are a:

- \$500 million Renewable Energy Fund - to develop, commercialise and deploy renewable energy in Australia.
- \$240 million Clean Business Fund – to help business and industry deliver energy and water efficiency projects, with a focus on productivity and innovation.
- \$150 million Energy Innovation Fund – to keep our world leading scientists and researchers in Australia, rather than losing them overseas.

These announcements compliment the other key element of Labor's Clean Energy Plan - a \$500 million Clean Coal Fund to fund the deployment of clean coal technologies.

Federal Labor today announced three new commitments under the National Clean Coal Fund including \$50 million for a pilot coal gasification plant in Queensland, \$50 million to demonstrate carbon capture and storage in New South Wales, and \$5 million to undertake mapping and testing of potential carbon storage sites in Western Australia.

By rearranging Howard government spending to Labor's more focused priorities; the net budget impact of the Clean Energy Plan over the next four years is \$415.3 million.

Read more at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/msloo143.php>

=====

### **The Great Education Debate: Bishop v Smith**

*Justine Ferrari, Education writer | The Australian, November 16, 2007*

A COALITION government will take over the drafting of the school curriculum in the core subjects of English, maths and the sciences to protect students from educational fads.

Education Minister Julie Bishop yesterday dumped her policy to establish a National Board of Studies to decide on the content of the nation's most critical school subjects.

Instead, a returned Coalition government would appoint a panel of experts to write curriculum guides, as it did with Australian history earlier this year.

A day after Kevin Rudd made education the centrepiece of his campaign launch, the Coalition sought to regain the initiative on schools policy at the campaign education debate between Ms Bishop and Labor education spokesman Stephen Smith.

The debate was hosted by The Australian and The Melbourne Institute, and moderated by Melbourne University vice-chancellor Glyn Davis.

Ms Bishop pointed to a lack of policy detail in Labor's education revolution, with the only new schools initiatives the Opposition Leader announced in his campaign launch being a pledge to give every student a computer and connecting every school to broadband.

"Kevin Rudd said he's been working on his education revolution for 10 years; if that's 10 years of policy development, heaven help us," she said.

"There was nothing new, nothing original, nothing remotely innovative. There was nothing on the single-most important issue that affects educational outcomes apart from parents, and that's the quality of teachers. There was nothing on higher standards, or greater rewards for excellence. In this election, the Labor Party has vacated the field of ideas."

Education has emerged as one of the few policy battlegrounds of the election, with Labor and the Coalition both promising to introduce rebates for school expenses.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,22767165-601,00.html>

=====

## **PM Defends No Means Test on School Fees Deduction**

*The Age 13 November 2007*

Prime Minister John Howard has defended his decision not to means test his \$6 billion plan to make private school fees tax deductible.

The tax breaks to parents for their children's education were the centrepiece of Mr Howard's Coalition campaign launch yesterday in Brisbane.

Labor's own planned \$2.3 billion education tax rebate applies only to low and middle-income families (those eligible for Family Tax Benefit A) and covers items such as books, printers, internet connections and laptop computers - but not school fees.

However, Mr Rudd has refused to criticise the Government's election promise, saying only Labor had better ideas on education.

"Labor has placed education on the national political agenda," Mr Rudd told reporters in Mooloolaba, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

"I don't care whether schools are government owned or non-government. I have no ideological problem whatsoever."

In 2004 former Labor leader Mark Latham drew up a notorious hit list of private schools which he believed were benefiting too heavily from government funding.

Mr Howard said today that means testing the rebate meant families would lose out once they earned more than \$100,000 a year, depending on how many children they had.

Asked why wealthy parents should receive a tax break, Mr Howard said: "I'll tell you why. When it comes to things like education, parents make enormous sacrifices.

"I know parents who are by no stretch of definition wealthy, who've made enormous sacrifices...to send their children to the school of their choice.

"And I think you have to be sensible and realistic enough with something like this not to muck around with an income test."

However, an expert economist believes private school fees will rise due to the federal government's planned tax rebate for families' education expenses.

Australian National University economist Andrew Leigh said today the Coalition's policy, trumpeted by Mr Howard as a "breakthrough", would have been better directed at helping kids from poor families to improve their grades.

The government's policy was "middle-class welfare" that would simply subsidise wealthy parents.

"It's not obvious to me that there's a crying need to subsidise the education costs of the middle and upper classes," Dr Leigh told AAP.

The Independent Education Union, which represents private school teachers, says remote, indigenous and disabled students should have been the target of the coalition's education election largesse, not private-school parents.

The IEU said the Howard government's latest initiative on education continued the current "failing" system of school funding.

"This wealth of money that the Prime Minister has splurged in nothing more than a cynical vote-buying exercise could have and should have been better targeted at areas of need," the union's assistant federal secretary Chris Watt said today.

"We know that there are areas of particular disadvantage in educational opportunities across this country, including rural and remote schooling, indigenous education and students with special needs.

"This vast outlay could have been used in a targeted fashion to deal with these needs."

=====

## **Make higher education free: Greens Policy Launch**

*November 14, 2007*

Australia should introduce a free higher education system with a living allowance for students and apprentices, says Greens Leader Bob Brown.

The major parties had under-funded education in Australia for years, Senator Brown said, launching the Greens' education policy in Sydney on Wednesday. "We are at the back of the class when it comes to like-minded countries".

"It is taken for granted by Australians that our governments are spending well on education. By world standards we're spending very poorly."

Money for education had instead been going into "corporate welfare", he said. "It should be going into skilling young Australians."

The Greens announced their first plan was to work towards the abolition of HECS fees in nursing and teaching and introduce "needs based" funding for public schools.

The abolition of Australia's Higher Education Scheme (HECS) would cost \$2.5 billion, Senator Brown said.

By contrast, Prime Minister John Howard was proposing a \$6 billion education tax rebate which would move Australia in the direction of the United States system, which had one of the worst outcomes in the OECD.

"We ought to be moving closer to the Scandinavian model, which does guarantee tertiary education and skilling for all its citizens," Senator Brown said.

"I would hope the ALP will get behind fairness in education so that every Australian child is able to look forward to a post-high-school education and tertiary education of their choice," he said.

Senator Brown said Mr Howard's rebate system would disadvantage rural and regional Australians, but he was not confident that Labor would do a better job of funding public education.

"Remember it was Labor that started the process of cutting funding to the public education system in a way that has left it a very poor second now," he said.

"I think the experience of seeing what a hash of it the Howard government's made will bring a better result with a Rudd government, but frankly I see the need for The Greens to be in there making sure that young Australians can get the education they want and that they've got living allowances so they're not forced into poverty.

"So that they're not forced into the grind of having to work all the time, except when they're studying, through their best years ... and they don't end this up with a massive debt."

The Howard government had manufactured a budget surplus by placing debt onto individuals, including tertiary students, Senator Brown said.

Commenting on criticism of Mr Howard's public education policy by two principals of elite Melbourne private colleges, Senator Brown joked that it appeared the Greens were now more aligned with the conservatives on the issue.

A fall in university enrolments, including a decrease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, was unacceptable given Australia's enormous resources wealth, Senator Brown said.

NSW Greens Senator Kerry Nettle said Australia was the only OECD country that was reducing education expenditure.

The Greens would lobby a Labor government to remove voluntary student unionism (VSU) and eliminate outside interference in academia, she said.

"I don't want us to be the stupid country," Senator Nettle said.

Read the Greens full education policy statements at <http://greens.org.au/election/policy.php?policy=24>

=====

## **RESEARCH**

### **Young lack post-school training despite demand**

*The Age 12 November*

NEARLY half of Australia's 18 to 20-year-olds are not in any form of education or training despite the nation's professional and technical skills shortage.

According to a Monash University analysis of census data, while the number of jobs needing a post-school education is rising, the number and proportion of young adults studying or training has remained static this decade.

About 29 per cent of young adults were at university last year, 15 per cent were at TAFE or similar, 7 per cent were at school and 48 per cent were working full or part-time or unemployed, and not studying or training.

Published today in University World News, the report found the gap in education participation between federal electorates immense, with only 13 per cent of young adults in Melbourne not studying or training compared with 63 per cent in the seat of Mallee, which takes in Mildura and Horsham.

Wealthier and inner-city electorates are more likely to have high participation in post-school education than lower-socio-economic and regional seats.

In regional Western Australia, for example, 77 per cent of young adults are not enrolled in a course, yet only half of those not studying are in full-time work.

The report, by Bob Birrell and Daniel Edwards, says qualification levels have fallen desperately behind employer needs, leading to chronic shortages, particularly in engineering, accounting, the health professions and construction trades.

While the Coalition and Labor have acknowledged the depth of the skills shortage, the report says they have not explained how they are going to tackle it, particularly at university level. Neither party has released a higher education policy during the campaign.

The proportion of 18 to 20-year-olds in education remained static as the economy boomed and unemployment fell between 2001 and 2006.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics says this coincided with the creation of 331,000 new professional jobs, a 26 per cent rise in six years. Much of the growth was filled by skilled migration.

The professional workforce expanded at more than twice the rate of trades such as metal, automotive, electrical and construction (up 12 per cent since 2001).

=====

## **NEW NATIONAL FORUM ENGAGING PARENTS & FAMILIES**

### **The Parents' Jury: A Community Initiative to Promote Healthy Living**

The Parents' Jury is a web-based network of parents who are interested in improving the nutrition and physical activity of Australian children – promoting healthy minds and healthy bodies in healthy communities.

It provides a forum for parents to express their views and to advocate nationally for change on current issues that relate to healthy diet and activity.

Formed in 2004, the Parents' Jury is an Australia-wide initiative with members in all states and territories – with some 2,850 members at September 2007.

The Parents' Jury is jointly convened and funded by an alliance of

- Diabetes Australia(Vic);
- Cancer Council Australia and its member bodies
- Australasian Society for the Study of Obesity and Health; and
- VicHealth.

No funding is received from the food industry.

Core issues identified for further exploration and action are:

- Healthy school food in canteens, vending machines, events and fund-raising
- Junk-food-free children's TV programming
- Confectionary-free supermarket checkouts
- Improved physical activity environments in schools and their communities.

Free membership of the Parents' Jury is open to Australian parents, grandparents and guardians of children aged up to 18.

Members are eligible to vote in online and email surveys relating to topical issues identified, and to submit their comments and views on aspects of nutrition and physical activity.

Members receive a weekly email update containing links to current news articles from around the world and are kept informed about all activities that The Parents' Jury is undertaking.

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

=====

## **CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

### **World Education Forum SA – International Conference**

*Adelaide 26-28 June 2008*

**“Being, Becoming and Belonging – the economic imperative in education”**

How do we care for and educate children and young people for the world in which they live now and in which we hope they will flourish as citizens of tomorrow?

The World Education Forum, South Australia, thinks that it is time to take stock of the effectiveness of the effort that has been made to date. They urge you to join them and share your expertise and re-examine the values which underpin many of the assumptions that drive modern educational policy.

For more information, go to <http://www.infront.com.au/evt/wef/>

=====

## **REMINDERS - 2007 EVENTS**

**ACOSS National Annual Conference** – Adelaide – 22 & 23 November

[http://www.acoss.org.au/upload/events/3125\\_ACOSS%20Draft%20Conference%20Program.doc](http://www.acoss.org.au/upload/events/3125_ACOSS%20Draft%20Conference%20Program.doc)

## **RESOURCES**

**Fundraising Directory** - [www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au](http://www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au) and [www.fetesandfestivals.com.au](http://www.fetesandfestivals.com.au)

-----  
**Drug Awareness Website** - [www.drugawareness.com.au/](http://www.drugawareness.com.au/)

-----  
**Australian Schools Directory** - [www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au](http://www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au)

=====

Details of products, services, events, resources or points of view are provided for information only; publication does not imply endorsement or recommendation. No warranty is provided nor liability accepted by ACSSO, its members or employees.

To unsubscribe from Australian Education Digest click here: <mailto:webmaster@acsso.org.au?subject=unsubscribe>