

# **AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST**

Volume 2 Number 30, 28 August 2008

## **SPECIAL EDITION: THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION**

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### **HOT TOPIC: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

#### **Quality Education: The Case for an Education Revolution in our Schools**

*Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Address to National Press Club, 27 August 2008*

Greater accountability to parents and the public is one important area of reform.

Greater transparency for the outcomes achieved by Australian schools is another area of reform.

All Australian schools - public and private - need to do more to demonstrate the outcomes they achieve with the resources they receive from the broader community.

This is not about creating an arbitrary public league table.

It is about ensuring that all schools, all teachers and all students are focused on achieving the results we need as a nation and realising the potential also of each child.

That is why I am today announcing three central pillars of reform in schools that the Commonwealth aims to achieve through Council of Australian Governments later this year:

- one, improving the quality of teaching;
- two, making school reporting properly transparent; and
- three, lifting achievement in disadvantaged school communities.

The States and Territories are important partners in this process.

Our challenge to them is to commit to concrete, tangible reforms.

And our commitment to them is to match ambitious policy reform on the one hand, with new financial support on the other as part of our upcoming National Policy Partnership negotiations on the future of education.

Read more at [http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech\\_0443.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0443.cfm).

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### **Questions at the National Press Club 27 August 2008**

**Chris Uhlmann from the ABC:** Can you tell us the difference between an arbitrary league table and an individual school performance report? And, no matter what you call it, if parents find out that their school is not performing well; won't they do the rational thing: vote with their feet and leave?

**PM:** Well, on the last point, we would make no apology for that. The whole idea is to make sure that schools are accountable for their performance. And part of accountability means that the parents and the students know how that school is performing against agreed standards.

On your first part of your question which goes to the question of a national league table it's this: when we talk about an arbitrary national league it's basically one which would try and line up a comprehensive government school in the outer suburbs of, you know, Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne with the likes of Geelong Grammar and the rest.

Far better it is that instead you have a system whereby schools which broadly have common characteristics, common socio-economic profile across the country within government and non-government systems for that data to be readily comparable. That's what we're talking about.

And the second thing as well, put yourself in the position of parents, and a highly labour-mobile country which Australia is today. When people move interstate, one of the things they want best and quickest is readily available comparative information on the schools within that geographical area. And so the other element of comparison that we would look to through the agreements that we seek to make with the states is to make that available as well.

So if you move to a new town, whether it's Canberra, or whether it's the southern suburbs of Brissie where I come from, you can quickly access comparative data. That's what we're talking about, and we think that's a practical way forward.

The argy-bargy on this is going to be significant with the states. We accept that but we intend to prosecute this and we have some way to go yet in the months ahead. But that's where the Commonwealth wants to land.

**JOURNALIST:** Well, on the argy-bargy index isn't your toughest opponent going to be the teaching unions? And would you say that the teaching unions have so far had a positive role in giving parents more transparency as to the operation of schools?

**PM:** I think some of the - it's a very mixed bag, to be honest. Some of the unions have been complete to the - resistant, I think it's fair to say, and we therefore expect a fair bit of argy-bargy on that front as well, but we don't intend to shirk from it. We think this is the right way to go.

I think, at the end of the day, what's going to prevail in this debate is the interests of parents and of students, and that is they deserve to have the information available to them of how schools are performing.

We recognise fully all the challenges which local school communities and teachers face if you're dealing with really entrenched social and economic disadvantage. But at the end of the day parents and students should be able to have the information in front of them.

Also, as I sought to answer the question from Chris Uhlmann before, if some walk with their feet that's exactly what the system is designed to do; that is to make sure that school communities are being responsive to the legitimate high expectations of parents and kids that they get first-class education opportunities at the school level.

Because you know something? Having been on a P and C myself, once you - once kids start going through the primary school and they start lagging behind literacy and numeracy measures, and you don't tackle them at least by the early high school you really start getting to the point where it's too late.

So, frankly, having this information up there and putting the pressure back onto school systems, which are run at the end of the day by state governments and by others, to ensure that these schools are performing at their best levels, is what this set of reforms is all about.

Read more at [http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2008/interview\\_0445.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2008/interview_0445.cfm)

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## **Interview with Prime Minister**

*Sydney Radio 2GB, 27 August 2008*

**Phillip Clark:** I know today you've guaranteed the education funding into the future, this is despite the fact that the Education Union says you're going to cut teachers and cut salaries. That's not going to happen?

**PM:** Absolutely not. That's quite a dishonest statement out by the union, and I think they know it.

What we've done is provided funding for this year, that's 2008, and we're right now in the middle of a huge negotiation with the States and Territories on the future funding for schools for the four to five year period following that. And that will be finalised by the end of the year.

But what I spoke to the National Press Club on today, and in Parliament also Philip, was this: what we invest in terms of more money into the school system and into early childhood education and into vocational education - trades training - is one thing. But we've got to lift the quality of our school education as well.

What I put out there today was a proposal for new partnership agreements for the states to boost teacher quality. To also boost our funding for the most disadvantaged schools in the country. And also, to make sure that we've got the best school performance data out there into the community so you've got transparency about which schools are doing well, and which schools are not doing well.

These are major education quality reforms which have put out there today, and they are as important as injecting more money into the system overall as well.

Read more at [http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2008/interview\\_0446.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2008/interview_0446.cfm)

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## **Plan to measure schools against rivals**

*The Age, 27 August 2008*

Schools will have federal funding tied to new league-style tables that will publicly compare their performance against rivals.

The move, outlined by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd today, aims to ensure parents have the best chance of making informed decisions when choosing where to send their children.

"Every kid in the country deserves a decent start, it doesn't matter where they come from, every kid in the country," Mr. Rudd said today.

At the National Press Club, Mr. Rudd outlined a three-pillar policy for the reform of education in schools - the next step of Labor's so-called education revolution.

Improving the quality of teaching and providing resources to disadvantaged school communities are the other central elements of the plan.

But the coalition rejects it's a revolution, accusing Labor of another bout of the me-too-ism that plagued last year's federal election.

Opposition education spokesman Tony Smith said the government planned to improve teacher quality, teacher pay and transparency, which were all reforms the coalition had been pushing for years.

"Unfortunately, the Labor state governments and teachers unions blocked many of these crucial reforms at every turn," he said.

"Copying the Howard government's education policies is the easy part, but actually implementing them will be the real test."

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/plan-to-measure-schools-against-rivals-20080827-43w8.html>

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## **PM's plans make 'no difference'**

*The Age, August 27, 2008 (AAP)*

The federal government's plan for a national school performance reporting system is an example of fruitless policy making, the NSW Teachers' Federation says.

Mr. Rudd today announced individual school performance reporting will be a condition for reaching an education agreement with the states to begin in January.

He also pledged to establish new standards to reward school principals and the best performing teachers, and to fund teacher recruitment, development and excellence.

"The announcements will not make any systematic or system-wide difference," Federation president Maree O'Halloran said in a statement.

"While there will be some extra money for certain designated schools, there will not be enough to provide public schools with the infrastructure and learning environments necessary for the 21st century."

Ms O'Halloran said Mr. Rudd had disappointed teachers by adding "school watch to fuel watch and grocery watch".

"These are the types of policies a government announces when it doesn't plan to make a real difference," Ms O'Halloran said.

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/pms-plans-make-no-difference-20080827-43zj.html>

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## **Welcome move, but critics await detail**

*Justine Ferrari, Education writer | August 28, 2008*

STATE governments, principals, business and teachers in independent schools yesterday supported the thrust of Kevin Rudd's commitment to make schools more transparent and accountable.

State education ministers said school reports were already comparing their results with similar schools, and any move to recruit the best and brightest graduates into teaching was welcome.

Ministers welcomed the negotiations, but said the detail of the Prime Minister's proposals was critical in winning support.

But teachers unions gained an unlikely ally in their opposition to moves for schools to report student performance from the organisation representing the parents in government schools.

The Australian Council of State School Organisations president Jenny Branch said parents were only interested in how their child progressed at school and what learning plan was in place to help.

Ms Branch dismissed the suggestion that parents wanted to be assured their child's school was performing at a minimum level, and doing as well as comparable schools.

Ms Branch criticised Mr Rudd for failing to consult ACSSO before announcing his plans. She said even though he ruled out simplistic league tables, any comparison of school performance would be viewed as a league table.

The Australian Education Union, representing government school teachers, said Mr Rudd's announcement was a distraction from the real question of committing greater resources to public schools.

"First we had FuelWatch, then we had GroceryWatch, and this afternoon he announced SchoolsWatch," AEU president Mr Angelo Gavrielatos said.

He said Mr Rudd's stand resembled the policy of the former Howard government, which made federal funding contingent on school performance reporting.

"Let's be very clear about it, they are league tables," he said.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24253140-5013871,00.html>

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## **Rudd Ties Funding to School Performance**

*The Hon Kevin Rudd MP, Gordon Primary School, ACT, 28 August 2008*

What I would say to our friends in the teachers unions across Australia, and many of them are fantastic people, is that it is time to arrive in the 21st Century. And that is, let's get past the name calling, let's get past all this sort of pointless debate about blaming someone here or blaming someone there.

Let's get on with the business, two core objectives: how do we lift the standards of Australian schools across the nation and how do we provide the funding necessary to do it. Now, presumably what some of our friends in the trade unions would like us to do is just hand over a blank cheque.

Well guess what, I am not going to do that. What we will be doing is providing extra funding but at the same time, making that funding conditional on lifting school performance, while recognising that individual schools across the country often face really hard practical challenges given the immediate environment and social economic circumstances which they face in those communities.

That is why the four pillars of this program are so important: quality teaching, quality school leadership, transparent reporting, but at the same time, extra funding not just for those but for schools in disadvantaged areas as well.

Read more at <http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/Gillard/Releases/EducationSensisFigures.htm>

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## **Australian Council of State School Organisations**

*Terry Aulich, ACSSO Executive Director, Sunrise, Seven Network, 28 August 2008*

Watch the video at <http://cosmos.bcst.yahoo.com/up/player/popup/?rn=1341467&cl=9477912&src=y7lifestyle&ch=>

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## **HOT TOPIC: FUNDING**

### **Expert warns of public school funds decline**

*Farrah Tomazin, The Age, 27 August 2008*

THE Federal Government's education revolution will see public school funding continue to fall over the next three years and parents increasingly turn to the private system, according to a study by one of Labor's former chief education advisers.

New research from University of Sydney expert Jim McMorrow has warned that public education funding will fall from its 1996 level of 43% of the federal schools budget to 33% by 2012, unless dramatic action is taken.

While the report points out much of the problem is due to the funding arrangements inherited from the Howard government - namely the contentious socio-economic status funding model for private schools - it found Labor's first budget "markedly slowed the growth of education funding", from 10% a year under the Coalition, to 1% a year.

Likening the projected three-year funding decline to losing 1000 teachers from government schools, Dr McMorrow calls for a "root and branch" review of funding between the state and federal governments, and an immediate investment of \$1.5 billion to create a more equitable system for students.

"It is as if the machinery inherited in the Howard government's policies is driving the Rudd Government's agenda," said Dr McMorrow, Labor's former policy adviser to education shadow minister Jenny Macklin.

"If ... action is not taken soon, the long-term decline in the Commonwealth's funding to public schools will continue to its inevitable progress towards the Commonwealth abrogating its responsibility for public schools."

The report - commissioned by the Australian Education Union - also says:

The drift of students from public to private schools will continue over the next three years, with students in independent and Catholic schools set to increase by 3.1% compared with an 0.1% fall in government school enrolments.

That if increased federal funding for non-government schools in the May budget was expressed in terms of the capacity to pay teachers, the number of private school teachers would rise by 2630 by 2012.

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/expert-warns-of-public-school-funds-decline-20080826-430s.html>

Download the report at <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2008/JMcMorrowpaper.pdf>

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### **Government denies public schools funding cut**

*The Age, August 27, 2008 (AAP)*

The Rudd government has rejected a new report which suggests funding for public schools will be cut over the next four years, resulting in the loss of 1,000 teachers.

The report, commissioned by the Australian Education Union (AEU), says under current budget projections there'll be a 1.8 per cent decrease in real funding for public schools by 2011-12.

In 2007-8, the commonwealth budget for government schools was \$3.54 billion, but that will drop to \$3.48 billion by 2011-12, University of Sydney academic Jim McMorrow says in *Reviewing the Evidence*.

"What kind of education revolution would cut money to public schools," AEU president Angelo Gavrielatos told reporters in Canberra, referring to the Rudd government's name for its education policy.

"(It's) a 1.8 per cent decrease in real funding for public schools during the life of the next four-year agreement".

Mr. Gavrielatos said that equated to the loss of 1,000 teachers, and called on the government to immediately inject \$1.5 billion into public schools to avert the funding slide started during the Howard government years.

But Treasurer Wayne Swan said the federal government already was committed to increasing education funding.

"We are already boosting funding for education, that's what our trades training centres in schools are all about, that's what the digital revolution is all about," Mr. Swan told reporters. "There is additional money flowing to schools."

Education Minister Julia Gillard said the government was elected on the back of policies "to make huge new investments into education".

Read more at <http://news.theage.com.au/national/govt-denies-public-schools-funding-cut-20080827-43ny.html>

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## Australian Education Union report

*ABC Newsradio, 27 August 2008*

**MARIUS BENSON:** Julia Gillard, the view of the Education Union seems to be that things were bad under the Howard Government for public schools, but if anything, they're worse now under Labor.

**JULIA GILLARD:** Well, I certainly don't agree with that proposition. I've received the Union's report this morning and I will have a look at it. But what I absolutely know is that the Rudd Labor Government was elected to bring an Education Revolution.

We were elected with policies to make huge new investments into education and we've already started.

We've already started rolling out our \$2.5 billion investment in Trades Training Centres in Schools, our \$1.2 billion investment in the Digital Education Revolution, and the list goes on.

And what I also know is we are in active discussions with states and territories, with the independent and Catholic school systems, about school funding over the next four years and what we can do to make a difference, most particularly for disadvantaged schools and on teacher quality.

Read more at

<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/Gillard/Releases/AustralianEducationUnionreportEducationRevolutionNationalPartnershipschoolsundingagreement.htm>

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## HOT TOPIC: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Schools asked to do b in truants to Centrelink

## ***ABC News, 27 August 2008***

Schools will be asked to report truant children to Centrelink under the Government's proposed new law on welfare payments.

Education Minister Julia Gillard introduced the controversial bill to Parliament today.

The bill will enable parents' welfare payments to be frozen for 13 weeks if their child does not go to school.

Ms Gillard told Parliament that only a small amount of parents will be affected and the Family Tax Benefit payment will be protected.

"Parents with children of compulsory school age who are affected by the measure will need to provide Centrelink with details about their child's school enrolment," she said.

"Consistent with current responsibilities, state education authorities and non-government schools will be responsible for monitoring school attendance.

"In those cases where children have unsatisfactory school attendance and their parents do not take reasonable steps to work with the school to address the situation, the education authority or school can choose to notify Centrelink.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/27/2347806.htm>

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## **Enrolment and attendance legislation**

### ***Interview with Hon Julia Gillard MP, ABC Radio 891, 27 August 2008***

**JULIA GILLARD:** This morning I'm introducing legislation into the Parliament, which will give the Federal Government power in eight trial communities as a last resort to suspend welfare payments if kids aren't going to school. But it's a long way before we get to that stick.

What we're saying is, first off, if you are an income support beneficiary, if you get a welfare payment from the Government, you will need to show Centrelink that your child is enrolled at school. Now that's not going to be a hard thing to do.

I mean, at the end of the day it's a legal obligation to make sure kids are enrolled at school. And then, if there becomes an attendance problem, Centrelink would work with the family involved to try and resolve it. And only ultimately, if all else fails, will a sanction come into effect. Now that's the mechanics of it.

The important thing is why we are doing it? Well, the evidence shows that there are around 20 000 Australian kids who aren't enrolled or aren't regularly attending school. And you don't need to be a professor of education to work out that if a child misses large parts of their compulsory school years then you are setting them up for a life of failure, and we want to fix that problem.

**DAVID BEVAN:** So is the obligation on the school to let Centrelink know that kids not turning up?

**JULIA GILLARD:** In the first instance, the obligation is on the parent to show Centrelink that their child is enrolled at school. Then schools, because they already collect attendance data, would let Centrelink know if there was an emerging problem with non-attendance.

And obviously by non-attendance we don't mean, you know, the usual things that happen when kids go to school. They need a day off here or there because they've got a cold or a sore throat or other form of lurgy.

We understand that that happens in a normal school year. We're talking about real absences, unexplained absences.

Read more at

<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/Gillard/Releases/Enrolmentandattendancelegislation.htm>

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## **Anger over truancy link to welfare**

*Dan Harrison, The Age, August 26, 2008*

EDUCATION groups have reacted angrily to a Federal Government move to stop welfare payments to families if their children do not regularly attend school.

The changes, flagged in the May budget, will initially be tested at eight locations, but draft legislation to be introduced to Parliament tomorrow by Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard will allow for the policy to be implemented nationally.

The trial sites comprise the Northern Territory communities of Hermannsburg, Katherine, Katherine Town Camps, Wallace Rockhole, Wadeye and the Tiwi Islands, the Perth suburb of Cannington, and one other metropolitan area yet to be decided.

Under the changes, parents who receive income support will be required to show evidence their children are enrolled at school, and schools will be expected to report attendance problems to Centrelink.

Minister for Families and Community Services Jenny Macklin said welfare payments would only be suspended as a last resort.

Family tax benefits and rent assistance would not be suspended under the policy, and any suspended payments would be reinstated with back pay if parents met their responsibilities relating to enrolment and attendance within 13 weeks.

Education groups expressed concern about the changes.

James McAlpine, deputy president of the Australian Secondary Principals Association, said the policy could lead to children going hungry or turning to crime if their parents' welfare payments were stopped.

Leonie Trimper, president of the Australian Primary Principals Association, said she feared the changes could lead to teachers and school administrators being subjected to violence from angry parents.

"I just wonder if legislators have thought about the practicalities on the ground for both Centrelink workers and school workers," she said.

"The potential for parents to get aggressive and violent over this is huge."

Australian Council of State School Organisations executive officer Terry Aulich said: "The Rudd Government has to be very careful of catering to the media's obsession with five-minute politics.

"They have to have the courage to stand back and say, we will think this through, we will take our time, and when we're ready, we'll move on it ... It may not get you a pat on the back from the media, but it actually makes for good government."

Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/anger-over-truancy-link-to-welfare-20080825-425p.html>

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## **Greens will block truancy legislation**

*The Age, August 27, 2008 (AAP)*

The Australian Greens have vowed to block new draft laws introduced to parliament to strip the welfare payments of parents whose kids wag school.

Greens Leader Bob Brown labelled the legislation whacky and nonsensical and expressed doubt there were any changes the government could make in order for it to win his party's approval.

Without coalition backing for its bill, the government needs the support of all seven balance of power senators - the five Greens, independent Nick Xenophon and Family First's Steve Fielding - to get its policy through the Senate.

Senator Brown said he was amazed Ms Gillard had come up with such a plan, and called on her to withdraw it. "Talk about whacky and poorly thought out legislation, this must take the cake in recent times," he told reporters.

"This is a hangover from the Howard era. It's very, very surprising that Julia Gillard and her fellow members of the Labor cabinet have come up with a punitive option which sounds good but there's no evidence to say it's going to work.

"In fact, logically you could say that it's going to make things worse because you're going to have the family of a truant child slung into even greater poverty and inability to get itself well ordered.

"I would have thought this government had more wit and wisdom than to come up with this Howard hangover legislation."

Senator Brown said he would like to see the wages of MPs docked if their children skipped school.

"I'll be looking to see if there's a clause in that bill that says if parliamentarians' kids play hookey, have their wages stopped until they get the child settled and back into school," he said. "It's absurd. This is neo-Liberal legislation and I'm very surprised this government and Julia Gillard has come up with it."

Read more at <http://news.theage.com.au/national/greens-will-block-truancy-legislation-20080827-43ie.html>

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## **Families on welfare payments need extra support**

*Letter to the Editor, Judy Aulich, Giralang, 27 August 2008*

Oh dear Kevin Rudd. What a blinkered and ill-informed suggestion to withhold welfare payments from those whose children play truant.

In my time as a deputy principal in an ACT public primary school, I saw many reasons for children not attending school, all indicating a degree of dysfunction in the family. They ranged from substance abuse to mental illness, domestic violence and subsequent homelessness.

By and large attendance was good, but there were the children who occasionally didn't come because it was the day or two before payments were due and there was no food for them to bring for lunch, one who sometimes didn't have a clean uniform to wear, another who had only one pair of shoes and if they were out of action he had nothing to wear, and a couple of families who just couldn't get it together. How does withholding payment address any of these issues?

Families on welfare payments are already financially and socially vulnerable and need extra support, not less.

How about breakfast programs, school-based resources to collect younger children for school, an increase in family support which is not based on a punitive model, and some priority given to developing alternative schooling models that will engage our older disengaged students? We expected more from Rudd's education revolution.

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## **Rudd's progress stalls while he kicks the vulnerable**

*Christopher Scanlon, Canberra Times, 27/08/2008*

Nearly one year has passed since the Rudd Government came to power on the promise of a new generation of leadership. In its early days in office, it seemed Rudd might just deliver on the promise. The apology to the Stolen Generations and signing the Kyoto Protocol in particular, showed a Government intent on putting some distance between itself and its predecessor.

With each passing month since, the Government has seemed to stall, leaving the impression that it is running out of ideas and lacks any compelling idea of what the country's future could or ought to be.

None of this is to suggest that the Rudd Government isn't willing to get its hands dirty. It's just that, when it does go beyond ineffectual tinkering around the edges of social and economic policies, this Government prefers its targets to be vulnerable and voiceless. The recently announced plan to block welfare payments to parents of children who play truant is a case in point. The clear inspiration for the plan is the previous government's intervention in the Northern Territory's remote indigenous communities.

Howard's intervention showed Labor it could take a more punitive approach to the management of people's lives with minimal electoral fall-out. It was only a matter of time before policies applied to indigenous people living in remote communities would be applied to non-indigenous Australians living in suburbia.

As with the NT intervention, the justification for the plan to curb truancy is to protect children. According to the Prime Minister, breaking the poverty cycle means getting kids educated. While education is undoubtedly important, it's not certain that cutting people's welfare will help matters.

Read more at <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/opinion/editorial/general/rudds-progress-stalls-while-he-kicks-the-vulnerable/1255344.aspx>

*Christopher Scanlon lectures in the journalism program at La Trobe University and is online editor of Arena Magazine and Arena Journal.*

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## **An audit for educational disadvantage**

*Valerie Yule, 15 August 2008*

True measures of educational disadvantage are the proportion of young people who leave formal education unqualified in anything and even illiterate, and the numbers of adults who cannot cope in jobs, who cannot apply simple arithmetic to shopping or gambling, and who have learned no constructive leisure interests.

The economic costs of these disadvantages are enormous. Sending your own children to a "good" private school is no escape from the costs that you pay for those least privileged who will clog the welfare and justice systems.

Let us all back Julia Gillard's determination to tackle educational disadvantage, because it has many causes, and many are not soluble by government money or free laptops. Annual assessment of schoolchildren's progress is essential, but other audits are just as important (and some of the detailed

ongoing assessments that can be imposed on teachers actually prevent them getting on with teaching).

Every disadvantaged school needs the public support of its local community and of the whole region. It should not be shamed.

The shame is if it is not improved in the next 12 months.

Let communities have public annual audit of their local schools' progress to reduce disadvantage. And let families and communities themselves try to prevent their children starting school already educationally disadvantaged.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7770&page=0>

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## **HOT TOPIC: LITERACY & NUMERACY**

### **National Literacy and Numeracy Week 2008**

#### **\$40 Million for Literacy and Numeracy Pilot Projects**

##### ***Prime Minister & Minister for Education Media Release, 28 August 2008***

Today the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education officially launched National Literacy and Numeracy Week 2008 by announcing a \$40 million literacy and numeracy initiative.

The Rudd Government will invest \$40.2 million in 29 literacy and numeracy pilot projects in schools across Australia.

These pilots will trial or expand initiatives that exemplify strategies to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for those students most in need of support, in government and non-government schools.

Pilots were selected because they focus on reforms that will deliver sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy for students, particularly for low SES, Indigenous or disadvantaged students.

Government, Independent and Catholic education authorities were invited to submit proposals for pilot programs by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in June 2008.

This funding is available from 2008 and will support pilots for up to two years and negotiations with successful education authorities will be finalised this month.

Getting the basics right at school is fundamental to helping all Australian students reach their full potential.

These pilot programs will guide literacy and numeracy reform by developing and sharing an evidence-base of what works.

National Literacy and Numeracy Week is an Australian Government initiative that runs from 1-7 September which aims to raise community awareness of the importance of developing effective literacy and numeracy skills for all Australians.

For information about National Literacy and Numeracy Week activities:  
[www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au](http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au)

The full list of National Literacy and Numeracy pilot programs is at:  
[www.deewr.gov.au/literacyandnumeracy](http://www.deewr.gov.au/literacyandnumeracy)

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