



# Australian Council of State School Organisations

The National Voice of Parents of Children in Australia's Public Schools and Their School Communities

## AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

Volume 3 Number 1, 27 January 2009

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### BATON HAND-OVER FOR ACSSO

#### Welcome to new President Steve Carter

Steve Carter has a long, extensive and very active engagement with all aspects of public education in both urban and rural Australia – plus an in-depth appreciation of in the special challenges which are faced in the Northern Territory and the underlying realities of the debate on Indigenous education which currently dominates media attention.

With Steve at the helm, ACSSO will continue to be actively engaged in all aspects of public education, with a strong continuing focus on these aspects of key strategic importance:

- Advancing social inclusion and building cohesive communities for the future through access to a full range of high quality educational opportunities to enable every young Australian to achieve their potential – and a complementary focus on young people's health, resilience and well-being.
- A strong focus on the needs of early childhood as the essential foundation for effective learning and positive personal development in the later years of schooling
- Enhanced support for the needs of students with a disability and their families
- The central importance of values in all aspects of learning and personal development
- Recognition of the vital significance of languages, music and the arts in building creativity and other skills that equip all young people to achieve a productive and fulfilling life in the modern world

Steve brings these perspectives to the challenges of national leadership at a time of renewed public debate and pressures for transformational change right across all aspects of education.

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## **Thanks for everything, outgoing president Jennifer Branch**

ACSSO extends its thanks and congratulations to Jennifer Branch, who steps down from the national leadership position after three years of hard work, outstanding contribution across all facets of education – and high achievement.

Jennifer has been national president since 2005, being previously Vice President and Senior Vice President of ACSSO. Her involvement in public schooling dates from the time her daughter started pre-school in Tasmania, representing the interests of parents in her school community, and thence on the Tasmanian peak body – where she has in recent years been a very active State President – an important role in which she still continues. This work has been recognised through formal awards from the Tasmanian Minister for Education.

The many high points of her national presidency include negotiation and co-ordination of the \$700 million Investing in Our Schools program for government schools, the development and adoption by all Ministers of the national Family-School & Community Partnership Framework, and the negotiation and recent establishment, with initial four-year funding, of the Family-School & Community Partnership Bureau. Jennifer has also been active in a wide range of policy development forums, working groups and project planning teams in ways that have ensured the parent and community voice has been taken on board in shaping a variety of government education programs and initiatives.

Jennifer is a passionate advocate for an effective public education system that will enable and assist every child to achieve their potential: and will continue this vitally important work as Vice President of ACSSO.

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## **... and au revoir to Executive Director Terry Aulich**

We also note with regret, the departure of Executive Director Terry Aulich – who has astutely and adroitly driven our operations and a variety of new initiatives over the past five years.

Terry has decided the time is right to take on new challenges and opportunities in education, in the role of Executive Director with the Australian Primary Principals Association, based in Canberra.

At a time when the focus of education is on building positive sustainable partnerships between families, principals and school communities, there are obvious synergies between the two organisations which ensure that we will continue to work closely together in complementary ways for the benefit of all students and families.

Our Committee will now commence the difficult task of finding a suitable replacement.

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## **ACSSO NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2009**

**Building partnerships to support student health, resilience & well-being**

**12-13 October 2009 – Hobart, Tasmania**

Internationally renowned educationalist Dr Neil Hawkes from the UK will lead an outstanding array of speakers, presenters and panellists drawn from across the country, exploring and illustrating the importance of student health, resilience and well-being – and how to build effective community partnerships to support our young people's positive personal development.

ACSSO's national conferences are for everyone with an interest in education – parents, teachers, principals, researchers, academics, journalists – from all fields and sectors of education. Lively interactive discussion draws on the real-life experience of school communities – and seeks to focus on the practical things we can all do in our own local community to create an effective learning environment in a linked-up learning community.

So make sure you put these dates in your diary now!

In future issues of the Digest we will bring you speaker profiles and background information – and we aim for the Conference Website to be fully operational, with online registration facilities, in March 2009.

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## OPINION

### **When students miss out, Australia will pay the price**

*Editorial, The Age, January 21, 2009*

HOW much does Australia value education? The short answer is less than almost any comparable nation. The annual high-stakes jostle for university places offers a stark reminder of how chronic underfunding by federal and state governments has crippled the liberating power of education and turned schools and universities into perpetrators of social and economic inequality.

In Victoria, about 13,000 of 57,300 applicants for Commonwealth-supported places missed out on first-round offers. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not even apply. These students are as underrepresented in tertiary education as they were 20 years ago. Students from the top 25 per cent of postcodes ranked by income and education get 37 per cent of places. Students from the bottom quartile get 15 per cent of places, and only 11 per cent at the most prestigious universities. That is a damning disparity for a "fair go" society.

University admissions simply reinforce the inequality created by the school system. Few would take issue with private schools if public schools were adequately funded. A 2004 study by Monash University's Centre for Population and Urban Research found students from private or independent schools achieved a median ENTER score of 83.55. The figure for Catholic schools was 68.45 and for government schools it was a lowly 61.05.

There can be little argument that Australian governments do not invest enough in all levels of education. Education economist Adam Rorris has found Australian governments have consistently spent about \$1000 less per student on school infrastructure than the US and Britain — that amounts to a funding gap of about \$11.2 billion since 2002. Investment in private school buildings is about three times that of public schools. Mr Rorris said there was strong evidence from Britain that better facilities improved academic performance, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

It is probably no accident that Australia is one of only three countries that does not release OECD data that give a breakdown of the performance of public and private school students in reading, maths and science. The suppression of this information presents an early test of federal Education Minister Julia Gillard's commitment to greater transparency in school reporting. Yet one expects it would only confirm what is already known: that social background unduly determines school and university outcomes and that the Australian education system rates poorly for improving the performance of disadvantaged students.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/editorial/when-students-miss-out-australia-will-pay-the-price-20090120-7llg.html>

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## **EDUCATION TAX REFUND**

### **Keep receipts for the Education Tax Refund**

*Hon Wayne Swan MP, Treasurer, 22 January 2009*

With a new school year just around the corner, today I call on parents to make sure they keep their receipts to make the most of the Rudd Government's \$4.4 billion Education Tax Refund.

For millions of Australian families, preparing for the new school year can involve an extra financial strain – just after the Christmas holiday period – as they face hefty costs like laptops, internet connections and school textbooks.

The Education Tax Refund will provide some much-needed relief to help families meet these costs, with refunds of up to:

- \$375 per primary school student; and
- \$750 per secondary school student.

All families with school children who receive Family Tax Benefit Part A will be eligible for the Education Tax Refund, which will be paid to families from 1 July this year.

Provided parents keep their receipts, the Education Tax Refund will apply to some of the most common back-to-school items, including:

- laptops;
- home computers and associated costs;
- home internet connections;
- printers;
- education software;
- trade tools for use at school;
- school text books; and
- stationery.

Parents are doing one of the most vital jobs in the country – bringing up the next generation of Australians – and the Rudd Government is proud to lend a helping hand.

We understand that the back-to-school period can be an expensive time and that every dollar counts, particularly as the global financial crisis continues to hit our economy.

The Education Tax Refund is a key part of the Rudd Government's Education Revolution to give Australian kids the best possible start in life and build the best educated and trained workforce in the world.

For details of who is eligible and what can you claim:

<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0109/mstres220.php>

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## **HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

## **Schools benefit from fresh food program**

*Hon Nicola Roxon MP, 20 January 2009*

Children around Australia will soon enjoy the benefits of growing, preparing and sharing fresh food as part of the national Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

The Rudd Government has committed up to \$60,000 for up to 190 Government primary schools to implement the program across Australia over the next four years. The funding provided by the Government is to cover infrastructure costs associated with building kitchens and gardens.

This important program will help tackle the levels of childhood obesity by giving children hands-on experience in healthy eating.

School children in years 3-6 will get the opportunity to work in a productive garden, harvest the food, cook it in a purpose-built teaching kitchen and sit down with other students and parents to taste and enjoy what they have made.

This program is part of the Rudd Government's fresh approach to tackling the growing rates of childhood obesity in Australia, and recognises that children learn best through interaction and positive examples.

For details of schools to receive a grant of up to \$60,000 for kitchen and garden infrastructure:  
<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0109/msheag200.php>

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## **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

### **Child care support for children with high care needs**

*Hon Maxine McKew MP, 13 January 2009*

Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education, Maxine McKew, today announced that KU Children's Services has been awarded the national contract to administer the Inclusion Support Subsidy program.

The Inclusion Support Subsidy is a contribution paid to eligible child care services to build their capacity to accommodate children with a diagnosed disability, children undergoing an assessment for a disability and refugees. The Australian Government has allocated \$52 million per year for the Inclusion Support Subsidy.

"The Inclusion Support Subsidy plays a critical role in supporting child care providers to deliver quality services for children with ongoing high support needs. I know that many child care providers are passionate about this aspect of their service and I commend them for their commitment to these children and their families," Ms McKew said.

KU Children's Services is a long established not for profit child care provider delivering services in over 150 early childhood centres throughout Australia.

"KU Children's Services will operate as the single national Inclusion Support Subsidy program provider. This change is expected to deliver increased consistency, efficiency and flexibility within the program," Ms McKew said.

The Australian Government places a high priority on improving the early childhood education opportunities for children with ongoing high support needs. The Inclusion Support Subsidy is available

to a wide range of child care services including both private and community centre based Long Day Care, Outside School Hours Care including Vacation Care, Family Day Care, Occasional Care, and In Home Care as well as other flexible and innovative services, such as mobile child care services.

For further information on the Inclusion Support Subsidy, visit:  
[www.deewr.gov.au/ChildCareInclusionandPSP](http://www.deewr.gov.au/ChildCareInclusionandPSP)

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## **AWARDS & PRIZES**

### **Australian Rural Education Awards 2009**

The Australian Rural Education Award has been awarded annually to an institution, organisation or industry to recognise excellence in rural education since 1994.

Eligibility to apply includes a school, community group or other institution that can demonstrate a commitment to rural education via a project or initiative that expands education opportunities for rural communities.

Nominations close 31 May 2009

Further details – including previous years' winners – at: <http://www.spera.edu.au>

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### **Eureka Science Prizes 2009**

*Australian Museum*

2009 is the 20th year of the Australian Museum Eureka Science Prizes - and we would like you to help us celebrate.

We are inviting primary, secondary school students and their teachers from across Australia to enter to win a share of \$30,000 worth of cash and prizes, and to make this coming year's entries the best ever!

The 2009 Eureka school prizes include:

- Macquarie University Eureka Schools Science Prize for Action Against Climate Change (secondary students years 7 – 10)
- University of Sydney Sleek Geeks Science Eureka Prize (primary and secondary students)
- University of Technology, Sydney Eureka Prize for Science Teaching (secondary teachers)
- Australian Museum Eureka Prizes People's Choice Award

Read more at <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka>

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## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

## **International Mother Language Day – 21 February 2009**

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO in November 1999, and observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

Languages are at the very heart of UNESCO's objectives. They are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage.

All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to development fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

You will find some background information on the UNESCO site at [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=35097&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35097&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

This is an opportunity to engage and include the multilingual and multicultural families of your community in a school-wide celebration of the importance of languages and culture in our multicultural society.

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## **Harmony Day - 21 March 2009**

Harmony Day is held each year on 21 March to celebrate the richness and diversity of our school communities – and the vibrant potential of our successful multicultural society.

Parent organisations in all parts of the country are encouraged to work with their school and wider community to make this an important and inclusive celebration of the cultural diversity that underpins and enriches each community.

For some school communities, Harmony Day is the “launching pad” for an ongoing series of activities and events right through the year and right across the curriculum.

Harmony Day is managed by the federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship for the Australian Government – and you are invited to visit the website at <http://www.harmony.gov.au> for ideas and suggestions on how to become involved. Here you can register your school's events – and order free materials to make your event even more successful.

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## **CONFERENCES**

### **Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers Annual Conference**

**26-27 February, Melbourne, VIC**

The 2009 Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers' Association's annual conference will be once again held at the Hemisphere Convention Centre, South Road, Moorabbin.

Read more at <http://www.mltav.asn.au/indonesian/content/view/146/163/>

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## **CSEDU 2009 - International Conference on Computer Supported Education**

**23-26 March, Lisbon, Portugal**

CSEDU 2009 aims at becoming a yearly meeting place for presenting and discussing new educational environments, best practices and case studies on innovative technology-based learning strategies, institutional policies on computer supported education including open and distance education, using computers.

CSEDU 2009 is expected to give an overview of the state of the art as well as upcoming trends, and to promote discussion about the pedagogical potential of new learning and educational technologies in the academic and corporate world.

Read more at <http://www.csedu.org/CFP.htm>

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## **WA Childcare and Early Childhood Education Conference**

**3-5 April 2009, Perth, WA**

This is a biennial Conference which aims to provide a forum for collaboration, quality learning and discussion for people working in the areas of Children's Services, Care and Education. Representatives from various child service industries and organisations in WA have formed the planning committee, ensuring that the Conference provides relevant, practical and stimulating learning for all participants.

Read more at <http://www.waecec.com.au/>

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## **Contasta Science Education Conference**

**4-7 July 2009, Launceston, Tasmania**

The annual conference of the Australian Science Teachers Association is being hosted by the Science Teachers Association of Tasmania (STAT) from 4 to 7 July in Launceston, Tasmania, Australia.

The theme of the conference is Science Education – A Bridge to the Future and it will cater to the interests of teachers from all levels of education and include a full program each day for primary (K-6), secondary (7-10), secondary college (11-12) and tertiary.

CONASTA 58 is Australia's most significant professional learning experience for science education.

Read more at <http://www.cdesign.com.au/conasta58>

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## **AAMT 2009 - 22nd Biennial Conference of the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers**

**13-16 July, Fremantle, WA**

AAMT holds a conference every two years to showcase quality teaching in mathematics.

Teachers of primary, secondary and tertiary students as well as teacher educators, researchers and government representatives share and discuss initiatives to promote the learning of mathematics.

Participants from all states and territories of Australia as well as from other countries provide a rich source of teaching and learning ideas.

The diversity of contributions to the conference is a real strength and provides an opportunity not to be missed.

Presentations and workshops by teachers will highlight effective classroom practices and exhibitors will present a range of the latest resources.

Read more at <http://www.aamt.edu.au/2009-conference>

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## REMINDERS

2-5 March - BIG Skills Conference - Sydney Australia -

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training\\_skills/programmes\\_funding/programme\\_categories/Conferences/](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/programmes_funding/programme_categories/Conferences/)

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16-18 March - IASTED International Conference on Web-based Education - Phuket, Thailand -

<http://www.iasted.org/conferences/home-644.html>

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15-18 April - International Outdoor Education Research Conference - Beechworth, Vic -

[http://www.latrobe.edu.au/oent/research\\_conf\\_2009.htm](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/oent/research_conf_2009.htm)

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17-21 April - National Art Education Association National Convention - Minneapolis, USA -

<http://www.naea-reston.org/convention.html>

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21 May - Education 09 - London, UK - <http://www.govnet.co.uk/education/>

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8-10 July - Education in a Digital Present: Enriching Rural Communities - Flinders University, SA -

<http://www.spera.edu.au//conferences/callforpapers.pdf>

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## RESOURCE LISTINGS

### Passport to Australia: The Australian Travel Game

Find out more about our amazing country the fun way: Strap yourself in for a learning adventure like no other with Passport to Australia , the new board game from Brisbane based company Barker Boys (Australia) Pty Ltd

This is a fresh and exciting way for players of all ages to learn about Australia – the ultimate board game that takes players on a funtastic journey to every state and territory

The game is a brilliant way to improve your general knowledge on places that are in our own backyard. Though you hardly notice you're learning because it's so easy to get carried away with the thrill of the chase.....

Read more at <http://www.passporttoaustralia.com>.

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## **Linguascope**

The most valuable resource for schools for French, German, Italian, Spanish or ESOL - Year 1 - 12

Registration to Linguascope gives teachers access to thousands of resources - and enables every student to access to games and activities at all levels when they login at school - or at home.

When teachers discover Linguascope, they never want to give it up! With a re-subscription rate of 99%, it shows the value to teachers across Australia – and worldwide.

Linguascope's clear instructions and attractive colourful graphics will ensure that the site is a hit with your students. Linguascope encourages them to log on at school and home giving them the opportunity to revise and do extra study at night or during their lunch break. Students using Linguascope are able to work at their own pace - and teachers love it:

Read more at <http://www.linguascope.com.au>

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## **LOTE@HOME**

Learning languages at home from the early years

"Children who have grown up learning two or more different languages are better problem solvers"

[LOTE@HOME](#) is an innovative way for parents to participate with their kids as they all learn a second language.

[LOTE@HOME](#) packs are not intended to replace formal LOTE lessons, however they are intended to build an "in country environment" in the home that will support the formal learning of a second language.

Devised by a parent who was unable to identify an approach to learning a language other than English that focused on a home, family-based setting, these family-friendly kits are now available in ten community languages.

Read more at <http://www.lote-at-home.com.au>

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## **Educational Experience**

Educational Experience's product range consists of over 8,500 product lines showcased in our annual Teachers Catalogue.

Our speedy delivery is recognised as being the most efficient and reliable service offered in the industry.

The products sold by Educational Experience are sourced from Australian suppliers where possible – or imported from reputable international suppliers.

To ensure all our products are of the highest quality and meet safety standards, our suppliers must show product compliance testing to Australian standards.

Read more at <http://www.edex.com.au>

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

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

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### **ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS**

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/aed.htm> (weekly)
- International News Roundup : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup.htm> (monthly)
- Values Education : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Languages Education : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- Ensemble - Music Education : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)
- Family School Partners : [http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page\\_id=6](http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page_id=6) (quarterly)

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)

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