



# 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 5, 25 February 2009

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### PLACES FOR PARENTS AT NATIONAL PUBLIC EDUCATION FORUM

**Join Geoffrey Robertson in the nation's capital**

*Old Parliament House, Canberra, 27-28 March 2009*

*ACSSO has reserved some spaces for parent group representatives at this important event. Registration costs \$100, while travel and all other costs are borne by each attendee; Find out more and express your interest in attending at: <http://www.acssso.org.au/forum09/>.*

The future of public education in Australia is at a crossroads. Parents, teachers, principals, policy-makers and academics around the country are pondering how state-run education services should develop in the best interests of our children and future citizens.

The National Public Education Forum provides a unique opportunity to look at the issues, the stakes, the opportunities and the obstacles as some of the country's sharpest minds present honest and informed assessments of what is right and wrong with public education in Australia.

Australian human rights lawyer, academic, author and broadcaster Geoffrey Robertson will deliver the opening session, an acknowledgement of the need to bring this discussion into the widest possible public arena, and to call on our finest thinkers.

The Forum will provide a platform for more than a dozen other key observers, thinkers and practitioners of education to have their say, culminating in a synopsis to be presented by Professor Tony Vinson, one of our leading educational and social researchers who chaired the 2001 Vinson Inquiry into public education in NSW.

The major outcome of the Forum will be a Communiqué reflecting the needs of public education for the 21st Century, as an input to public policy and government decision making processes for the next four years - and beyond.

Read more at <http://www.acsso.org.au/forum09/>

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## **PUBLIC / PRIVATE**

### **State school enrolments grow as downturn bites**

*Farrah Tomazin, The Age, 19 February 2009*

THE drift from public to private schools could slow over the next year, according to some educators, with government school principals reporting higher enrolments as the financial crisis intensifies.

In a new survey of state secondary schools, dozens of principals have recorded a rise in enrolments this year, including students shifting from private schools as their parents struggle with education costs.

According to the findings, 45 per cent of state secondary principals reported a growth in enrolments while 17 per cent reported a fall. While almost one in three principals cited the desirability of their school as the main reason for the increase, 17 per cent cited family financial concerns, affordability or the economy as a factor.

The findings, based on an Australian Secondary Principals Association survey, are preliminary but give a snapshot of trends leading up to official enrolment figures to be released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics later this year.

Association president Andrew Blair said fears about the economic downturn appeared to be having an impact, with many families seeking a combination of quality and value for money.

But he pointed out that principals also reported a range of other factors boosting their enrolments, such as improved public perceptions of the opportunities available in government schools.

Read entire article at: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/state-school-enrolments-grow-as-downturn-bites-20090218-8bhc.html>

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### **Going for broke – more parents unable to pay private school fees**

*Denise Ryan, The Age, February 23, 2009*

AN INCREASING number of parents who fail to pay private school fees are losing their homes in bankruptcy actions taken by cash-strapped schools, according to the head of a national debt-collection agency.

Roger Mendelson, the chief executive of Prushka, a debt-collection agency that represents more than 200 private schools in Victoria, says the number of bankruptcy petitions presented by private schools against parents has risen 25 per cent in the past year, with an average of two families losing their home each week.

For every 10 parents taken to the Federal Magistrates Court over overdue fees, two become bankrupt, with trustees selling the family home.

"Most schools will go out of their way to work with parents and are reluctant to take action. But they are becoming much less reluctant than they were," he says.

At least two large independent schools in Melbourne are owed between \$1 million and \$2 million in outstanding fees, Mr. Mendelson says. These schools have strong balance sheets and are able to carry this debt, but if parents don't make an attempt to pay fees, such schools are taking a harder line, particularly when they have students on waiting lists.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/going-for-broke-20090220-8db2.html?page=-1>

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## **BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION**

### **Reading, writing... rebuilding**

*Caroline Milburn, The Age, February 23, 2009*

A FEW years ago Cheryl O'Connor discovered a disturbing pattern as she looked through the funding requests submitted by schools under the former federal government's Investing in Our Schools program.

Wealthy schools in middle-class areas were ambitious: applying for the maximum funds available and asking for such things as a refurbished computer lab or a floor replaced in a dance studio.

Requests from schools in poor neighbourhoods were often modest: new curtains for an audio-visual room or minor improvements to play equipment.

Ms O'Connor, chief executive officer of the Australian College of Educators and a veteran educator with experience as a school principal, public servant and consultant, says the Rudd Government's \$14.7 billion plan to upgrade all of Australia's 9540 schools needs to avoid such weaknesses.

Too often the strength of a school's application for improvements depends on the expertise and vision of the school's parent community and leadership, not the relative needs of the school.

"Even when schools are on a list for upgrades, political pressures tend to occur," says Ms O'Connor, whose organisation represents 5800 educators in the public and private sectors. "Some parents are able to apply more pressure on decision-makers by constantly contacting their local MP and by using their network of contacts to supply more detailed information quickly. They're more likely to be able to say, 'We've got a proposal that's costed, we know people who can do it, we're ready to go.'

"So the Government can't just leave it up to schools themselves to work up a strong proposal. There needs to be strong consultation with the leaders of the government, Catholic and independent systems because they all have priority lists and know where the strongest areas of need are."

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/reading-writing-rebuilding-20090220-8d4b.html?page=-1>

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## **Building the Education Revolution Guidelines Available**

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 24 February 2009*

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has today released guidelines that will assist schools around the nation to be part of the Rudd Government's \$14.7 billion Building the Education Revolution.

\$14.7 billion is now available to schools across Australia to build or upgrade existing facilities, including:

- Primary Schools for the 21st Century - \$12.4 billion long term investment to build or upgrade large scale infrastructure, such as libraries and multi-purpose facilities in all primary schools, special schools and K-12 schools.
- National School Pride Program - \$1.3 billion investment to refurbish and renew existing infrastructure and undertake minor building works in every Australian school.
- Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Schools - \$1 billion long term investment to build around 500 new science and language laboratories in secondary schools.

Under the guidelines, schools will be required to make the new or refurbished facilities available for broader community use at no or low cost.

Preference will also be given tenders from businesses which demonstrate a commitment to retain and employ new trainees and apprentices.

The guidelines are available on the Building the Education Revolution website <http://www.buildingtheeducationrevolution.gov.au> together with a range of information material to assist schools and education authorities in the preparation of project proposals.

Read entire release at:

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_090224\\_154149.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090224_154149.aspx)

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## CELEBRATING TEACHERS

### Tell the world about YOUR Favourite Teacher

Teaching Australia is supporting a project by Robert and Wendy Macklin for a book to be entitled My Favourite Teacher, which will highlight the important role of teachers in our society and include a collection of stories about the way in which teachers have made a difference to the lives of prominent and ordinary Australians.

Robert is a well-known journalist, author and screen-writer and Wendy Macklin is a Canberra teacher.

Through a website set up at <http://www.myfavouriteteacher.com.au/> they are inviting Australians from across the nation to tell stories of how favourite teachers changed lives - stories that are humorous, poignant or just plain thankful. The Macklins see the book and the website as a celebration of teachers and teaching.

This is a great opportunity to raise community awareness of the importance of teaching and the respect in which teachers are held.

Teaching Australia would appreciate anything you can do to spread the word about the My Favourite Teacher Project and encourage people to write in to the website with their stories.

Further information - and already some fascinating stories (Can you really do an appendix operation with a tin can lid...?) at: <http://www.myfavouriteteacher.com.au>



## MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

### A disturbing set of numbers

*Nalini Joshi, The Australian, February 18, 2009*

MATHEMATICS is critical to modern life and it will be essential for formulating a response to the present economic crisis.

Yet Australian school children are coming out of schools not knowing that doing a calculation with pencil and paper is the way to learn mathematics.

While the federal Government is ploughing money into infrastructure, we are staring at the vista of shiny new classrooms and rows of laptops with no mathematics teachers.

The international table of mathematics skills, the four-yearly Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, shows that our achievement scores in Year 8 mathematics have steadily declined since 1995.

In the latest results in 2007, Britain and even the US, countries we used to beat, significantly outperformed Australian Year 8 students in mathematics. Unless we can stop the decline of well-trained mathematics teachers in our schools, this will continue.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25069225-25192,00.html>

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### **Summing up a failure**

*Marty Ross, The Age, February 23, 2009*

EDUCATION Minister Julia Gillard has just called for a renewed emphasis on "the basics". Is there really a problem? Yes, with maths there is definitely a problem.

We certainly need the times tables, but it is not merely an issue of the basics. The real problem is one of basic meaningfulness.

To illustrate, here is an exercise from a current Victorian year 9 maths text: a farmer has 2C cows and 3H horses. The exercise is to find the square of the sum of the farmer's animals.

The Victorian texts are not uniformly that pointless or that bad. But not much is good. Definitions are clumsy, problems are contrived, natural connections and beautiful insights are overlooked. The texts do not reflect a mathematical culture.

It is not just the textbooks. Teachers are poorly trained; the curriculum is moribund, rife with silly, contrived applications; and everywhere there is pointless calculation. And calculators - the cane toads of education.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/summing-up-a-failure-20090220-8d42.html>

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## **EQUITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION**

### **Poverty focus a failure for education**

*Justine Ferrari, The Australian, February 18, 2009*

THE federal Government's focus on social disadvantage to improve students' education is misguided, a leading education researcher argues.

Instead, funding should be directed at low-performing students, the Australian Council for Educational Research's Steve Dinham said.

With the Government handing over more than \$1billion to schools with low socio-economic status, the biggest leveller in education was a quality teacher in every classroom, he said.

Asked if the Government's investment in socially disadvantaged schools was a waste of money, Professor Dinham said socio-economic status (SES) was a "red herring" and the funds should be put into "low-performing schools and low-performing students".

"Across the SES spectrum, there are low-performing kids in all schools," he said. Professor Dinham - ACER research director in teaching, learning and leadership - said low socio-economic status was often used as an excuse to dumb down curriculum. Many teachers wrongly believed that students' backgrounds determined their potential at school.

Read entire article at: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25069225-25192,00.html>

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### **Noel Pearson launches fight against truancy**

*Patricia Karvelas & Paul Toohey, The Australian, February 21, 2009*

CAPE York indigenous leader Noel Pearson has called for radical laws to stamp out truancy, forcing education ministers to report to parliament every quarter on the reasons why cases of chronic non-attendance at school have not been prosecuted.

Writing for The Weekend Australian today, Mr. Pearson backs a call by fellow indigenous leader and Australian of the Year Mick Dodson for all children to be enrolled in school by January 26 next year, and challenges the Rudd Government to ensure the goal is achieved.

Mr. Dodson said the so-called Education Revolution was worth "bugger all" if investment was not poured into teacher quality, relevant curriculums and providing school reports parents could understand. But Mr. Pearson has taken Mr. Dodson's call a step further, calling on governments to overhaul the way truancy is dealt with and insisting on much more ambitious targets to improve indigenous education.

"Dodson is dead right to set 26 January, 2010, as the date for closing the gap on school attendance," he said. "If the governments led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and his state and territory counterparts, and the leaders of indigenous Australia, cannot respond to the primary school participation gap and close it by the start of the next season, then we might as well forget about closing the gap on anything.

"It is not rocket science. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Australia can attend schools as well as anybody."

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25085269-2702,00.html>

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### **CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

#### **Students do badly in study of civics**

*Justine Ferrari, The Australian, February 18, 2009*

STUDENTS' knowledge of Australia's system of government is lower than expected, with only one in three Year 10 students knowing what the Constitution is.

The national assessment of civics and citizenship in Years 6 and 10 found about 54 per cent of primary students and 41 per cent of high school students met the proficiency standards for their year. But about one in five Year 10 students failed to meet the Year 6 standard.

"This was especially the case in relation to information about the constitutional structure of Australian democracy," the report says. "Lacking such fundamental information will restrict the capacity of students to make sense of many other aspects of Australian democratic forms and processes, and they may, therefore, be disadvantaged in their capacity to engage in meaningful ways in many other levels of civic

action or discourse."

At Year 6, students are expected to recognise the division of governmental responsibilities in a federation, identify a link between a change in Australia's identity and a change in the national anthem, recognise the benefit of different political parties and the federal budget.

By Year 10, students are expected to recognise key functions and features of parliament, analyse the common good as a motivation for becoming a whistleblower, explain the importance of a secret ballot, and recognise how the independence of the judiciary is protected. On the Constitution, Year 10 students were asked "what is the Australian Constitution?" and given four possible answers: the rules about how the major Australian political parties are run; the policies of the Australian federal government; the framework for the ways Australia is governed; all the laws that Australian citizens must obey.

Only 34 per cent identified the correct answer, the framework for the way Australia is governed.

"Given that it is a definitional question, requiring only knowledge with no interpretation, it is clear that students have not been taught or at least have not learned this most basic information," the report says.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25070977-2702,00.html>

Access the full Report at: [http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/NAP-CC\\_2007\\_Report\\_16Feb07.pdf](http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/NAP-CC_2007_Report_16Feb07.pdf)

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## EARLY CHILDHOOD

### Early Childhood Learning Framework Trial Commences

*Hon Maxine McKew MP, Parlt Secretary for Early Childhood Education & Care 24 February 2009*

Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care, Maxine McKew has welcomed the commencement of the trial of the Early Years Learning Framework.

The framework, developed by a consortium of early childhood experts, will guide early childhood educators in delivering quality early childhood programs.

It will also inform parents, families and the early childhood workforce about the importance of young children's learning.

The curriculum will be trialled in 29 locations across the country including in metropolitan, regional and remote areas.

Participating sites include preschools, long day care centres, family day care and Multipurpose Aboriginal Children's Services.

The trial will also be run at some early intervention and occasional child care centres and within some preschools which are co-located with schools.

Ms McKew said the trial is the next step in developing Australia's first national Early Years Learning Framework.

Read more at [http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/McKew/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_090224\\_145144.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/McKew/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090224_145144.aspx)

For more information please visit <http://www.mychild.gov.au/earlyyearslearning.htm> .

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## TERTIARY EDUCATION

## **New row over student unionism**

*The Age, February 24, 2009 (AAP)*

A new row has broken out over student unionism, with the opposition accusing the government of breaking an election promise by imposing a \$250 fee on students.

"It's a return to the bad old days of effective compulsory student unionism," opposition youth spokeswoman Sophie Mirabella told parliament on Tuesday.

The opposition will vote against the government's measure in what's shaping as a mirror-image battle of 2005 when the Howard government, in the face of fierce Labor opposition, forced voluntary student unionism through parliament.

When introducing the new legislation on February 11, Youth Minister Kate Ellis said it was not a return to compulsory student unionism. Ms Ellis said it would allow universities to charge students up to \$250 a year to improve vital student services, which were stripped of \$170 million by the Howard government.

She said the bill also introduced national student representation and advocacy protocols to ensure students could participate in university government.

Mrs. Mirabella said it was a new tax on Australia's one million university students who'd be hit whether or not they wanted the services to be funded.

Debate on the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities and Other Measures) Bill 2009 was adjourned.

Read entire article: <http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-national/new-row-over-student-unionism-20090224-8gvo.html>

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## **Bradley Review: The dust settles - now for the verdict**

*Heath Gilmore, The Age, February 23, 2009*

In perhaps two weeks, the Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, will deliver her verdict on the 46 recommendations presented by Bradley and her fellow panel members - Peter Noonan, Helen Nugent and Bill Scales.

The review, released in December, urged the nation to increase participation in higher levels of education and give fairer access to lower socio-economic, rural and regional residents.

It recommended a \$7 billion expansion of higher education and research, an extra 330,000 graduates by 2020 and a new funding mechanism based on student vouchers or "learning entitlements".

Gillard began a series of six discussions two weeks ago so that universities and other stakeholders could respond before the Government's official response. Gillard has reportedly kept her own counsel during these meetings.

But the talks signalled an opportunity for some university bosses in the \$16 billion industry to declare open season on Bradley. Last week members of the "group of eight" universities savaged the review, describing it as a "road map to mediocrity" lacking vision and failing to provide a blueprint for the future. They have attacked the proposed student voucher system, without fee deregulation.

Bradley has become the punching bag for higher education pundits. Gillard's office has declined to offer any words of support. Interestingly, in a speech to the Sydney Institute last week, Gillard failed to mention the review by name once, though she stressed the Government's commitment to making access to higher education fairer.

"Perhaps the most shameful legacy of the previous government was that despite continuous economic

growth, it failed to invest properly in education, allowing real spending on tertiary education to decline and our national investment in the early years to lag far behind our OECD peers," she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/the-dust-settles--now-for-the-verdict-20090222-8erj.html?page=-1>

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## **KEEPING SCIENCE SECULAR**

### **Australia: Letter to the Editor**

My son was taught inappropriate religious views in his year 11 physics classes at a state high school in Qld.

I would like to see religious perspectives, like intelligent design, kept out of school science lessons.

Given the diversity of religious beliefs in Australia, the only balanced way to teach religion is as comparative religion by trained teachers with no particular religious axe to grind.

Fundamentalist Christians, who have no formal and independent training as counsellors, should not be able to gain access to state school children without parents' permission, as they do at present under the federally funded schools chaplains program.

(Name & address supplied, Qld)

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## **USA: Creationism Left Out of Science Education for Valid Reasons**

*Richard B Katskee, February 10, 2009*

Should we teach creationism in public-school science classes? Of course we should—if we want to violate the Constitution, dumb down our students, and make our nation an international laughing-stock.

Ironically, creationists keep evolving. First they tried to ban the teaching of evolution outright. The Supreme Court struck down those attempts in 1968. Then creationists tried to mandate the teaching of "creation science" alongside evolution, in what were called "balanced treatment" laws. The Supreme Court rejected that ploy in 1987.

More recently, creationists tried to teach "intelligent design" in the public schools of Dover, Pa. I was one of the attorneys who represented the parent-plaintiffs in that case. We were gratified when U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III sent intelligent-design creationism packing in 2005.

"We have been presented," wrote Jones, "with a wealth of evidence which reveals that the District's purpose was to advance creationism, an inherently religious view, both by introducing it directly under the label ID and by disparaging the scientific theory of evolution, so that creationism would gain credence by default as the only apparent alternative to evolution...."

No matter how they try or what they call their ideas, creationists can't get over this hurdle: They want the Bible to be treated like a science book. Creationist efforts fail in court because creationism begins with a series of set-in-stone conclusions anchored in a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, and then cherry picks "facts" to back up that religious view. Anything that doesn't fit the scenario is tossed. Call that what you will; but it isn't science.

Read entire article: <http://www.usnews.com/articles/opinion/2009/02/10/creationism-left-out-of-science-education-for-valid-reasons.html>

Richard B. Katskee is assistant legal director at Americans United for Separation of Church and State in Washington, D.C.

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## **UK: Launch of National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies**

*Jessica Shepherd, Guardian UK, 19 February 2009*

Every religion on campus has its student society, from the Christian Union to the Jedi Knights. Now the non-religionists will have theirs too. The National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies launches today to mobilise non-believers.

The "anti-God squad", as it is happy to be called, says it will fight for the voices of what it believes to be the majority of students to be heard on campus and further afield. It is planning campaigns and events across the country to protest against religious privilege and promote the understanding of science.

It has the support of some of the country's leading critics of religion: the scientist Richard Dawkins, the philosopher AC Grayling, and the Guardian columnist Polly Toynbee.

The launch comes four months after a campaign for 30 London buses to parade the slogan: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." The campaign began in response to evangelical Christian adverts on buses.

Read entire article: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/feb/19/atheist-student-society>



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## **AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES**

### **NSW: HSC essayists told that to say less will be worth more**

*Brian Robins, Sydney Morning Herald, February 23, 2009*

HIGHER School Certificate students are to be told that quality, not quantity, is the key when sitting their exams from next year. They are to be given suggested word lengths for essays to stop some students from writing thousands of words when only a few hundred may be necessary.

In some subjects there will be more multiple choice questions. Students who have to do a major project in subjects such as industrial design will be told not to spend thousands of dollars on it, something an increasing number are doing.

"This is in the nature of refinement - making ongoing improvement," said the head of the NSW Board of Studies, John Bennett. "We evaluate all of the operations of the HSC every year, and following the changes to the HSC exam in 2001, it was time to look at making some fine tuning."

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/hsc-essayists-told-that-to-say-less-will-be-worth-more-20090222-8er9.html>

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### **NSW: Students told to cut part-time job hours**

*Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, February 4, 2009*

SOME secondary students are too tired to turn up to school after working a late shift the night before.

Others are not managing the stress associated with juggling a part-time job with their Higher School

Certificate studies.

In response to the growing concern, the NSW Minister for Education, Verity Firth, will today encourage students to strike a better work-life balance to avoid unnecessary stress.

Higher School Certificate students in particular would be urged to sit down with their parents and employers to plan a sustainable schedule to ensure they were not at risk of being overwhelmed by their part-time job and study commitments.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/students-told-to-cut-parttime-job-hours/2009/02/03/1233423223155.html>

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### **NT: Territory teachers fear attacks under welfare trial**

*ABC News, Mon Feb 23, 2009*

A Northern Territory teacher says a new trial cutting welfare payments for indigenous parents with truant children could lead to attacks on education staff.

The Federal and Territory government's joint regime will be trialled in Aboriginal communities in Katherine, Wallace Rockhole, Wadeye and the Tiwi Islands to address chronic low indigenous school attendance.

But a teacher in one of the trial areas says children still won't come to school because they don't see it leading to jobs in their communities.

The teacher, who can't give her name because she's signed a public service gag order, has told the ABC she's worried if teachers report truancy, they'll be blamed for the dole docking and face attacks by angry parents.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/23/2498698.htm>

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### **QLD: Schools aim for green future**

*Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts The Honourable Rod Welford, 25/02/2009*

Education and Training Minister Rod Welford has urged Queensland's school students to play their part in making Queensland a greener, healthier place to live.

Mr Welford launched the 2009 Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland Green and Healthy Schools Awards program at Parliament House today.

"This Green and Healthy Schools program plays an important role in creating a smarter, greener Queensland," Mr Welford said.

"As part of our Toward Q2 vision we have set an ambitious target to cut Queensland's carbon footprint by one-third through reduced car and electricity use by 2020 - and this initiative will help us to achieve that goal.

"Schools recognised through the Green and Healthy awards program address issues such as environmental sustainability, nutrition, waste minimisation, energy usage, litter reduction and recycling.

"The winner of Queensland's Greenest and Healthiest School title must be motivated, have a strong sense of community and best represent all aspects of the Green & Healthy Schools competition."

Read more at <http://www.mysunshinecoast.com.au/articles/article-display/schools-aim-for-green->

### **SA: Student information booklets - South Australian Certificate of Education**

*Hon Jane Lomax-Smith, SA Minister for Education, 23 February 2009*

More than 20,000 South Australian Year 10 students are this week receiving an information booklet about the new South Australian Certificate of Education.

"Schools have been receiving regular updates about the introduction of the new SACE, but this booklet is the first specifically for students," Minister Lomax-Smith says.

"I would encourage all Year 10 students to talk with their parents or carers about the information in this booklet to see how the new SACE enhances their opportunities for the future.

The booklet, distributed this week, builds on information provided in Starting the SACE in 2009, a brochure for Year 9 parents, distributed in August last year.

Read more at <http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au/newsace> .

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### **TAS: Schools prepare for 10% drop in student numbers**

*Sally Glaetzer, Mercury, 21 February 2009*

THE number of students in Tasmanian state schools is projected to fall 10 per cent by first term next year.

The Education Department's latest school enrolment information, obtained by the Mercury, is likely to put more pressure on Hobart primary schools to merge.

Premier David Bartlett has said up to 30 schools might need to close because of changing demographics.

Yesterday he reiterated that there would be no forced school closures and again ruled out listing those schools in the firing line.

Read entire article: [http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2009/02/21/56931\\_todays-news.html](http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2009/02/21/56931_todays-news.html)

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### **VIC: It's too risky to go bush**

*John Masanauskas, Herald Sun, 23 February 2009*

SOME schools may permanently ban student camps during the summer and early autumn as concern grows over the effects of climate change.

Some schools have already cancelled or postponed bookings this year in response to the bushfire threat.

But camp operators say they are ready for emergencies and maintain high safety standards.

Canterbury Primary School has postponed a year 4 camp to June and will consider not offering camps during term one in the future.

"This is more to do with climate change and risk management than just the bushfires," said principal Anne Tonkin yesterday.

"I find it curious that some primary schools are continuing with camps at this stage of the year often in quite remote settings."

Read entire article: <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,25091736-661,00.html>

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## **AWARDS & PRIZES**

### **2009 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes**

This year the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes are celebrating two milestones, the 20th anniversary of the program and a decade of rewarding science in the classroom. We would like to take this opportunity to invite your school to take part. Students, teachers and schools can win over \$30,000 worth of cash and prizes.

The 2009 Australian Museum Eureka School Science program includes the:

- Macquarie University Eureka Prize for Action Against Climate Change Eureka Prize – develop a science presentation about reducing the effects of climate change
- University of Sydney Sleek Geeks Science Eureka Prize – produce a short film telling a science story in an entertaining and accessible way
- UTS Eureka Prize for Science Teaching – awarded to a science teacher who has motivated and inspired students to become involved in student-centred investigation

You can take part by:

- Encouraging students to enter the Sleek Geeks Science Eureka Prize and Action Against Climate Change Eureka Prize. Students will have loads of fun creating short films and designing online presentations. For help check out our Teacher Notes and Lesson Plans and for inspiration take a look at the top entries from 2008
- Nominating an outstanding science teacher for the Eureka Prize for Science Teaching
- Voting in the Eureka Prizes People's Choice Award (24 July – 16 August). Register now and we will remind you when voting is about to start.
- Keeping up-to-date with the latest Eureka news by subscribing to our e-bulletin

For further details go to <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka> for competition details, entry forms, lesson plans, examples of winning entries and much more.

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## **CONFERENCES & EVENTS**

### **Harmony Day**

*21 March 2009*

This year Harmony Day has a new logo and the theme of "Everyone Belongs".

Your school community is invited to bring the logo to life.

Download the new logo from [www.harmony.gov.au](http://www.harmony.gov.au) and ask students to interpret what it means to them ... through photography, art, film or any other suitable medium.

Selected work will be posted to the official Harmony Day website so send your digital images to [info@harmonyday.gov.au](mailto:info@harmonyday.gov.au)

Get your school community involved in Harmony Day 2009.

Visit [www.harmony.gov.au](http://www.harmony.gov.au) for more information, to register your event and order free materials.

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## Youth ANZAAS 2009

5-10 July, Melbourne, Victoria

Youth ANZAAS is a residential five-day national conference for 50 science students in Years 10, 11 & 12 from Australian and New Zealand Schools.

The conference is organised by the Australian & New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS), one of Australia's oldest scientific associations. Its purpose is to give students a broad perspective on the aims and practice of science in action, including opportunities to visit leading institutions and to meet leading scientists. Students have the opportunity to interact with other students and young adults who share their passion for science.

The selection of student delegates is based on academic merit and interest in science – and issues of disadvantage and remote background are also taken into account

Applications will open early in March and close at the end of May.

For more information about the conference and applying to attend, visit the Website at:  
<http://www.anzaas.org.au/youth.html>

You can register your interest by clicking the link provided at the site, so you can be kept up to date with the latest news about the program – or send an email to advise who and where you are -  
[youth\\_anzaas\\_interest@anzaas.org.au](mailto:youth_anzaas_interest@anzaas.org.au)



ACSSO NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2009

**Schools – heart of our community**

**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 central 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.

The Conference website will be operational from early March with further information and online registration – and attractive **Early Bird** discounts.

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## REMINDERS

March-May - Teaching Australia Workshops and Masterclasses - locations around Australia - <http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au>

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/)

16-18 March - IASTED International Conference on Web-based Education - Phuket, Thailand - <http://www.iasted.org/conferences/home-644.html>

21 March - Harmony Day - <http://www.harmony.gov.au>

23-26 March - International Conference on Computer Supported Education - Lisbon, Portugal - <http://www.csedu.org/CFP.htm>

2-3 April - ACOSS National Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://users.tpg.com.au/ads1444m/bulletinfinal.htm>

3-5 April - WA Childcare and Early Childhood Education Conference - Perth, WA - <http://www.waecec.com.au/>

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)

17-21 April - National Art Education Association National Convention - Minneapolis, USA - <http://www.naea-reston.org/convention.html>

1 May - Australian Museum Eureka Prizes nominations close - <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/eureka/>

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

31 May - Australian Rural Education Awards nominations close - <http://www.spera.edu.au>

4-7 July - Contasta Science Education Conference - Launceston, TAS - <http://www.cdesign.com.au/conasta58>

5-8 July - World Conference on Higher Education - Paris, France - [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=56642&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=56642&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

8-10 July - SPERA National Conference - Flinders University, SA - <http://www.spera.edu.au//conferences/callforpapers.pdf>

13-16 July - Conference of the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers - Fremantle, WA - <http://www.aamt.edu.au/2009-conference>

6-7 August - Professional Development Network School Leaders' Conference - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/conference/professional-development-network-leadership-conference-2009>

13-14 August - Isolated Children's Parents' Assoc. of Australia Federal Conference - Longreach, QLD - <http://www.icpa.com.au>

26-28 September - ACEL International Conference - Darwin, NT - <http://www.ancel.org.au/index.php?id=858>

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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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