



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 20, 9 June 2009

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RURAL & REGIONAL EDUCATION

Students hit by budget changes: MPs

Bonny Symons-Brown, The Age, May 27, 2009

The federal government needs to amend its changes to student support immediately, the Australian Greens and independent MPs say.

As announced in the budget earlier this month, Labor is tightening the criteria for young people to prove their financial independence and qualify for Youth Allowance.

In the past, students who worked 15 hours per week part-time or earned \$20,000 over 18 months qualified for support.

But from 2010, they'll need to have worked 30 hours a week.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young and independent MPs Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott on Wednesday hosted a group of disgruntled young women and their parents at Parliament House in Canberra to discuss the proposed changes.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mm2qyp>

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Mounting pressure on Govt to re-think proposed Youth Allowance changes

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 4 June 2009

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young says pressure is mounting on the Federal Government to re-think their proposed changes to the Youth Allowance Independence Test.

"It is increasingly clear from the Government's responses in Estimates that the removal of workforce participation eligibility criteria from the Youth Allowance Independence Test has not been thought through properly," said Senator Hanson-Young.

"Students have taken in good faith the advice given to them in their classrooms by Centrelink representatives, as to how to qualify for income support while at uni.

"Thousands have taken a gap year to work hard towards Independent status in the eyes of the Government, only to discover in the Budget fallout that that option will no longer be valid from January 1 next year, making the changes effectively retrospective."

Read entire release: <http://tinyurl.com/kmea7p>

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Greens welcome Coalition support for amendment to fix Govt Youth Allowance blunder

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Media Release, 7 June 2009

The Greens have welcomed the Coalition's support for amending the start date of changes to Youth Allowance eligibility criteria, backing the Greens' move to assist thousands of aspiring tertiary students who have been caught short.

The May Budget contained measures making changes to Youth Allowance, including the removal of two of the three workforce participation eligibility criteria from January 1 2010, catching current gap year students out. Early last week the Greens announced that they would be moving to amend the effective retrospectivity when the legislation reaches the Senate.

"We welcome the Coalition coming on board with the Greens' plan to amend the legislation," said Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Greens' spokesperson for Education.

Senator Hanson-Young said a Senate Inquiry was necessary to examine broader issues relating to the obstacles faced by young people in rural and regional Australia in accessing higher education, and the support they need.

Read entire release: <http://tinyurl.com/kmea7p>

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Open Letter from Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA) to Minister Gillard

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

The Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA) applauds the overall intent of the Commonwealth budget in attempting to address the key recommendations of the Bradley Report. However, we believe there is an unintended impact on rural students of the changes to the criteria to prove independence to qualify for the Youth Allowance. Without access to the Youth Allowance (or similar), tertiary study will become impossible for many rural young people - and mainly available to the children of wealthier families.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mocfh8>

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Open Letter from Society for Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA)

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

SPERA commends the overall intent of the Commonwealth budget in attempting to address the key recommendations of the Bradley Report. The Bradley Report acknowledges that regional students are seriously under-represented and the stated aim of its recommendations is to make changes that encouraged country students. The Bradley target is to have an appropriate proportion of regional students accessing higher education. The changes to the criteria to prove independence to qualify for the Youth Allowance will disadvantage our rural and regional young people. Without access to the Youth Allowance (or similar), tertiary study will become impossible for many rural young people.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nu7gyl>

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BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

But are our distance education children being excluded?

Schools of Distance Education Parent Network, 28 May 2009

The Parents and Citizens Associations of the Queensland Schools of Distance Education were shocked to discover their schools may no longer be considered eligible for funding under the three components of the Building the Education Revolution program.

According to the guidelines, all Australian schools will receive a funding allocation under the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program. As representatives of our respective P&Cs, members of the Schools of Distance Education Alliance are endeavouring to find out the reason for our schools' ineligibility for this funding.

We can only presume this decision has been made without an understanding of the nature and the functions of Schools of Distance Education.

Currently the Queensland Schools of Distance Education have a combined enrolment of 1450 full time equivalent primary students. These students are already some of the most disadvantaged in the state due to their inability to attend a mainstream school, often because of geographic isolation or medical conditions. These students deserve to have equitable opportunities for a quality education and to have access to adequate facilities.

Read entire release: <http://tinyurl.com/lmgovg>

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Eligibility of distance education schools for Building the Education Revolution funding

Transcript, Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education and Ginger Gorman, ABC Radio Western Queensland, 9 June 2009

JULIA GILLARD: There's been an issue for distance education schools about our Building the Education Revolution program. When we set the program up, as part of our urgent stimulus package at the start of this year to support jobs right around the country while building new school infrastructure, we were working on the enrolment data given to us by state governments. That did cause a problem for distance schools and what we are going to do now is make distance schools eligible on a case by case basis for our Building the Education Revolution program for primary schools and for our National School Pride money.

GINGER GORMAN: How much is available to distance education schools?

JULIA GILLARD: What that means is for distance education schools, depending on enrolments because the Building the Education Revolution money works on school size, for National School Pride money they could be eligible for up to \$200 000 and for distance schools that are catering for primary school age children depending on the enrolments of primary school age children, they could be eligible for up to \$3 million.

GINGER GORMAN: And what can that money be spent on?

JULIA GILLARD: The National School Pride money is there for all of the repairs and maintenance and small projects that schools need.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mk9258>

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Hundreds of schools miss out on lab upgrades

Justine Ferrari, The Australian, June 01, 2009

HUNDREDS of high schools will miss out on a \$1 billion federal government program to upgrade science laboratories after the Government refused to widen guidelines for eligible schools.

Under the program, schools needing new science buildings are favoured over those asking for improvements to existing facilities.

NSW had proposed the Government spread the funding among more schools. A working group of parents, teachers and principals in conjunction with the NSW Government argue a more cost-effective way to spend the money is to refurbish existing laboratories rather than construct new buildings from scratch.

But federal Education Minister Julia Gillard has rejected NSW's push to revisit the guidelines. A spokeswoman for Ms Gillard said it was always intended the program would focus on the construction of new or "substantially refurbished" science labs "to support the maximum number of jobs possible" at 500 of the nation's neediest schools.

Under the NSW plan, about 430 of the 455 secondary and K-12 schools in the state could be refurbished, but Ms Gillard's decision means only about 150 NSW schools will benefit.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/lkb5tc>

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TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Move to widen national curriculum

Farrah Tomazin & Dan Harrison, The Age, June 1, 2009

AUSTRALIA'S first national school curriculum could eventually be expanded to take in subjects relating to health, humanities and information technology.

As the curriculum begins to take shape in the four core subjects of English, science, history and maths — and, later, languages, geography and the arts — state and federal education ministers are considering incorporating more "key learning areas" to be studied by primary and secondary school students.

These could include economics, business, civics and citizenship, health, physical education, information and communication technology and design and technology.

National Curriculum Board chairman Barry McGaw — who has been asked by education ministers to look at the cost, timing and implications involved — said it made sense to consider a nationally consistent curriculum beyond the first round of core subjects.

But the move could be contentious, with primary principals warning against "overcrowding" the curriculum and other educators urging governments not to rush the process.

"We need to get the core subjects right and not try to do too many things at once," the chief executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research, Geoff Masters, said.

The curriculum will make it clear to teachers what they must teach and to students the achievement standards expected of them each year. But it also has a more ambitious aim: to help increase the proportion of students who complete year 12 or its equivalent.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/lq477l>

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BULLYING

Bullying out of control in middle years of schooling:

Highest levels shown in Queensland schools

Bruce McDougall & Tanya Chilcott, Courier Mail. June 01, 2009

Results from Australia's largest study of school bullying shows Year 8 students are major victims, with almost one in three citing taunts and attacks.

The research, commissioned by the Federal Government and obtained by The Courier-Mail, shows Queensland has among the highest levels of bullying in the country - well above the national average in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the highest rate for Year 9.

More than one-third of Year 8 students in Queensland indicated they were being bullied.

Meanwhile, Year 9 students in Queensland were more likely to take part in cyber bullying than most of their counterparts nationwide. Only Northern Territory students were worse.

Many of the 7000 children from 124 schools surveyed across Australia said they had lost faith in the ability of teachers to protect them.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/n3mmk8>

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Push to help gay pupils with new anti-homophobia policy in Victoria

John Masanauskas, Herald Sun, 2 June 2009

A new state Education Department policy paper, "Supporting Sexual Diversity in Schools", says comprehensive action is needed to protect vulnerable gay students. The paper, endorsed by Education Minister Bronwyn Pike, says about 10 per cent of students have "same-sex attraction" feelings and most suffer verbal or physical abuse.

Teachers who ignored homophobic abuse could face action under state equal opportunity laws for "authorising or assisting discrimination", the policy says.

Associate Professor Anne Mitchell, a La Trobe University gay and lesbian health expert whose research helped formulate the policy, said yesterday that posters or books giving information on homosexuality in a counselling area would make gay students feel safer.

Ms Mitchell said some teachers were scared of being labelled gay if they challenged homophobia and others needed a push to move ahead with the times.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/lj5g69>

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Victorian school bullying is out of control, other states even worse

Bruce McDougall, John Masanauskas, Herald Sun, June 01, 2009

BULLYING is surging out of control in Victoria's schools. Almost one in four children in years 4-9 say that they are regular targets of bullies. Bullying peaks in primary school, in year 5, but continues well into high school, according to Australia's largest study of the problem.

The study reports that 22 per cent of year 9 students say they are victims.

Researchers are recommending schools overhaul their whole approach to the problem, a major part of which is now cyber-bullying.

A Carrum Downs mother whose daughter has been bullied at two bayside primary schools said political leaders should take action. Mum Lynda Beddoe, of Carrum Downs, said, "The attitude needs to change. I'm sick and tired of them sweeping it under the carpet."

The federally commissioned research, seen by the Herald Sun, reveals bullying is even worse in other states. In Victoria, 23.2 per cent of year 4-9 students said they'd been bullied; nationally, it was almost 27 per cent. Slightly more boys than girls were bullied, and 8 per cent of students said they'd bullied others.

Covert bullying is expected to become "more prevalent and insidious", thanks to communications technology.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/nw9py8>

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Mum wants cyber thugs to pay

Carly Crawford, Courier Mail, June 03, 2009

THE mother of a US teen who committed suicide after a campaign of abuse by cyber bullies has appealed to Australian lawmakers to prosecute attackers.

Tina Meier, whose daughter Megan hanged herself in 2006, aged 13, said strict school rules and the threat of criminal action were the keys to keeping school bullies at bay.

"We have to put things in place so kids realise this is not a joke," Ms Meier said from Missouri. "I have had teenagers from Australia contact me telling me the horrible things they are going through from cyber bullies."

Ms Meier called for a three strikes system under which school cyber bullies were first warned, then suspended and finally expelled.

"Cyber bullies need to be treated as though they have been physically violent because the effect on the victim is the same," she said.

Megan Meier ended her life after she was befriended then ridiculed by a fictitious person who went by the name "Josh Evans" on a social networking site. The true identity of "Josh" was exposed as the mother of one of Megan's school friends.

Mum Lori Drew had suspected Megan of spreading rumours about her daughter, Sarah, who was also alleged to have posed as "Josh" but was not prosecuted. In a landmark cyber bullying case, Ms Drew was convicted of illegally accessing a computer and faces up to three years jail. The case, which was nearly never prosecuted because of vague criminal cyber bullying laws in the US, sparked a wave of new cyber-specific legislation.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/nt9c7z>

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AWARDS & PRIZES

Ten outstanding teachers from across Australia receive NEiTA national award

NEiTA Media Release, 4 June 2009

NEiTA (the National Excellence in Teaching Awards) with support from the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) has honoured ten of Australia's top teaching professionals at the NEiTA ASG National Teaching Awards ceremony.

"This year's national award recipients all possess passion, skill, and commitment in each of their fields of expertise," said NEiTA's Terry O'Connell. "What they all demonstrate is an ability to effectively engage their students, school parents and the community with the learning process and this positive impact shows how great teachers change the future today."

The NEiTA ASG National Teaching Awards were presented to the following teachers:

Emma Cullen - Abbotsford Long Day Care Centre in New South Wales.
Tonya Wood - Sawyers Valley Primary School in Western Australia.
Helen Armstrong - Bakewell Primary School in the Northern Territory.
Phillip Hall - Yarralumla Primary School in the Australian Capital Territory.
Brian McCallum - Central Coast Grammar School, Erina Heights in New South Wales (now teaching at Holy Cross Primary School, Kincumber in New South Wales).
Petrina Prain - Miles State School in Queensland.
Jackie Bell-Warren - Sacred Heart College, Geelong in Victoria.
Yvonne McDonnell - Palmerston High School, Driver in the Northern Territory.
Dennis Nguyen from Sarah Redfern High School, Minto in New South Wales (now teaching at Picton High School, Picton in New South Wales).
Brendon Nutt - Ballajura Community College, Ballajura in Western Australia.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/msblnp>

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Nominations for 2009 Teaching Awards

CLOSING 19 JUNE 2009

Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 3 March 2009

Minister for Education Julia Gillard called for nominations of outstanding teachers, principals and schools for the Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence to be presented in October in association with World Teachers Day.

The prestigious awards celebrate the work of our best and brightest teachers and recognise the crucial role they play in improving educational outcomes.

Parents, students and the community are encouraged to nominate excellent teachers, principals, staff and schools with more than \$1 million in prize money available for 64 awards across the teaching profession.

These awards pay tribute to the exceptional contribution teachers and principals make to young people's lives and support the Council of Australian Government's reform agenda to promote quality teaching and effective school leadership so that every Australian child receives a world class education.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/l6ott>

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DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Australia takes lead on bringing students into the 21st Century

Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 8 June 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today announced that Australia will become a founding member for a new international multi-sector research project, the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S) project.

The Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills project is a not for profit collaboration between Cisco, Intel, Microsoft and five founding member countries: Australia, Finland, Portugal, Singapore and the UK.

The international project, to be led by Professor Barry McGaw of the University of Melbourne, will develop new assessment tools for measuring key skills needed for the modern economy and society.

The Australian Government will work alongside other country representatives to explore the gap between the skills students are being provided with and what they require to participate fully in the modern world of work.

As part of the project a computer-based assessment system will be developed to test students' abilities in cross-disciplinary analytical, creative, adaptive and problem solving skills, as well as their ability to work co-operatively.

Further information is available at <http://tinyurl.com/nv3z5z>

Read entire release: <http://tinyurl.com/oeshz3>

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School students - stay smart online

Hon Stephen Conroy, 5 June 2009

Australian schools are being offered free e-security resources to help students to stay smart online.

"Young people have grown up with the internet. They are always connected and often deeply engaged with new social networking services," the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, said. "To help kids to be aware of how to be smart and secure online, we've launched new interactive learning modules, available free for all Australian schools."

"These tools are targeted specifically at Year 3 and Year 9 students and highlight the simple steps they can take to be smart online. Given their experience online, young people are in a great position to help their families to improve e-security at home."

The Budd:e E-security Education Modules are available for download and order on CD-ROM from the Australian Government's e-security website www.staysmartonline.gov.au

Read entire release: <http://tinyurl.com/qjpmmq>

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OPINION

Independent Schools stifled by the three Rs: restrictions, red tape, rigidity

Jenny Allum, Principal of SCEGGS, Sydney Morning Herald, June 1, 2009

It is a basic tenet of our society that freedom of choice and diversity should be highly valued. We live in a democracy, and are true to these ideals by allowing such freedom of speech, diversity of thought, freedom of religion.

There is a proud record of excellent and diverse independent schooling in the history of this country. Each independent school may have a different ethos, perhaps based on its religious traditions, or because it wishes to emphasise a particular aspect of education such as music. Schools may wish to be academically selective or be committed to a particular philosophy or style of education, such as in the Steiner or Montessori schools. This diversity in schooling reflects the diversity of our society, and is something to be cherished and supported.

I believe we all have a vested interest in ensuring that our schools provide the very best education we can for our children. To this end, it is important that all schools, including independent schools, be accountable to the public and to our governments for the education we provide for our young people. It is on the primacy of education that this accountability rests. So I will always support governments monitoring the outcomes of the education at SCEGGS.

I also believe that all parents should receive some financial support for the education of their children. SCEGGS parents pay taxes as working citizens which do, in part, contribute to the education of all children in our society. SCEGGS students and their taxpaying parents surely deserve at least a small share of what they would receive if they attended the local government school. SCEGGS parents receive, through the recurrent funding of this school, significantly less than 25 per cent of the cost of educating a student in a government school.

It has been said that I have no right to criticise government policy because my school receives some funding from the Government to support the education of the students here. The ABC receives funding but maintains its journalistic independence. Catholic hospitals receive funding but rightly are allowed to practise medicine according to their

religious world view. Likewise we should value independent education, because it offers choice and points of difference for parents. We don't want a monocultural landscape for education.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/nqd2r7>

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TERTIARY EDUCATION

Are universities failing our teachers?

Tanya Chilcott, Courier Mail, June 01, 2009

UNIVERSITIES are under attack from fellow educators for failing to produce teachers ready for the classroom.

One stakeholder is calling for universities to raise teaching course cut-off marks to increase the desirability of the profession. Others warn the courses aren't rigorous enough and are calling for "teacher schools" or internships.

The calls are being made in response to the Masters Report recommendations. Professor Masters reported doubts over teachers' numeracy and literacy standards and recommended they sit a test.

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission wants an OP of around 12 to be targeted as a minimum entry requirement for university teaching courses instead of a test. "The desirability of teaching as a profession needs to be increased for students with higher academic achievement." The QCEC would also like to see some prerequisite level of mathematics ability for entry into primary education tertiary courses.

Independent Schools Queensland said while they didn't reject the notion of a teacher test, they would prefer action that ensured universities had rigorous assessment practices which properly prepared graduates for the classroom, including internships.

The Queensland Association of State School Principals has also attacked the rigor of university training, arguing extra training schools or internships are needed to ensure pre-service teachers are ready for the classroom.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/ndfbnd>

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HEALTH & WELL-BEING

How many junk food ads do our children see on TV?

Cancer Council, 3 June 2009

Help put a stop to TV advertising of unhealthy food to children. Cancer Council's latest campaign aims to put a stop to TV advertising of unhealthy food to children

Australian children are bombarded with about 2200 junk food ads on TV per year. That's about 18 hours worth of ads promoting obesity-inducing food - the equivalent of three full school days!

Parents want their kids to eat healthily, yet they have to compete with the country's top ten food companies who pump more than \$375M annually into food marketing. The Federal Government attempts to promote healthy lifestyle messages, but is outspent by the food industry six to one on marketing.

Cancer Council recently launched an on-line campaign to hit back at junk food advertising to kids. Help support this campaign and let the Government know that you want it to put a stop to TV advertising of unhealthy food to children.

Simply watch the video clip and click on the link to send a message to the Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, as well as your State Senators.

Please check it out, and share it with your friends: <http://tinyurl.com/n83f89>

Christina Sampson, Cancer Council Outreach Service

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

NSW: Public school's \$700 plea to parents

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, June 2, 2009

A NORTH SHORE public high school is pressing parents to make "voluntary" contributions of up to \$700 a year, more than double the rate charged by most schools, to make up for a "shortfall in government funding".

The Mosman High School P&C has written to parents urging them to pay an average of \$400 for subject contributions in addition to the voluntary general contribution of up to \$254 for year 12 students.

It thanks the 37 per cent of families who have paid their voluntary school contributions. To the 63 per cent who have not, the P&C "is asking for your help".

The president of the NSW Secondary Principals Council, Jim McAlpine, said subject contributions generally ranged from nothing to \$80 per subject in addition to a general contribution of around \$50 each year. "It could be that in some schools in leafy green suburbs parents are contributing more because they can afford to," he said.

The NSW Greens MP John Kaye said the school was right in saying the Government was not providing adequate funding.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/osuaks>

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NSW: Seven day school ban for NSW kids or teachers who travel to Vic

Laura Tunstall, Live News, 3 June 2009

Any primary or high school student from NSW who visits Victoria will have to stay away from school for a week. The quarantine also applies for teachers.

Director of Communicable Diseases NSW Health Dr Jeremy McAnulty realises it's a tough ask.

"We know this is a big impact on parents and children missing out on school for a week, but we're trying to balance that against the risk of introducing human swine flu into schools."

The new measures are in response to Victoria raising its swine flu alert levels.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/lea9gs>

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NSW: Sydney Islamic school rejected

Elicia Murray, Sydney Morning Herald, June 2, 2009

Controversial plans for a large Islamic school in Camden have been rejected leaving many residents pleased with the results. Camden City Council cited planning arguments when it first blocked the proposal a year ago.

But fierce community opposition to the project often relied on racial and religious arguments.

The case attracted international media attention when two pigs' heads were rammed onto metal stakes at the site, on the corner of Cawdor and Burragarong roads, in 2007.

And at the hearing in April, the council's evidence included a letter signed by four Christian churches stating that Islam espoused views that were "incompatible with the Australian way of life".

The council's legal team also presented a DVD featuring the views of concerned residents, one of whom said the school would be a "breeding ground for terrorists".

Outside court, the council's solicitor, Chris Shaw, tried to distance the council from blatantly anti-Muslim evidence presented in its case.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/mkvolc>

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QLD: Noose boy to sue over hanging accident at Laidley school

Tanya Chilcott, Courier Mail, June 05, 2009

FADED marks of Monday's horrific school hanging accident could still be seen on parts of Trent Garner's neck yesterday as he was cuddled by Mum Donna Garner at home.

The Garner family is planning to sue the Queensland Government over the accident, in which a noose tightened around Trent's neck as he helped re-enact a "murder by hanging" as part of his Laidley State High School Year 9 English assessment.

Students who were reportedly in the classroom at the time have come forward with stories of children screaming during the incident and Trent turning blue after he fell off a table. They have supported claims by the Garner family that a teacher was not in the room at the time of the accident.

Acting deputy director-general of Education Lyn McKenzie refused to answer several questions yesterday, including whether a teacher had or should be suspended.

"Speculation on possible outcomes and recommendations at this stage would compromise the investigation process as well as be premature and counterproductive," Ms McKenzie said.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/mv7v43>

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SA: High demand public high school rejecting students within zone

ABC News, Jun 2, 2009

The Education Department says at least one Adelaide state school has started turning away students even though they live within the school's zone.

Deputy CEO Jan Andrews says Adelaide High School adopted a new policy recently, so that new students are only to be taken in year eight or if they get involved in a specialist program.

She says, in some cases, even year eight students who live within the zone have missed out because there is not enough room for them.

Ms Andrews says other Adelaide high schools including Marryatville, Unley and Brighton might have to implement the same policy.

"There are a number of schools in that inner city ring that are under a lot of pressure," she said.

"None of them have reached quite this degree of pressure at the moment but you can go to another public school which will be a good one."

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/m4mchv>

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VIC: School progress reports to appear online

Farrah Tomazin, The Age, June 4, 2009

EVERY Victorian school will have its performance and programs published in a new state register within weeks as the Brumby Government moves to give parents unprecedented information on schools.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike last night warned teachers and principals they risked being branded as "naive and paternalistic" if they continued to oppose the push for more data on school performance.

Ms Pike said she made no apology for putting schools under higher levels of scrutiny or making teachers more accountable for students' results. There were some schools where teachers had "such low expectations" and results had plateaued, and the community had a "moral obligation" to address this, she said.

But the push to disclose more raw data is contentious, with Australian Education Union branch president Mary Bluett saying last night: "Ministers and education departments have had this information for decades, but what have they done to actually support schools that they say are underperforming?"

Brian Burgess, president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, questioned why the Government was not prepared to ban league tables or selective use of data. Some principals have threatened to boycott the national literacy and numeracy test, after results were used last month to publish league tables comparing schools.

"We're not against transparency; what we are against is the data being cherry picked and used to give a distorted view of schools," he said.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/ny98xp>

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VIC: School fire plans lacking: CFA chief

Karen Kissane, The Age, June 2, 2009

VICTORIA lacks adequate policies for dealing with schoolchildren, hospital patients or disabled people who might be in the path of a bushfire, the state's fire chief says.

CFA chief fire officer Russell Rees also admitted yesterday that his organisation's warning systems failed at critical points on Black Saturday. Mr. Rees said there were breakdowns in communication, particularly between different locations, and in staff "take-up" of information received.

The main problem was that people did not recognise the system was faltering. "I see the weakness here as being many of the people didn't realise it was happening until too late," he said.

"We deeply regret it. It's not as if these people were not trying their best, but we regret the fact that certain things didn't go as well as we would want. We need to appreciate the extreme pressure that these people were under, not just for the East Kilmore fire, but particularly for those in the (Integrated Emergency Co-ordination Centre).

"It is now our responsibility, as I see it, for us to take those system failures and do our utmost to remedy that situation."

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/koq55z>

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WA: Bunbury principal making a difference

Kate Campbell, West Australian, 8th June 2009

The belief that teachers deserve a medal could not be more true than in the case of Felicity Dear, who has received a prestigious Member of the Order of Australia medal for her service to Aboriginal education.

Ms Dear, the principal of Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School in Bunbury for the past nine years, has been passionately involved in Aboriginal education for 28 years.

Humbled by the honour, Ms Dear said nothing made her more proud than witnessing more and more Aboriginal students and their families realise they can achieve above and beyond expectations. She said her students' numeracy results were on par with those of non-Aboriginal students and were not far behind in literacy. Djidi Djidi had an attendance rate of 87 per cent, compared with an 80 per cent rate for Aboriginal students across the State.

"It's about making a difference with the kids, being involved in ways that help preserve the culture, and I enjoy working with Aboriginal people because I have a deep respect for their culture and I want to see a better education for their children," she said.

Helping students keep their culture alive, part of the school's curriculum centres on the traditional Nyoongar language, art, music and food.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/lo2rrt>

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WA: High school hopes fence art will give award edge

Angela Pownall, West Australian, 6th June 2009

A Perth high school is hoping to win a share of a new \$15 million education award that has been set up to encourage schools to become more involved with the community.

Students from Melville Senior High School helped decorate a new public garden last year by painting fence pickets with the faces of local identities. School community projects could qualify for a share of the Schools First project's \$15 million of funding, which has been provided by NAB.

The national initiative will pick one school to receive an award of up to \$1 million. In WA, six schools will each get \$50,000 this year for their community project and one State winner will get \$100,000.

Schools First spokesman Steven Heathcote said the grants were designed to improve school and community partnerships over the next three years.

This month, workshops will be running in WA to show schools how to apply for one of the awards.

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/kv3o8c>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

ACT Currie Lecture 2009

"Thinking past the Standards Movement: An Educational Reflection"

Prof. Marie Brennan

16 June 2009, University House, ANU, Canberra

Neoliberal and neo-conservative social and economic movements have left a legacy to education which valorises narrow forms of an 'audit culture'. Core to the audit culture is an emphasis on benchmarking, with attendant testing regimes, registration, league tables and comparative performance data. All of this requires the setting of 'standards'. This paper raises questions about the role of standards in educational reform and their capacity to contribute to educational improvement?

Professor Marie Brennan is currently a member of the School of Education at the University of South Australia, where she was Dean and Head of School between 2002-2007. Since 1991, she has worked at the University of Canberra, Central Queensland University and Deakin University. This followed many years in the Victorian Education Department as a Humanities teacher in technical schools, a researcher in Curriculum and Research Branch, a manager of the School Improvement Unit, policy officer, and member of the Senior Executive Service.

Further information and to register: <http://tinyurl.com/njnblb>

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Educational Leadership and Coaching Conference

14-15 July, 2009: Macquarie University, Sydney

It is now widely accepted that coaching is a key element of successful leadership development and the most effective way to achieve sustainable results. For this reason Growth Coaching International (formerly Australian Growth Coaching), Macquarie University, and Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) are joining forces to launch the first Australian conference for educators that focuses on coaching and leadership development.

This is a conference with a difference. It applies coaching principles to ensure you maximise the learning you take away to create sustainable change in your work environment. You will hear about the latest research on leadership and coaching from exemplary overseas and local researchers and practitioners in the field of leadership coaching. You will also hear about inspiring case studies of how coaching has had a positive impact on results being achieved in schools and other educational institutions. This conference provides the opportunity for you and your leadership teams to be coached yourselves so that you walk away from the conference with a plan of action to be implemented immediately!

Register today at: <http://tinyurl.com/kk3ree>

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REMINDERS

5 June - Education, Policy and Research Forum - Melbourne, VIC - <http://tinyurl.com/ob36xs>

15-16 June - Communities in Control Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://tinyurl.com/r8np4d>

16 June - ACT Currie Lecture - Canberra, ACT - <http://tinyurl.com/njnblb>

19 June - Nominations close for Australian Awards for Teaching Excellence - <http://tinyurl.com/peahdl>

4-7 July - Contasta Science Education Conference - Launceston, TAS - <http://tinyurl.com/r4yluh>

5-8 July - World Conference on Higher Education - Paris, France - <http://tinyurl.com/p3624s>

5-10 July - Youth ANZAAS 2009 - Melbourne, VIC - <http://tinyurl.com/oroyk4>

8-10 July - SPERA National Conference - Flinders University, SA - <http://tinyurl.com/qtjfkj>

9 July - Registration closes for Environmental Song for Australia Contest - <http://tinyurl.com/pp4yjq>

13-16 July - Conference of the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers - Fremantle, WA - <http://tinyurl.com/gqif9f>

31 July - Nominations close for ASG Inspirational Teacher Awards - <http://tinyurl.com/ojjh3z>

31 July-1 August - NSW Federation of Parents' & Citizens' Associations Annual Conference - Penrith, NSW - <http://tinyurl.com/ofzcvw>

6-7 August - Professional Development Network School Leaders' Conference - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://tinyurl.com/grfnoh>

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

22 August - Tasmanian Parents & Friends Association State Annual Conference - <http://tinyurl.com/lzqrpn>

31 August-6 September - Reach for the Stars - <http://tinyurl.com/l3zh3e>

2-4 September - ARACY Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://tinyurl.com/qligzw>

26-28 September - ACEL International Conference - Darwin, NT - <http://tinyurl.com/pgf6cq>

2-4 October - Australian Curriculum Studies Association Biennial Conference - Canberra, ACT - <http://tinyurl.com/pclsmo>

12-13 October - ACSSO National Conference - Hobart, TAS - <http://tinyurl.com/q8njl3>

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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)
- Family School Partners : http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page_id=6 (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)

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