



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 27, 28 July 2009

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Calls for watchdog for foreign students

Sandra O'Malley, WA Today, July 28, 2009

The federal government vows it won't tolerate abuses of the system governing the education of foreign students in Australia.

Concerns about Australia's third-biggest export industry have reignited after an investigation by the ABC's Four Corners program claimed some colleges and migration agents are ripping off students who come here to study.

The claims follow recent fiery debate sparked by violence against international students, especially Indians.

Federal police and immigration officials on Monday raided the offices of a Sydney migration agent allegedly involved in a scam to exploit students.

Police and the government declined to comment on the investigation on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith insisted the government was taking action to stamp out abuses of the system.

Read entire article at: <http://tinyurl.com/m5ewxs>

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Undercover reporter attacked

Roy Greenslade, guardian.co.uk, 28 July 2009

A young Indian reporter who went undercover to expose the exploitation of Indian students in Australia for a TV programme was attacked for carrying out her investigation.

She has not been identified, but the executive producer of ABC news, Mark Bannerman said the assault, which took place in daylight at the weekend, followed phone threats.

It is thought she was followed from ABC's offices and then hit from behind while walking along a street. She is now said to be "safe and sound".

The programme, entitled Holy cash cows, revealed that Indian students are being lured to Australia to take educational courses with false promises of obtaining permanent residency. The courses are also said to be inadequate.

Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/ll6wsp>

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Australia vow crackdown on Indian student rip-offs

Agence France Press, 28 July 2009

Australia vowed to crack down on migration scams targeting Indian students and condemned a "cowardly" attack on a female reporter who blew the lid on the shady practices.

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said Australia was tightening regulations on migration agents after a current affairs TV show exposed rip-offs exploiting students who have fuelled the country's booming international education sector.

The revelations are the latest to damage the 15.5 billion dollar (12.7 billion US) a year industry -- Australia's third-largest export earner -- after a series of violent attacks on Indian students living in Melbourne and Sydney.

"Any of these abuses we of course won't tolerate and don't tolerate," Smith told public broadcaster ABC, referring to the migration scams.

"And the cracking down, so far as the migration agents' regulatory arrangements are concerned, will assist in that process."

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard slammed the attack on the female Indian journalist, who was physically assaulted in a Sydney street over the weekend while working undercover for ABC's "Four Corners" programme.

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

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Xenophon urges compo for cheated foreign students

ABC News, 28 July 2009

Independent Senator Nick Xenophon has called for a statutory compensation scheme to reimburse overseas students who are ripped off by unscrupulous education providers.

He is also pushing for a dedicated ombudsman to investigate their complaints.

Senator Xenophon says his proposals have been prompted by last night's Four Corners program, which exposed widespread dodgy practices in the multibillion-dollar international education industry.

He says a compensation fund could be created, possibly through a small levy on educational services, to provide refunds to international students who are ripped off.

"Whether it's on fees or whether it's on the accredited bodies - that they have to pay a small levy - to ensure that if dodgy operators don't do the right thing, that students can be assured they'll be able to get a refund, that they won't be out of pocket, he said.

Read entire article at: <http://tinyurl.com/nyogdo>

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International Students Invited to Have Their Say at Round Table

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 27 July, 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today called for expressions of interest from international students to be part of an International Student Round Table that will take place in Canberra on the 14th-15th of September this year.

Up to 30 students will be able to participate in the Round Table and the Australian Government will meet the cost of travel and accommodation for the selected participants.

The Round Table will be designed to reflect the wide diversity of nationalities and cultures of the 190 countries that provide international students studying in Australia each year.

It is important that international students have an opportunity to discuss issues affecting their experience in Australia and to put forward ideas on how to address their concerns.

This Round Table is the latest step in the Rudd Government's commitment to achieving the best possible education for all international students.

Read entire release at: <http://tinyurl.com/m7ktk3>

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Don't exploit overseas students: Birrell

Brisbane Times, July 27, 2009

The federal government must look past export dollars and clean up the education of foreign students before Australia's reputation is irreparably damaged, an academic says.

Dr Bob Birrell from Monash University, one of Australia's leading social scientists, told ABC's Four Corners program on Monday night the government had been "bedazzled by the dollar" and must ensure overseas students were not exploited.

His comments come as federal police and immigration officials raided the offices of a Sydney migration agent allegedly involved in a scam to exploit foreign students.

Police are also investigating allegations of death threats and an assault in Sydney at the weekend on an undercover reporter employed by the ABC's Four Corners program to assist with a story, which aired on Monday, about the exploitation of students.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/l9jls3>

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COMPARING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

League tables reflect pupils' genes, says expert

Heath Gilmore, Sydney Morning Herald, July 25, 2009

School league tables are more likely to reflect the genetic endowment of students rather than the standard of teaching at a given institution, a researcher says.

Brian Byrne, an internationally recognised researcher at the University of New England, has written to the federal Education Minister, Julia Gillard, offering to discuss his findings, which challenge the Federal Government's approach to primary and secondary education.

Professor Byrne's research into 1000 sets of twins in Australia, the US and Scandinavia over 10 years has led him to conclude that school-averaged scores in early literacy were more likely to reflect inherited differences in students rather than the operation of a school.

Ms Gillard is determined to make good on an election promise to give parents access to more transparent and easily comparable information on individual school performances.

The Government, while rejecting "simplistic league tables", intends to unveil a website this year comparing schools on a "like-for-like" basis - that is, comparing schools of similar social background. Critics say that once the information is available, newspapers and other media will compile the data into publishable league tables.

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

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League Tables Will Damage Education

Trevor Cobbold, Save Our Schools, 24 July 2009

Australian education ministers are being duplicitous on school league tables. They claim to be opposed to 'simplistic' league tables but are providing the information to enable their publication.

League tables are inevitable because school results are to be published on a centralized national website, as well as on several state and territory websites. It will be a simple matter for anyone to construct school rankings from them.

The evidence against publishing school results and league tables is overwhelming.

First, league tables restrict student learning because they narrow the curriculum and teaching. Students receive a less rounded education.

Overseas evidence shows that schools direct more resources into the tested subjects of literacy and maths while untested subjects such as science, history, social studies, languages, arts and music, physical education and health receive much less time. There is also less teaching of more complex thinking and writing skills.

League tables turn classrooms into test preparation factories. Weeks and months are devoted to test preparation instead of deep learning.

Read entire article at <http://tinyurl.com/m6yxcS>

First published in The Canberra Times

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CYBER-BULLYING

Treat threats to student wellbeing as seriously as road toll, says Jeff Kennett

Courier Mail, July 22, 2009 (AAP)

IT's time society started addressing the state of people's wellbeing as emphatically as it does trying to bring down the road toll, former Victorian premier Jeff Kennett says.

Mr. Kennett is among the speakers who address the parents of students at Western Heights College in Geelong following the suicide of 14-year-old pupil Chanelle Rae. Chanelle, who was believed to have been a victim of cyber bullying, was the fourth student at the school to take their life this year.

"Young children find growing up difficult," Mr. Kennett said. "The internet doesn't take people's lives but what happens is that it often builds depression and anxiety levels.

Victorian Premier John Brumby said the State Government had given funding to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to develop a national strategy on cyber bullying in schools, but that more education is needed.

"I don't think you'll ever fix the problem by regulating the problem out, the reality is that internet's expansive, it's available to kids whether they're at school, at home, in internet cafes, over their phones," he said. "So I do think we need more education in our schools, we do need better understanding about cyber bullying."

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/nu7fm4>

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BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Auditor General announces full investigation of schools stimulus debacle

Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Shadow Education Minister, 24 July 2009

In a humiliating development for Education Minister Julia Gillard, Auditor General Ian McPhee has today announced that he will be conducting a full investigation into the 'Building the Education Revolution' schools stimulus debacle.

"This afternoon the Auditor General has vindicated the Opposition's calls for a review of the schools stimulus debacle, by announcing a full performance audit under Section 15 of the Auditor-General Act 1997," said Mr Pyne.

"It is a shame that it has had to come to this. The Opposition has been arguing for months that funds, borrowed on the taxpayer's credit card, must not be wasted or mismanaged and that schools deserve to receive value for money.

"We suggested that decisions about expenditure on school facilities should be made by local schools, not by bureaucrats in Canberra and State Capitals.

"This once-in-a-generation opportunity for Australian schools to build new facilities has been wasted as a result of Labor's mismanagement. We hope that the Auditor-General's intervention will ensure that these grants can now be spent more wisely.

"Taxpayers deserve value for money for their massive expenditure. Our school communities deserve the best facilities that money can buy – not McSchool halls built in Western Sydney and delivered off the back of a truck.

Read entire release: <http://tinyurl.com/m4ldtc>

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DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION

OLPC Australia eyes 20,000 laptops for kids

Stuart Kennedy, The Australian, July 23, 2009

THE local arm of the global One Laptop Per Child organisation wants to place 20,000 laptops in the hands of primary and early secondary school children in remote regions of Australia by the end of 2010.

Founded by technology visionary Nicholas Negroponte in 2005, OLPC is a non-profit firm created to raise education standards in third world countries by equipping school children with a rugged, low power consumption laptops able to survive outside classrooms. The OLPC laptops feature strong networking capabilities and an educational software suite that promotes collaboration between students and their teachers.

So far most of the 1.1 million OLPC laptops produced have gone to South and Central America, although a scheme to distribute 100,000 machines is in place in Rwanda, Africa.

In May OLPC Australia began rolling out 400 of the distinctive white and green XO-1 laptops to Shepherdson College on Elcho Island, Newcastle Waters in the Northern Territory and Rawa Community School in WA.

Read entire article at: <http://tinyurl.com/l8u49t>

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OPINION

An education revolution does not compute without quality teachers

Adele Horin, Sydney Morning Herald, July 25, 2009

The Rudd Government's education revolution will amount to little if it fails to lift teacher quality. Computers, libraries, arts centres and well-functioning buildings are vital in improving the learning environment, and the appeal of schools. Only a curmudgeon would quibble over the extra expenditure. But unless teacher quality also improves, the revolution will be half-baked.

With so many baby-boomer teachers retiring over the next seven years - in NSW virtually half the teaching population - there is both opportunity and imperative to raise the standard.

Any parent knows the quality of the child's teacher is critical. That is why the pushier parents lobby to secure the best teacher for their child, and more reticent parents accept with sinking

hearts the lost year or lost marks a bad teacher represents.

Now economists have quantified the effect of a good teacher compared to a bad teacher - not only on a child's academic attainment and future earnings but on the health of a national economy. The difference a good teacher makes is large.

Professor Eric Hanushek, an economist at Stanford University, has just visited Australia, bringing a body of research that should focus the minds of politicians on teacher quality. It's not easy. Rolling out laptops is child's play in comparison.

Read entire article at: <http://tinyurl.com/lvbhc9>

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GENDER & EDUCATION

Gender and Education Guidelines

Association of Women Educators: Leading Social Change project

An e-learning guide with research findings and links to key readings and resources funded by the Australian Government through the Women's Leadership and Development Program.

Many excellent gender and education resources have been developed, and the arguments and directions for change have been well articulated. One of the greatest challenges for all of us is in making time and finding the right support. This resource provides an accessible outline of issues and approaches linked to selected key resources.

Whilst reviewing the literature it became apparent that we continue to address many of the same challenges and rather than creating a new summary and commentary, it would be eminently sensible to give an e-life to sections of the training module Piecing it together – understanding the social construction of gender (Education Queensland 1996).

These pages of Piecing it together have been reproduced with permission and provide a scaffold for elaborations from the research findings and links to further readings and professional learning and teaching resources.

Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/m68fyh>

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TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary booksellers and publishers warn against book copyright changes

Aust. Campus Booksellers' Assoc & Aust Publishers' Assoc, 21 July 2009

University booksellers and tertiary publishers have warned that the Productivity Commission's proposal to abolish Australian territorial copyright for books would mean confusion, uncertainty and inequity on campus.

The Australian Campus Booksellers' Association and the Australian Publishers Association have both called for the proposal to be rejected.

The President of the Australian Campus Booksellers' Association, Graeme Connelly, said bypassing Australian publishers for overseas-sourced textbooks would damage the book supply chain and impact negatively on students.

“Even if all the quality control problems were overcome and campus booksellers were able to get the right texts a couple of dollars cheaper, they would not know who else was importing the books and, without being available to return surplus stock, they would have to order very cautiously,” he said.

“This would lead to inequitable situations where some students did not receive the books they needed at the start of the semester, especially since subject enrolments vary significantly as late as the first week of each semester.”

Read more about the campaign issues at: <http://tinyurl.com/cy8a3b>

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Teachers TV Australia Gets Behind WorldSkills International

Teachers TV Australia is the Australian equivalent of the successful UK initiative, Teachers TV. The UK service is a successful web and 24 hour cable television initiative providing teachers and school administrators with professional development resources that are engaging, relevant and convenient to use.

Already involved with the groundbreaking SkillsOne initiative that makes hundreds of videos about getting a trade or skill available through the web and on pay TV, Teachers TV Australia is supporting Australia's team of 26 entrants to the WorldSkills International competition in Calgary, Canada from 1-7 September.

WorldSkills International (formerly known as the Skill Olympics) has come to symbolise the pinnacle of excellence in vocational training. Every two years hundreds of young skilled people, accompanied by their teachers and trainers, gather together from around the world to compete before the public in the skills of their various trades and test themselves against demanding international standards. They represent the best of their peers drawn from regional and national skill competitions held currently in 51 countries/regions.

Read more about WorldSkills International at: <http://tinyurl.com/mqttcf>

Read more about SkillsOne at: <http://tinyurl.com/5g732f>

Read more about Teachers TV Australia at: <http://tinyurl.com/qm4qwz>

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PRIZES & AWARDS

2008 Prime Minister's Awards for Skills Excellence in School Winners Announced

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 22 July, 2009

The Prime Minister and Acting Education Minister today congratulated outstanding students who have been awarded a 2008 Prime Minister's Award for Skills Excellence in School.

The Award recognises Year 12 students who have demonstrated excellence and outstanding achievement in vocational education and training in schools.

Award categories include the highest achieving student in each state and territory, the highest achieving Indigenous student, and the highest achieving students in each represented industry area. Award recipients in each of these categories are listed below.

Winners of this prestigious award are selected from the highest achieving recipients of the Australian Vocational Student Prize.

Each winner receives a certificate from the Prime Minister and \$2,000 in addition to their Australian Vocational Student Prize Award.

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

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NEiTA Inspirational Teachers Awards 2009:

Nominations closing 31 July 2009

Nominating a teacher, principal, or director for the ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards through the NEiTA teaching awards program, provides parents, school and early childhood communities with a unique opportunity to say thank you to an outstanding and hard-working teacher.

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

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Schools First

Applications close 14 August 2009

Schools First, developed by NAB, ACER and the Foundation for Young Australians, is designed to recognise excellence in school-community partnerships. It is Australia's largest ever corporate-backed education initiative and is open to all schools around the country.

Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/lv9vzi>

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

NSW: Staff sacked as non-government Sydney college goes bust

Courier Mail, July 27, 2009 (AAP)

STUDENTS have been dealt a major blow after a Sydney college went into administration tonight. Dire financial problems forced Sterling College, which runs several campuses in the city's CBD, to close.

More than 500 students have had their courses halted and face the loss of thousands of dollars in fees. All 35 college staff have been sacked.

"Late on Monday afternoon Dr Dharmappa Hagare, the sole director of Sterling College Pty Ltd, which operates the group's Sydney training facilities, made a decision to appoint Quentin Olde and Matt Adams of Corporate Recovery Specialists, Taylor Woodings, as voluntary administrators," the administrator said. The Sydney campuses specialised in teaching IT, language and hospitality courses.

Taylor Woodings said the college's Brisbane campuses, part-owned by Dr Hagare, would remain open for the time being.

"Students have unfortunately been severely impacted by the failure of Sterling College and have had not only their education process suddenly halted, they also face the prospect of a financial loss as most of their tuition fees have been paid in advance," Taylor Woodings said.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/kt4dmd>

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NT: A Smart Territory – Delivering on Education and Training

Paul Henderson, Chief Minister, 22 July 2009

Chief Minister and Education Minister Paul Henderson has unveiled an Education and Training Strategic Plan for the next three years.

"I want every child to leave school with the skills to go to uni, or get an apprenticeship or job," Mr Henderson said.

"This is a practical, commonsense approach which will improve results as part of our plan to be a Smart Territory.

"This is a step by step Plan to better education and training, backed by concrete targets and resources

"Our kids deserve the best education and training – and that's what this Plan delivers."

Read entire release at: <http://tinyurl.com/mwhto9>

Download the plan at: <http://tinyurl.com/kktmse>

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QLD: Bully boot camps - the way to beat school violence?

Greg Stolz, Courier Mail, July 27, 2009

BULLY "boot camps" should be introduced to crack down on rising levels of violence in Queensland schools, says a Gold Coast litigation lawyer. Bruce Simmonds said the Bligh

Government should consider setting up reform schools or boot camps to deal with the worst bullies, or risk even higher compensation claims.

The Gold Coast compensation lawyer said it was time for "drastic measures" because schools were fighting a losing battle. There was too much focus on trying to change the attitudes of bullies and not enough focus on their victims.

"What the state needs to do is bring forward the spectre of reform schools or boot camps, and enact tougher legislation which forcibly removes violent children from school and places them in a reform school environment," Mr Simmonds said.

"This way their victims can study at school in peace, which is their right.

"The bullies have a wake-up call and the knowledge their conduct will not be tolerated."

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/n5fxwq>

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QLD: School chaplain remains despite 'suggestive' online chats

Mark Bode, Sunshine Coast Daily, 28th July 2009

A Pelican Waters couple is outraged the married female chaplain of Golden Beach State School still has a job after exchanging inappropriately personal online messages with their then 12-year-old son.

The couple removed their 10 year old daughter from the primary school at the end of last term after Education Queensland and Scripture Union Queensland – which employs chaplains – allowed Jocelyn Hook to remain in the position.

They are also disturbed over "inappropriate" websites their son, already in high school at the time of the MSN exchanges, learned of through Mrs Hook.

The boy's parents have also questioned Mrs Hook's online relationships with other students after learning she was also messaging them without parental consent.

The boy's parents detailed their concerns to Education Queensland and Scripture Union in written statements. But his father said the extent of Education Queensland's investigation was speaking to the school principal, Greg Ferdinands: despite Scripture Union finding Mrs Hook acted improperly after launching its own investigation.

"I do wonder if this would be brushed off with such a limp wristed answer if the chaplain had been male and he'd been talking to my 12 year old daughter," he said.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/mvos9j>

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QLD: Asbestos in hundreds of schools

Kelmeny Fraser, Sunday Mail, July 26, 2009

ASBESTOS experts have been called to schools more than 100 times in the past 2½ years after vandalism, upgrades or damage to buildings dislodged asbestos materials.

Contamination after building upgrades or repairs were to blame for up to 30 asbestos-related incidents since 2007.

The list includes cases where schools have requested repairs to damaged asbestos walls, floors and ceilings and the clean-up of asbestos debris found on school grounds.

Release of the list, showing the reasons for testing and test results, comes after two asbestos incidents this month, just before school holidays ended.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/mg3o7t>

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QLD: Cash crisis at needy schools in Logan and Ipswich

Paul Weston, Courier Mail, July 26, 2009

MORE than 10 per cent of Queensland state schools are underfunded, many in our fastest-growing areas, a Federal Government review has discovered.

And those schools most in need of more funding are in the state's fastest-growing areas of Wide Bay, Ipswich and Logan, the national index on Special Assistance Schools has found.

According to the index, out of 1250 state primary and secondary schools, 131 have low socio-economic status (SES) and need funds to lift standards.

The review calls for funds to be spent on counsellors and literary advisers to help with the special needs of students in regions facing high unemployment and drug issues. It estimates up to \$500,000-a-year extra could be required at some schools.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/kt2jgf>

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QLD: Migrant students need more literacy assistance

Paul Weston, Sunday Mail, July 26, 2009

MANY Queensland schools fail to provide necessary services to a growing number of migrant children for whom English is a second language, researchers have found. In Logan, south of Brisbane, older primary school pupils are among the poorest performers in English in the state and desperately need educational support, according to a study by the researchers.

The research, called Improving Literacy Outcomes for Samoan-Australian students in Logan, was conducted in the past 18 months. It found an "absence of any planned, systematic, cohesive response" by schools, training institutions and Education Queensland.

Griffith University education lecturer Dr Judith Kearney and her team have found 170 ethnic groups in Logan, of which the Samoan community was the biggest and fastest growing.

The study found many Samoan students would use English as a first language at school then revert to Samoan at home.

Read entire article: <http://tinyurl.com/myhrp9>

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SA: ICAN Initiative to go State Wide

The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, 28 July,

2009

A Rann Government program that helps the State's most troubled young people to get back into learning or earning is being expanded across South Australia over the next four years.

By 2013, up to 8000 young South Australians, including students in Years 6 and 7 for the first time, are expected to benefit annually from the \$30m expansion of the State's Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) initiative.

The expansion is being funded through the Rudd Government's \$1.1 billion Smarter Schools National Partnership with South Australia on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities.

Federal Minister Kate Ellis and Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith today joined with Social Inclusion Commissioner Monsignor David Cappo to announce the State-wide rollout plans.

Minister Ellis says the Federal Government is delighted to contribute funding for the expansion of a program that helps young South Australians to learn or earn.

"As part of the Rudd Government's Compact with Young Australians, we want anyone under the age of 25 to be learning or earning in full time school, training or work," she says.

Read entire release at: <http://tinyurl.com/ks2p8z>

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SA: PPP contract for new schools signed

Mike Rann, Premier, 17 July 2009

Treasurer Kevin Foley says the contract to build six new schools in metropolitan Adelaide as a Public Private Partnership was completed today and that construction on the first of the schools will begin shortly.

Cabinet has approved Pinnacle Education – a consortium of Hansen Yuncken, Spotless, Lend Lease and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia – as the private sector developer of the new schools.

"As a result, site works will begin for the first two schools shortly after final development approvals are given and those schools at Playford North and Taperoo will be ready to open in time for the final school term in 2010," Mr Foley says.

"This represents a massive investment in our public school system and builds on the hundreds of millions of dollars currently being invested in partnership with the Federal Government through the Building the Education Revolution program."

The total value of the deal signed with Pinnacle is \$323 million which includes not only the cost of construction but also the management and maintenance of the schools over a thirty year period.

Read entire release at: <http://tinyurl.com/mcyavp>

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TAS: Labor Shows Leadership in Education

David Bartlett MP, Premier, 26 July 2009

Tasmania will lead Australia across the board in education outcomes for literacy and numeracy

by 2016 the Premier told the ALP State Conference in Hobart today.

"That is a firm commitment."

Mr Bartlett said the Government's leadership on education was already having an impact, showing that a 2016 goal is realistic and achievable.

"Education transforms lives.

"Labor's investment in literacy and numeracy of over \$50 million is starting to show results.

"In the latest round of national testing, our results in Year 3 reading, writing and numeracy placed us among the best in Australia.

"Those are results I want to see replicated and improved across every age group in coming years.

"We are spending the money and making the changes that make that an achievable goal not a dream."

Read entire release at: <http://tinyurl.com/n7lkm8>

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VIC: Students to Shine in State of the Arts School

Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Education, 22 July 2009

Victoria's best budding dancers and musicians will take to the stage and their studies in one of the world's most unique performing arts schools, thanks to a \$20 million Brumby Labor Government investment in education.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike today officially opened the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School (VCASS) for students in Years seven to 12 in Southbank.

"This school is about delivering new and creative buildings to give Victorian students cutting-edge opportunities in education within a world-class government school system," Ms Pike said.

"The VCASS has 200 specially-selected students in its dance and music program, as well as academic students from the Australian Ballet School, Gymnastics Victoria and Diving Victoria.

"This school breaks the mould of what a traditional school should look like and what a school should be, and there is no doubt students will flourish and achieve their dreams in a space where art, design and academia co-exist in a celebration of modern learning.

Read entire release at: <http://tinyurl.com/kjf96x>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Education with Muslims

The National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (NCEIS) Australia, in partnership with the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), is running a series of professional learning/development workshops for Victorian and New South Wales school educators called Education with Muslims.

Following the success of the launch of Education with Muslims: Moving Forward, on 22 May 2009, we have incorporated the overwhelmingly positive feedback and suggestions to present

Education with Muslims: Moving Forward and Engaging Communities, a full day workshop in two parts, with more guest speakers, two panel discussions and two roundtable discussion sessions.

5 August 2009 (9.30am-3.30pm), Melbourne: Education with Muslims: Moving Forward and Engaging Communities,

11 August 2009 (4.00pm-6.30pm), Melbourne: Education with Muslims: Where to My School?

14 August 2009 (9.30am-3.30pm), Sydney: Education with Muslims: Moving Forward and Engaging Communities

11 September 2009 (9.30am-3.30pm), Shepparton: Education with Muslims: Moving Forward and Engaging Communities

Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/nxug7p>

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National Literacy & Numeracy Week

31 August-6 September 2009

The theme for the Week in 2009 is Getting the Basics Right.

NLNW promotes the importance of literacy and numeracy as fundamental life skills and highlights effective literacy and numeracy practices on a national scale.

The week gives schools the opportunity to get involved in a range of activities and to recognise locally the achievements of students and the work of teachers, parents and members of the community who support young people to develop stronger literacy and numeracy skills.

All schools can participate in three exciting NLNW 2009 activities and be in the running for great prizes:

- Reach for the Stars (numeracy mass participation activity)
- National Reading Day (literacy mass participation activity)
- Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards (national awards ceremony).

Encourage your school community to get involved. Terrific ideas, resources and class materials will be available to support teachers and their students to participate in NLNW activities.

NLNW events are also run locally: so check out the State and Territory activities map.

For more information: <http://tinyurl.com/mzesro>

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National Science Week

15-23 August 2009

Plans are underway for the celebration of National Science Week 2009. Schools around the nation will take part in this national festival and it is now time to plan your school's participation.

The schools theme is Astronomy: Science Without Limits - 2009 is the International Year of Astronomy.

This year's National Project: Be An Astronomer

The CSIRO and ABC Science want you to become an astronomer during National Science Week 2009 (15-23 August 2009). Visit the Big Aussie Star Hunt website (coming soon!) and discover where you can find constellations such as the Southern Cross and Scorpio, read stories from Indigenous Australian astronomy, and download a free astronomy program for your computer.

You can also participate in the national light pollution survey. Light pollution is when we use too much lighting outside, or shine lights up into the sky. It confuses wildlife, is a waste of energy and makes it hard to see stars and planets.

State, Territory & School Events – You can find out more about contacts and activities in each part of the country – and also how you can register your school's event online – through these websites:

- Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA): <http://tinyurl.com/mkoza7>
- Official Science Week site: <http://tinyurl.com/nm4f5f>

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flexible.learning@schools

16-18 September, Adelaide Hilton, Adelaide, SA

This is the national conference of the Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools (AADES), the peak professional organization in Australasia representing school level distance education.

One of the challenges for educators is to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of our rapidly changing world. We must address

Changes in how we communicate and work
Changes in how students think and learn
Changes in what is valued as learning

How do we as educators and schools maximise student achievement and how do we know what we are doing is successful?

The conference explores the impact of rapidly changing technology on schools and on learners.

Early bird registration until 31 July.

Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/lregl2>

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International Conference on Primary Education 2009

25-27 November, Hong Kong Institute of Education

In this challenging time, we witness daily the transformation of the international economic system and regularly failed attempts to resolve major international tensions. We live in a world that for some is rich in technological advances but for others cannot provide clean water.

We know that education cannot by itself solve these problems: but we also know that education can prepare a generation of thinkers and problem solvers who can start to address

the problems in a serious way.

A key function of this conference is to provide a platform for professional dialogues and problem solving. The theme is 'The future is theirs: Visions for primary education in the twenty first century' and aims to provide a platform for professional dialogues and problem solving: new ideas to help confront troubling times, new approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, new possibilities for student engagement and an exploration of the values that will be needed to underpin our preferred future.

Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/lqt8rm>

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REMINDERS

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/qrfnoh>

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

16-18 August - ACER Research Conference - Perth, WA - <http://tinyurl.com/leo54l>

18-19 August - Parents Victoria Annual State Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://tinyurl.com/mw5faq>

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

29-30 August - Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Annual State Conference - Burswood, WA - <http://tinyurl.com/nydplr>

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

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

3-4 September - CHERI Annual Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://tinyurl.com/n3wq4y>

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/pcslmo>

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

9-12 November - London International Conference on Education - London, UK - <http://tinyurl.com/ckcrmp>

18-21 November - NAEYC Annual Conference & Expo - Washington DC, USA <http://tinyurl.com/muhe24>

24-26 November - Family Relationship Services Australia National Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://tinyurl.com/lz433t>

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ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://tinyurl.com/d2o8zu> (weekly)
- International News Roundup : <http://tinyurl.com/cswpka> (monthly)
- Values Education : <http://tinyurl.com/dls7rv> (monthly)
- Languages Education : <http://tinyurl.com/c59eda> (monthly)
- Ensemble - Music Education : <http://tinyurl.com/dedyz4> (monthly)
- Family School Partners : <http://tinyurl.com/qvleza> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://tinyurl.com/cy7s78> (quarterly)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acssso.org.au. Details of products, services, events, resources or points of view are provided for information only; publication does not imply endorsement or recommendation. No warranty is provided nor liability accepted by ACSSO, its members or employees.

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