



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 32, 1 September 2009

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BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Primary Schools for the 21st Century

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, 27 August 2009

With the school flag on proud display, I'm very pleased to be here at St Mary's Primary School with my Parliamentary colleagues. I have with me the Minister for Employment Participation, Senator Mark Arbib, I have our Local Member, Alan Griffin just over there and we're joined by the Coordinator General of the Commonwealth who's working on the Government's Economic Stimulus Package.

We're here today to make two important announcements.

First I'm here to announce the successful schools in the third round of the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program. This is the centrepiece of the Building the Education Revolution program.

It's the program that is making such a difference to primary schools around the country like this one. Bringing new resources so people can construct state of the art libraries, multipurpose halls, new classrooms, the educational infrastructure that people have wanted for so long.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/ksn73a>

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Building the Education Revolution

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 28 August 2009

These adjustments are being made within the \$42 billion allocated. There is not one extra dollar of taxpayers' money going into our Economic Stimulus Plan as a result of the adjustments I announced yesterday.

Disappointingly, the Liberal Opposition is using yesterday's announcement to talk down the Building the Education Revolution and modernising Australia's schools. In particular, the Liberal Opposition is trying to pretend to Australians that there are cost blow-outs in the costs of school buildings being provided to primary schools through our Primary Schools for the 21st Century program.

Well this simply isn't true. Our Economic Stimulus Plan has been an outstanding success. Primary Schools for the 21st Century, which is the single biggest element of our \$42 billion Economic Stimulus Plan, is a runaway success.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/l7cx2h>

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Schools funding labelled Government self-promotion

Lateline, ABC TV, 29 August 2009

LEIGH SALES, PRESENTER: The Federal Government is pumping an extra \$1.5 billion into its primary schools infrastructure program and it is determined to make sure everyone knows about it.

It has been revealed schools will be forced to display government promotion signs for the next 18 months. The Opposition is fuming, saying it is a grotesque display of self-promotion designed to coincide with the next federal election and insists the program's funding shortfall is evidence the government has mismanaged the roll-out of its \$42 billion stimulus package.

KIRRIN MCKECHNIE, REPORTER: The Government scrambled to find an extra \$1.5 billion to top up its schools infrastructure program. Don't let Julia Gillard hear it called a blow-out.

JULIA GILLARD, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER: I know the Opposition Leader is there playing politics and calling it a cost blow-out, trying to create in people's mind an image of something costing more than it should. That's not what's happened here.

KIRRIN MCKECHNIE: Instead, the Deputy Prime Minister said it goes to show the program has been a resounding success.

JULIA GILLARD: When we budgeted for this plan we budgeted on the basis that 90 per cent of primary schools would take up our offer. As it has turned out, so many primary schools want to be involved in this highly-successful program, that almost 100 per cent of primary schools have taken the opportunity to source funds through Primary Schools of the 21st Century.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nlr749>

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School signs break election law, says Chris Pyne

Christian Kerr, The Australian, 31 August 2009

EDUCATION Minister Julia Gillard faces fresh problems with claims the signage requirements attached to her schools stimulus scheme could breach state electoral laws.

Guidelines released last week require schools that receive funding under Building the

Education Revolution program to display a government-supplied sign acknowledging commonwealth support, from when construction begins until the end of March 2011 - after the next federal election.

Ms Gillard announced the requirement last Thursday as part of revised guidelines from co-ordinator general Mike Mrdak for the Rudd government's \$16.2billion primary schools building program. The guidelines also include for the first time a "value for money" requirement, compliance with council building laws and involvement of apprentices on building sites.

Many schools are used as polling booths, leading to claims the signs will breach laws prohibiting political advertising near polling booths.

Opposition education spokesman Chris Pyne confirmed yesterday he had written to the Australian Electoral Commission seeking a ruling on the matter.

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

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REGIONAL & RURAL EDUCATION

Changes to Youth Allowance to assist gap year students

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 26 August, 2009

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today announced that following discussions at the Student Roundtable in Canberra, students who have taken a gap year and must move to attend university will be entitled claim independent status for Youth Allowance under the existing system until 30 June 2010.

Ms Gillard met with students from across Australia earlier this week to hear their concerns over changes to the Youth Allowance system designed to make assistance available to more students.

Despite more than 100,000 students being better off as a result of the changes to the parental income test and almost 150,000 students benefiting from new scholarships, some students who had chosen to take a gap year in 2009 would have been disadvantaged during the transition between the two systems.

The changes announced today will mean students who left school in 2008, have taken a gap year this year and who must leave home to attend university will be entitled to apply for independent status under the existing system.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/kkv9tu>

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Gillard backflip does not satisfy the Coalition

Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training, 26 August 2009

Pressure from the Coalition and students has forced Julia Gillard to admit she was wrong on Youth Allowance. However her humiliating back flip still leaves 25,000 students in the cold next year, and fails to fix the long term disadvantage faced by country students, according to Shadow Education Minister Christopher Pyne.

"Julia Gillard has managed a spectacular combination in this morning's announcement. She has humiliated herself by backing down on something she was adamant didn't need fixing. But despite backing down, she still hasn't fixed the problem," said Mr Pyne.

"There are two main problems with Julia Gillard's original changes."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/l4g5nm>

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FUNDING

Private schools 'getting \$2.6b bonus'

ABC News, 29 August 2009

Research by the Greens shows that private schools around the country will receive a combined \$2.6 billion of over-funding.

It shows that 58 per cent of private and Catholic schools are not being paid at the standard rate, with some to receive an extra \$14 million.

New South Wales Greens MP John Kaye says this happened because the Federal Government has absorbed former prime minister John Howard's system of funding, which favoured certain private schools and lacks integrity.

"Their political power to ensure that they don't go backwards means that there's \$2.6 billion that goes out of the education budget into these private schools," he said.

"That's money that should be spent on public education."

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/lez2fl>

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

The literacy question in remote Indigenous Australia

Inge Kral, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU, May 2009

Public commentary commonly attributes blame to inadequate teaching, poor resourcing of remote schools or even lack of parental support for school attendance.

In a recent review of education in the Northern Territory (NT) Dr Chris Sarra, from the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute in Queensland, accused NT educators of expecting less of their Indigenous students and inadvertently creating an underclass (ABC News April 13 2009).

Why? Because the 2008 national English literacy and numeracy benchmarking tests indicated that the NT had some of the highest illiteracy rates in the country.

The literacy debate rarely addresses the critical social and historical factors that also account for why literacy levels among remote Indigenous youth are lower than their mainstream, urban, English-as-a-first-language speaking counterparts.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/mql5b6>

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UN critical of Australian Aboriginal intervention

James Grubel, Reuters, 27 August 2009

A senior United Nations official condemned on Thursday Australia's controversial intervention into remote Aboriginal communities, describing the measures as discriminatory and finding entrenched racism in Australia.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous People, James Anaya, made the findings after a 12-day visit to Australia, where he visited indigenous communities and held talks with the Australian government.

Australia's former conservative government sent police and troops to remote Aboriginal communities in June 2007, and made special bans on alcohol and pornography, to stamp out widespread child sex abuse fueled by chronic alcoholism.

"These measures overtly discriminate against aboriginal peoples, infringe their right of self-determination and stigmatize already stigmatized communities," Anaya told reporters in Canberra. Anaya, the first UN Rapporteur on Indigenous People to visit Aboriginal communities, congratulated Prime Minister Kevin Rudd for his 2008 parliamentary apology to Australia's Aborigines for historical injustices.

But he said it was clear the entrenched racism of the past remained, and the ongoing intervention into communities in the Northern Territory continued to discriminate against Aborigines.

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

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Indigenous kids 'need free pre-school'

AAP, 31 August 2009

All indigenous children should have access to free pre-school education to help close the literacy and numeracy gap, says Save the Children Australia.

Suzanne Dvorak, the group's chief executive, said only 79 per cent of indigenous students living in cities achieved the minimum Year Three reading standard in 2008, 13 per cent less than non-indigenous students.

"Significantly less indigenous students compared to non-indigenous students in all year levels achieved the national minimum standards for reading, writing and numeracy in 2008," Ms Dvorak said.

"In particular, schoolchildren in remote areas face even greater difficulties reaching the minimum education standards."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nb3e7y>

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OPINION

The Partnership for 19th Century Skills

Diane Ravitch, Common Core blog, 6 July 2009

I for one have heard quite enough about the 21st century skills that are sweeping the nation.

Now, for the first time, children will be taught to think critically (never heard a word about that in the 20th century, did you?), to work in groups (I remember getting a grade on that very skill when I was in third grade a century ago), to solve problems (a brand new idea in education), and so on.

Let me suggest that it is time to be done with this unnecessary conflict about 21st century skills. Let us agree that we need all those forenamed skills, plus lots others, in addition to a deep understanding of history, literature, the arts, geography, civics, the sciences, and foreign languages.

But allow me also to propose a new entity that will advance a different set of skills and understandings that are just as important as what are now called 21st century skills.

I propose a Partnership for 19th Century Skills. This partnership will advocate for such skills, values, and understandings as:

- The love of learning
- The pursuit of knowledge
- The ability to think for oneself (individualism)
- The ability to work alone (initiative)

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

Read about Common Core at <http://www.commoncore.org/>

Diane Ravitch is a historian of education, an educational policy analyst, and former United States Assistant Secretary of Education who is now a research professor at New York University's Steinhardt School of Education.

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Schooling and the common good

Jack Keating discusses his new report on education (see Research), Inside Story, 31 August 2009

Education reform is back on the national agenda.

Among the many issues being discussed are the need for a significant improvement in teaching skills and standards and the knotty and persistent problem of entrenched inequity of opportunities and outcomes.

A marked flight away from government secondary schools has been amplified by the previous government's approach to parental choice and funding patterns.

Professor Jack Keating from the University of Melbourne has written a report, *A New Federalism in Australian Education: A Proposal for a National Reform Agenda* (see Research), which argues for a major shift in funding and accountability arrangements across government and non-government schools and between state and federal governments, a new national quality agency and better early childhood education.

Jack Keating summarised the main thrust of his suggestions for Peter Clarke.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nox9hz>

Stream or download the audio at <http://tinyurl.com/moxwrz>

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SCIENCE EDUCATION

Physics teachers not up to scratch: study

Simon Santow, AM ABC Radio, 29 August 2009

In what is likely to be worrying news for many parents, a study of South Australian science teachers has found that only about half of those teaching physics are qualified to do so.

Adelaide's Flinders University surveyed more than 600 teachers in the state.

Professor Martin Westwell, director of the university's Centre for Science Education, says the study found many science teachers did not major in their specialisations at university.

"What we were finding in South Australia and I don't think we will find significant differences elsewhere, was particularly in physics education, that 58 per cent of our teachers who had been asked to teach physics at senior, secondary level, are not qualified to do so," he said.

"What I mean by that is, yes, they've got a teaching degree, but they don't have physics major or an engineering major or anything like that.

"They haven't got the subject's specific expertise to be able to teach that subject. While these teachers are doing the best job that they can, in difficult circumstances of course, we haven't got those physics teachers to go around."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nef74s>

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Government Launches \$2M Program To Promote Science In Schools

Here's Trouble, 31 August 2009

"The federal government will spend \$2 million attempting to turn Australia's high school students into science nerds."

This is the opening paragraph of ninemsn's article on the Australian Government's new \$2 million initiative to improve the participation of year 9 and 10 high school students in science, named STELR – The Science and Technology Education Leveraging Relevance program.

Although the journalist was probably attempting to be funny, his or her choice of phrase to "turn high school students into science nerds" perfectly sums up the anti-intellectual attitudes towards scientific pursuits in Australian society, and exposes the heart of the problem – that image conscious high school students who want to be cool, do not want to be labelled as "science nerds", hence choose not to study science in years 11 and 12, and do not pursue scientific careers.

I praise the Government's initiative as a very positive step. \$2 million is far too little, but any step forward is a good one.

I also praise the decision to target the year 9 and 10 age group as this age group is still young enough to be impressionable, are very conscience about their self image, yet are starting to consider their future after high school.

If this program succeeds, it will allow sufficient time for these students to choose science electives for years 11 and 12.

I wish to suggest some further ways to enhance this initiative:

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

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MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

Chinese Australian student wins Maths Olympiad gold

China View, 28 August 2009

Australia has provided young Hong Kong migrant Sampson Wong with the right environment for him to work to his maximum ability.

Sampson, 16, has recently become one of only a handful of Australians who have won a gold medal at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO).

The year-11 student of James Ruse Agricultural High School in Sydney attributed his success to the freestyle education system in Australia that encouraged him to learn Mathematics as a subject of interest.

"It's not an easy task but I did not feel pressure at the IMO competition," he told Xinhua News Agency.

"And the support from my family, teachers and friends means a lot."

When Sampson was three, the Wong family migrated to Australia. Sampson's father, Jimmy Wong believes a good education system should be tailored more for individual talents, rather than sheer academic results.

"I think Australian education is better for my son as it is focused on students' talents and personal interest," Wong said.

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

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Deputy Prime Minister begins India Trip

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 31 August 2009

The Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, today marked the first day of a trip to cement ties with India by meeting Mr Kapil Sibal, Minister for Human Resource Development, in New Delhi.

In an important step to achieving greater collaboration and a new partnership, the Ministers have agreed to an annual ministerial dialogue on education. Significantly this meeting would also involve university and industry representatives from both countries.

The Indian education system is growing rapidly as a result of government reforms and population growth. This new dialogue creates a major opportunity for Australia and Australian Education institutions to be partners and collaborators in this growing sector.

The Ministers also discussed the circumstances of Indian students in Australia and the Deputy Prime Minister conveyed to Minister Sibal that the Australian Government and the Australian people have zero tolerance for violence and that Australians welcome Indian students.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/konf36>

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Senate Inquiry into Welfare of International Students, established by Greens, visits Melbourne and Sydney

Sarah Hanson-Young MP, 31st August 2009

The scandal around the shameful treatment of international students in Australia has continued to unfold, with dozens of reports surfacing about rip-offs, scams and exploitation.

The Senate Inquiry Senator Sarah Hanson-Young established in June into the welfare of international students is holding hearings this week in Melbourne and Sydney, and is due to report back in November this year.

Of great concern is the fact that the Federal Government has been aware of problems within the international education sector for some time, but thus far has taken a hands-off approach to Australia's third-largest export.

International students are guests in our country, and should be hosted scrupulously – as we would expect of young Australians studying abroad.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/lt9hfw>

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India to open university sector to Australia

Amanda Hodge, The Australian, 1 September 2009

AUSTRALIAN universities could soon be operating on Indian soil after both countries yesterday agreed to put recent rocky relations over Indian student attacks behind them and begin an annual dialogue to increase education links.

On the first official day of a five-day visit to India yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said the two countries had agreed to regular ministerial talks that would involve representatives from Indian and Australian universities and industry on ways to build collaboration.

"It's a very healthy sign and a welcome development to see at the highest levels of Indian government the suggestion of a new partnership on Indian education," Ms Gillard said when asked of plans for Australian campuses in India.

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

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TERTIARY EDUCATION

Uni lecturers prepare to stop work in four states

Kirsty Needham, Brisbane Times, 31 August 2009

UNIVERSITY lecturers across four states will meet this week to approve a national strike on September 16, after ballots of staff showed wide support for industrial action including marking bans that could disrupt exams.

On Friday the Australian Electoral Commission notified the regulator, Fair Work Australia, that staff at the University of NSW had voted to approve 24-hour stoppages, bans on working overtime or using email and a ban on marking and processing exam results.

Staff ballots at the University of Wollongong, Charles Sturt University and the University of New England also showed overwhelming support for a range of industrial action including stoppages and marking bans.

The state secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union, Genevieve Kelly, said the high turnouts - 75 to 85 per cent of staff voted in favour of a 24-hour stoppage - expressed frustration with increasing workloads and a shift towards casual teaching and fixed-term contracts.

She said the quality of education offered to students had suffered as a result.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nlc5l9>

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RESEARCH

New report pushes for bold reform to Australian schooling

Foundation for Young Australians, 22 July 2009

An ambitious new proposal for a national reform agenda for Australian schooling was released on Wed 22 July by Education Foundation (a division of The Foundation for Young Australians)

in collaboration with The R. E. Ross Trust.

Prepared by Professor Jack Keating, the University of Melbourne, the report "A New Federalism in Australian Education" highlights a number of structural weaknesses in Australia's education system and proposes a path towards a cooperative rather than competitive federalist approach to schooling.

Professor Keating said, "At its heart, this report is about tackling some of the root causes of educational inequality. There are enormous social and economic benefits to be gained from a well-implemented reform of our schooling system."

Central to this report is the call for a multi-level, federalist approach to funding that prioritises schools with low completion rates and offers fee relief for low-income families. It recommends additional investment in early childhood education; an acceleration of interventionist programs in the middle years of secondary school to curb school leaving; and a strengthening of upper secondary pathways to further education and training that do not rely solely on academic results.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n57m2w>

Read the full report at <http://tinyurl.com/kqst6o>

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Studies Show that Smaller Schools Do Better than Large Schools

Save Our Schools, 31 August 2009

Small schools do better than large schools on a variety of school variables including student achievement according to a new review of studies on the effects of school size on education. Further, it found that students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds are the major beneficiaries of smaller schools.

The review examined 57 studies conducted since 1990. The studies assessed the impact of school size on a variety of school outcomes, cost efficiency and teachers. The vast majority examined the relationship between school size and various measures of student outcomes. It found that smaller schools were better suited to most purposes.

The review was published in a recent issue of the Review of Educational Research, the journal of the American Educational Research Association. It confirms the conclusion of many earlier studies.

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

Obtain report at <http://tinyurl.com/lq9w67>

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AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

ACT: Proposal to Re-locate the Islamic School Involves Major Policy Contradictions

Trevor Cobbold, Save Our Schools, 23 August 2009

It seems that the Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, and the Minister for Education, Andrew Barr, have got their messages mixed – yet again. The ACT Government's approach to school planning is shown once again to be riven by policy contradictions.

Last week, the Chief Minister announced that the vacant government-owned CIT Horticulture School site in Weston might be used to re-locate the Islamic School of Canberra from its current location on the old Watson High School site. The school has also applied to open a high school. The Chief Minister virtually endorsed the proposal, subject to a community consultation.

In the Chronicle last week, the Minister for Education, Andrew Barr, stated emphatically that it is not government policy to hand over former school sites to private schools. He said that former school sites are publicly owned facilities that will remain in community use.

There are several policy contradictions here that require clarification.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/klteu9>

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ACT: Young Canberrans urged to have their say

Andrew Barr MLA, Minister for Children and Young People, 27 August 2009

Minister for Children and Young People, Andrew Barr today urged young Canberrans to have their say on the draft ACT Young People's Plan 2009-2014.

"The most important job for any community is to ensure children and young people are provided with every opportunity to reach their full potential and to be active members of society," Mr Barr said, handing the first copy of the draft Plan to Youth Advisory Council Chair Kelly Logan.

"The Young People's Plan is the Government's framework for meeting this obligation to the ACT's young people. This is not a responsibility of government alone. To achieve the best outcomes for young people, governments, communities and young people need to work together.

"The Young People's Plan provides us with the roadmap to do this."

The Draft Plan is the result of significant community feedback and targeted consultation sessions on a discussion paper launched in May 2009.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n4f4zr>

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NSW: Digital Education Revolution delivered in NSW

The Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 26 August, 2009

Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard and NSW Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth will today announce the delivery of the first laptops to secondary schools in New South Wales.

The Deputy Prime Minister and the NSW Minister for Education will visit a Year 9 class at

Fairvale High School in Sydney's west to see how the laptops will be integrated into the lesson.

The laptop deliveries signify the roll-out of the Rudd Government's \$2.2 billion Digital Education Revolution to NSW high schools.

Ms Firth said the laptops would revolutionise the nature of education and training and provide students with more access to technology than ever before.

"More than 200,000 devices will be distributed to NSW government school students over the life of this \$386 million program."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/l3n65y>

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NT: More Funding For Territory Schools

Delia Lawrie, Acting Education Minister, 27 August 2009

Acting Education Minister Delia Lawrie today welcomed further Australian Government funding to build new facilities in primary schools across the Territory.

Ms Lawrie said nearly 70 Territory schools would benefit from more than \$70 million in funding as part of the latest round of the Australian Government's Primary Schools for 21st Century program.

"This is fantastic news for government and non-government schools in communities across the Territory – and it's also great news for the Territory's economy," Ms Lawrie said.

"The Australian Government's stimulus package – which includes these infrastructure improvements in our schools – has helped the Territory's economy in the face of the global financial crisis.

"Each project means stimulus for local economies, work for Territory businesses and jobs for Territorians.

"It also means new classrooms, covered learning areas and resource centres and other facilities for our schools."

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

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QLD: Historic School Part of \$60 Million Boost for the Future

The Honourable Geoff Wilson, Minister for Education and Training, August 25, 2009

Education and Training Minister Geoff Wilson today inspected Eimeo Road State School's new solar power panels as part of the school's 75th birthday celebrations.

The panels are part of the Bligh Government's plan to create a greener Queensland through the \$60 million Solar and Energy Efficiency in State Schools program.

Mr Wilson said schools throughout the state were reducing their carbon footprint while they learned as part of the scheme which works in partnership with the Federal Government's National Solar Schools Program.

"As these panels generate electricity for the school, students can download information on how much energy and carbon dioxide has been saved," Mr Wilson said.

"They also help educate students and school communities on the impact of more energy-efficient technology and behaviour change on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in every state school in Queensland."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n62uty>

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SA: SA kids are the focus of new lifestyle program

Minister for Health John Hill, August 26, 2009

The State Government's \$22.3m Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle program for children is about to begin across the State.

Minister for Health John Hill says the OPAL program is all about helping mums, dads and families to be healthy and active.

Minister Hill said team of six co-ordinators have been appointed to help roll out the five-year program, which is aimed at tackling obesity and chronic disease in the community.

"These OPAL Council managers will work with local groups to come up with community wide solutions to these important health issues.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/luw4w4>

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SA: New early learning facility open in Adelaide for children with autism

The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, 31 August, 2009

South Australian children with Autism Spectrum Disorders will benefit from specialist care and attention following the opening of an Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre in Prospect, Adelaide.

Six specialist staff, including a childhood education teacher, psychologist, speech pathologist and occupational therapist, will work alongside five trained childcare workers to provide the best possible learning environment for children aged up to six years old with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The Australian Government will provide \$3.2 million to operate the specialist centre from Anglicare South Australia's Daphne Street Childcare and Specialist Learning Centre.

Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, said it was the first of six autism specific centres to open as part of the Australian Government's commitment to deliver up to 260 Early Learning and Care Centres nationally.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/ny7fyc>

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TAS: Members sought for education and training authority

David Bartlett MP, Premier, 29 August 2009

Expressions of interest are being sought for membership of the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority.

Premier and Minister for Education and Skills, David Bartlett, said the authority provided advice to the State Government on education and training qualifications.

"The authority also manages all assessment, accreditation and registration for senior secondary, vocational education and non-university higher education," Mr Bartlett said.

"Six positions are vacant due to the terms of office of members expiring at the end of the year.

"I'm seeking nominations from people who collectively have experience in or knowledge of higher education, senior secondary education, vocational education and training and industry."

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/l4pols>

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VIC: A showcase for schools in action

Meg Rayner, The Courier, 29 August 2009

"IT is a very exciting time to be in education."

That was the message during Education Minister Bronwyn Pike's visit to Ballarat yesterday.

Ms Pike visited several schools in the region to inspect facilities and make announcements.

She officially opened the Year 7 to 10 East Campus at Ballarat Secondary College in the morning before paying a visit to the Ballarat Specialist School.

"Education is one of this Government's top priorities and we are building an education system for the future by continuing to invest in schools through the biggest rebuilding program in Victoria's history," she said.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/lvomg9>

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VIC: School leaving age to be lifted to 17

Melissa Fyfe, Radio 3AW, 31 August, 2009

Victoria's school leaving age will rise to 17 under legislation to be introduced to Parliament this week, forcing 16-year-old would-be idlers to study for an extra year or find a job.

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike said the new law, to come into effect next year, would encourage young people to stay in the system, giving them better career opportunities.

As part of a national push to stop teenagers from drifting, if 16-year-olds insist on quitting school, the Government will make it mandatory for them to undertake training or get a job.

"We will do everything we can to make sure young people are either in education, training or employment at least up until the age of 17, and beyond, if we can," Ms Pike told The Sunday Age.

Under the law, schools will be responsible for tracking early school leavers to ensure they are in employment or training, or a combination of both, for at least 25 hours a week.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n7vuww>

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VIC: Wireless Access Boost for All Primary Schools

Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Education, 1 September 2009

Classrooms across Victoria will soon surpass the modern office thanks to a \$7 million wireless access point upgrade to all Victorian Government primary schools, the Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike, revealed today while visiting Merri Creek Primary School.

Ms Pike said up to 7,300 wireless access points (WAPs) – delivered to schools this month – are set to boost network coverage and capacity for students who access the web.

“The Brumby Labor Government is taking action to provide schools with access to the very best modern technology,” Ms Pike said.

“We have already delivered on our commitment to connect Victorian government schools to unprecedented broadband speeds through the \$89.3 million VicSmart initiative.

“Schools across the State already enjoy 10-megabits-per-second broadband speeds and these upgrades will help Victoria maintain its leadership in the provision of bandwidth to schools.”

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/na5t6z>

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WA: Community input sought to improve student attendance

Education Minister Liz Constable, 19 August 2009

Education Minister Liz Constable has urged the public to comment on a nine-point draft plan that was unveiled today to improve student attendance in public schools.

Launching the “Better attendance: brighter futures” draft strategy, Dr Constable challenged parents and the wider community to play a greater role in getting children to school.

“This is not just a school problem - the whole community is responsible for children going to school, especially parents, and we in Western Australia are failing in that responsibility,” Dr Constable said.

“Children who do not receive a proper education jeopardise their future prospects of gaining employment and making a positive contribution to society, and are often disadvantaged socially and financially for life.

“This is why I am giving every Western Australian the opportunity to have their say on initiatives which they believe will significantly improve student attendance.”

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nog6qs>

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WA: International parenting program for WA parents

Education Minister Liz Constable, 29 August 2009

As part of the State Government’s focus on addressing student behaviour in schools, an internationally renowned parenting program will be rolled out across Western Australia.

Education Minister Liz Constable today announced that the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) will be offered to parents of three to five-year-olds in country and metropolitan public schools.

“Expansion of the Positive Parenting Program is part of this Government’s multi-pronged strategy, to which we’ve injected an additional \$46million, to teach students how to manage their emotions and behave appropriately,” Dr Constable said.

“Research has shown that improving parenting skills is one of the most practical and cost-effective ways of reducing the incidence of behavioural and conduct problems in children.

“This program will provide parents with a road-map for positive parenting and has been shown to significantly improve parenting skills and child behaviour, as well as reduce parental depression, anxiety and stress.”

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/n5fstn>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Ed Directions

6 October 2009, Masonic Centre, Sydney, NSW

Educating the next generation of web professionals (discounts for Digest readers!)

Developing curricula and training for the next generation of web designers and developers often feels like shooting at a moving target. Best practices are constantly evolving, and difficult to keep track of, while standards seem to constantly emerge and be updated. Browsers upgrade at a seemingly furious pace. As a consequence, it’s a real challenge for education and training to prepare students for the needs of industry by equipping them with the proper foundational knowledge of current best practices and standards.

Ed Directions, a highly focussed, in-depth, whole day symposium, will address this challenge, by helping teachers, trainers, course and curriculum developers, and others in the education field keep abreast with the latest developments in standards and industry best practice, and to develop and deliver the best possible curricula and courses. Workshop Leaders are **Chris Mills** (UK), **Ash Alluri** (Australia) and **Leslie Jensen-Inman** (USA).

If you are involved in developing or delivering education for web designers and developers, whether in the secondary, post secondary, vocational or the commercial sector, this day is for you.

Ed Directions is part of **Web Directions**, Australia's premier conference for web designers and developers. WD organisers have provided a **special rate for Digest readers**: use the discount code "EdEDU" to register for \$299 instead of the regular price of \$450/\$550.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/nmv4pz>

Secondary and tertiary students are also encouraged to attend the main Web Directions conference, and we have a discount for that, too. Use the **discount code** "Student" to register and you'll pay \$250 for two days of inspiration from international speakers and web industry leaders, instead of \$895/\$995. Fulltime student ID is required.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/peeoe5>

There are also some key free **Australian Web Week** events focusing on education, including **WE Rock** (6 October, Darling Harbour), "Short, sharp, entertaining presentations by education and industry experts on the state of education for web professionals" (<http://tinyurl.com/m4z5cu>), and **Web Futures - Careers on the Web** (7 October, Sydney University), "A web careers and ideas seminar for post secondary students featuring leading international experts from Mozilla, the W3C and Opera Software" (<http://tinyurl.com/l2kk17>).

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Anti Poverty Week

11-17 October 2009

Anti Poverty Week is concerned with poverty around the world, especially in the poorest countries but also in wealthier countries such as Australia. Last year, at least 1,000 organisations around Australia participated in more than 350 activities during the Week, with a total participation of more than 10,000 people.

The main aims of Anti-Poverty Week in Australia are to:

- strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and within Australia;
- encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including action by individuals, communities, organisations and governments.

A wide range of organisations have been encouraged to develop their own goals, proposals and activities for Anti-Poverty Week. APW is especially keen to encourage organisations to arrange activities at local or regional levels. You are encouraged to register an event to help promote your concerns about poverty and hardship. You can register your event directly on the APW website.

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

Register your event at <http://tinyurl.com/kvskdb>

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National Conference for Teachers of English & Literacy

4-7 July 2010, Burswood Entertainment Complex, Perth, WA

The conference title is aWay with Words: exploring the ambiguities in literacy and English education.

Several outstanding international speakers will deliver plenary addresses at the conference,

which will also include presentations by high profile national academics and teacher educators, teachers, authors and students.

The program consists of three and a half days of plenary and keynote presentations and a diverse range of concurrent workshops. The professional program will be complemented by social activities including a welcome reception, a conference dinner dance, a literary breakfast, farewell drinks and other formal and informal activities.

The Conference Committee invites teachers of English and literacy, school leaders, education authority representatives, teacher educators and literacy consultants from Australia and overseas to attend what will be one of the most significant events on the education calendar for 2010.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/ln6xjm>

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REMINDERS

31 August-6 September - National Literacy & Numeracy Week - <http://tinyurl.com/mzesro>

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

2 September - Indigenous Literacy Day - <http://tinyurl.com/ksfyv4>

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

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

11 September - Education with Muslims: Moving Forward and Engaging Communities - Shepparton, VIC - <http://tinyurl.com/nxug7p>

11-12 September - Future Directions in Literacy Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://tinyurl.com/n8ldcx>

16-18 September - flexible.learning@schools - Adelaide, SA - <http://tinyurl.com/lregl2>

26-27 September - NSW Computer Education Group State Conference - Stanhope Gardens, NSW - <http://tinyurl.com/ludqwh>

26-28 September - ACEL International Conference - Darwin, NT - <http://tinyurl.com/pgf6cc>

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

11-17 October - Anti-Poverty Week - <http://tinyurl.com/rbnlxh>

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

20 October - Symposium: Building school partnerships with commerce & industry - Melbourne, VIC - <http://tinyurl.com/m6r5mb>

24-25 October - Asian Conference on Education - Osaka, Japan - <http://tinyurl.com/lahwja>

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>

25-27 November - International Conference on Primary Education 2009 - Hong Kong -
<http://tinyurl.com/lqt8rm>

9-10 April - National Coalition against Bullying Conference - Melbourne, VIC -
<http://tinyurl.com/m78qyt>



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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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