



# 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 36, 29 September 2009

- [COMMONWEALTH-STATE FOCUS: Ministerial Council \(MCEECDYA\)](#)
- [MAJOR NATIONAL EVENT: Music Count us In 2009](#)
- [PUBLICATIONS FOR PARENTS: Adproofing Your Kids](#)
- [COMPETITIONS: SunRice's Children Helping Children](#)
- [INDIGENOUS EDUCATION: \(2 items\)](#)
- [OPINION: Think very carefully about the options: Brian J. Caldwell](#)
- [OPINION: Why it's easier to pick a school in the UK than Oz: Tony Taylor](#)
- [OPINION: What's Next? 21 Ideas for 21st Century Learning: Charles Leadbeater](#)
- [IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY: Reflections from the Scottish Teacher Scheme](#)
- [PRIZES & AWARDS: \(2 items\)](#)
- [HEALTH & WELL-BEING: \(3 items\)](#)
- [RESEARCH: Study shows staying at school key to success in job search](#)
- [DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION: Microsoft offers massive student discounts on Windows 7](#)
- [MATHEMATICS EDUCATION: Maths drain subtracts top talent](#)
- [INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: \(2 items\)](#)
- [AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES: \(14 items\)](#)
- [CONFERENCES & EVENTS: Beyond Beliefs](#)
- [REMINDERS](#)
- [ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS](#)

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### COMMONWEALTH-STATE FOCUS

#### Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA)

*Communiqué, 28 September 2009, Brisbane*

Meeting today in Brisbane, Ministers continued to progress reforms aimed at Closing the Gap in Indigenous education, improving the quality of early childhood education and care and improving the quality of teaching and schooling across the country.

Education Ministers agreed to take forward an Indigenous Education Action Plan to drive improvement through the key areas of readiness for school; attendance; school leadership and quality teaching; literacy and numeracy; parental and community engagement and pathways to real employment opportunities.

Ministers agreed that the school transparency measures will help establish an evidence base and a clear line of sight between the targets that have been set and the measures that are working.

The Indigenous Education Action Plan captures the national effort towards achieving the targets set by all governments to Close the Gap between the outcomes of Indigenous Australians and other Australians.

Ministers agreed to engage Indigenous leaders and stakeholders in the preparation of the final version of the Indigenous Education Action Plan.

All Ministers are committed to supporting high quality teaching and school leadership. Ministers

recognised that teacher quality is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and achievement and that improving teacher quality requires both school leadership from principals and new approaches to teacher recruitment, retention and reward.

Ministers today agreed to the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership.

Read entire Communiqué:

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_090929\\_080506.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_090929_080506.aspx)

[< top >](#)

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## MAJOR NATIONAL EVENT

### Music Count us In 2009

Can we count you in for Australia's biggest school community music event? We are counting down to Thursday 22 October 2009. It's on again and approaching fast!

At least a thousand schools and communities in all parts of the country are working happily towards the culminating day: Thursday 22nd October 2009 at 12 noon AEDT. Thanks to the Australian Government for continuing its support for this national school music initiative.

"Music Count us In" is more than just a day – it's an exciting and rewarding musical journey that brings together all the members of a school community – students, teachers, families – a shared journey starting now – and going forward from here - forever.

Best of all – every support resource that schools and teachers need has been developed and set up for online access - and everything can be downloaded free from the national Website!

Full details, registration and everything else: <http://www.musiccountusin.org.au>

[< top >](#)

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## PUBLICATIONS FOR PARENTS

### Adproofing Your Kids

*Tania Andrusiak & Daniel Donahoo, Finch Publishing*

Like many parents, Tania and Daniel were concerned about how to counter the deluge of marketing messages directed at their own two children. The main aim of their book is to help parents teach their children how to think critically about the values being suggested to them through marketing and advertising in all its forms.

It won't be a surprise to you that, through their research, the authors have found that parents want practical advice on how to address issues at home like:

- violence in movies, TV and computer games
- junk food advertising and health
- the impact of sexualised images on childhood
- how to protect a child's body image
- online media – how to protect kids in cyberspace.

Adproofing Your Kids has been endorsed by Julie Gale, the Director of Kids Free 2B Kids who writes: 'Parents need as much help as possible to deal with the manipulative and exploitative practice of advertising and marketing to children...Adproofing Your Kids gives parents timely and

important guidance and loads of great practical advice.'

The book is available from bookshops nationally and online at [http://www.finch.com.au/html/s01\\_home/home.asp](http://www.finch.com.au/html/s01_home/home.asp)

*Tania Andrusiak is a former advertising professional and journalist; Daniel Donahoo is an author and commentator on child and family policy.*

[< top >](#)

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## COMPETITIONS

### **SunRice's Children Helping Children schools competition:**

*Support UNICEF's international program and share in \$100,000 prize pool!*

By joining SunRice's Children Helping Children schools competition, Australian primary school children and their friends and families can also help make a difference, simply by collecting the blue UNICEF logos from specially marked SunRice packs from 19 October 2009 until 30 November 2009.

To take part in the competition, primary schools need to register online and collect blue UNICEF logos from selected SunRice products.

SunRice is helping to make a difference by joining forces with UNICEF Australia to support a program in the Pacific Islands to help prevent children dying from preventable diseases. We are working together on immunisation programs that cover 900,000 children across 14 economically disadvantaged countries.

The competition has a \$100,000 prize pool, which includes a first prize of \$20,000 cash and a swimming clinic with SunRice brand ambassador and triple Olympic gold medalist Stephanie Rice for the winning primary school.

Full details of the program, including support resources for schools and parents, can be found at <http://www.sunricedifference.com.au> .

[< top >](#)

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## INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

### **We can – we must – and we shall!**

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, Speech to "Stronger Smarter Summit" 28 September 2009*

I'm not going to rattle off all the well known statistics that show how we are letting Indigenous kids down by failing to give them a world class education. Today is not a day to continue wringing our hands. Today is not a day to shirk responsibilities and wonder who is at fault.

If Indigenous kids in this nation aren't getting a fair go that's our fault, the fault of the adults in this nation whose job it is to make sure they do – it's the fault of the governments, the bureaucrats, the local communities, the schools, the teachers and the parents who let these kids down.

And today is not a day to seek comfort in old negative mindsets.

Today as we commence this Summit, we should be guided by the words of three leaders.

First President George Bush who said to the 2004 Republican Convention: "In northeast Georgia, Gainesville Elementary School is mostly Hispanic and 90 per cent poor. And this year,

90 per cent of its students passed tests in reading and maths. The Principal expresses the philosophy of his school this way, 'We don't focus on what we can't do at this school, we focus on what we can do. And we do whatever it takes to get kids across the finish line.' See this Principal is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations."

Second, let's be guided by the words of President Barack Obama who challenged his nation and the world with the simple but powerful phrase 'yes we can'.

And third, let's be challenged by the words of another important leader – our Chris Sarra – who seeks to inspire us every day with the words 'we can do this' – we can as a nation ensure that Indigenous kids get a world class education.

Today, at this Summit let's say to ourselves and each other that we won't succumb to the belief that it's too hard, that there is some inevitability about Indigenous kids being at the back of the class.

We will reject the 'soft bigotry of low expectations'. We will set high expectations for the achievement of Indigenous children.

We can do this, we will do this.

Read entire speech: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Pages/default.aspx>

Read more about the Summit: <http://www.strongersmartersummit.qut.edu.au/>

[< top >](#)

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## **Stronger Smarter Learning Communities**

*Julia Gillard & Chris Sarra Press Conference 28 September 2009*

JULIA GILLARD: Can I say it's a great pleasure for me to be here today in Queensland with Chris Sarra and here at the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities conference.

We're here today to talk about a new focus for the education of Indigenous students. We're here today because we know we can make a difference for Indigenous children. We want to set high expectations. We want Indigenous children to succeed.

For too long the nation has succumbed to a sense that there is something inevitable about Indigenous kids ending up at the back of the class. We want to break away from those negative mindsets.

I'm here today with Chris Sarra to say we can change Indigenous education, we can set high expectations for Indigenous students, we can ensure that Indigenous kids succeed at school.

The Government has a major reform agenda in schooling underway. We want that major reform agenda to make a difference for Indigenous students.

Today at the ministerial council in Brisbane we will be talking about an Indigenous Education Action Plan. It will work with our reform agenda.

Particularly, it will work with our new transparency measures, so when we see schools educating large numbers of Indigenous students doing well, we can share the best practice from those schools. When we see schools who educate large numbers of Indigenous children doing badly, we can step in, in a spirit of partnership to make a difference.

And today I am very pleased to announce that we will be providing funds to the institute and to the program that Chris leads.

CHRIS SARRA: Thanks, Julia. The Stronger Smarter Summit symbolises a tipping point in our country beyond which there can be no place for any educator with low expectations of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in schools. Not in any jurisdiction, not in any school, not in any classroom that we have.

The tide has changed and it's now time for hard work and time to let the results flow.

Read entire transcript:

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article\\_090928\\_163400.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_090928_163400.aspx)

[< top >](#)



[< top >](#)

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## OPINION

### Think very carefully about the options and appropriate good practice models...

*Brian J. Caldwell, SCOPE, 28 September 2009*

Parents recently received a letter explaining how well their children performed on the national tests of literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN). This followed release of results for 2009 and league tables that ranked the performance of states and territories. Overall there was little difference from 2008 apart from small gains in grammar and punctuation for students in Year 3.

Federal education minister Julia Gillard immediately claimed credit, as reported in *The Age* of 12 September: "I think we are already seeing the benefits of (our) education revolution but, of course, to drive major changes in schools and school quality ... is going to take time". Gillard is dead wrong on cause-and-effect links with the 'education revolution' but correct to note that education reform takes time.

Julia Gillard can take credit for one important decision and that is the appointment of Dr Peter Hill to serve as the first chief executive of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Agency (ACARA). Hill is a pre-eminent authority in the field world-wide. He served as head of a curriculum and assessment body and head of a state system of education in Australia before his appointment as professor of educational leadership and deputy dean of education at the University of Melbourne. Over the last decade he has been head of research and development at the National Centre on Education and the Economy in the United States and secretary general of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. Along with Professor Barry McGaw, chair of ACARA, who was head of the education division at OECD for several years, Australia has a leadership team that few if any nations can match.

However, McGaw and Hill will need to negotiate a political and educational minefield in the

months ahead, as illustrated by the news from two other countries that should send shivers down the spines of those, including Julia Gillard, who have regarded them as benchmarks of good practice. These concern the publication of league tables and report cards on school performance in England and New York respectively.

Read entire article: <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/pdf/caldwell090928.pdf>

*Brian Caldwell is managing director of Educational Transformations and professorial fellow at the University of Melbourne where he was dean of education from 1998 to 2004. He is co-author of Why not the Best Schools published by ACER Press in 2008. SCOPE (Strategic Commentary on Policy in Education) is published by Educational Transformations Pty Ltd*  
<http://www.educationaltransformations.com.au/>

[< top >](#)

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## **Why it's easier to pick a school in the UK than Oz**

*Tony Taylor, Crikey, 28 September 2009*

... the UK's Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) publishes detailed reports of the regular evaluations of all schools and these reports can be very easily found on the Ofsted site, arranged by category, by school name, by area and even by postcode. In these reports you will find measured and professionally-based comments on all curriculum matters, with a careful outline of the good – and the bad – together with suggested strategies for improvement.

In contrast, information about Victorian government schools can only be found by looking at individual school websites (if they exist at all) or the school annual reports on the departmental website (brief, bland and unhelpful).

My students, all budding teachers looking for frank external assessment of potential employers, with some of them actual parents looking for the real lowdown on what goes on in a school, had no doubt about which system they preferred: Ofsted won hands down.

Read more at <http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/09/28/gillards-plan-to-make-school-info-public-its-not-about-winners-and-losers/>

*Tony Taylor teaches and researches at Monash University.*

[< top >](#)

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## **What's Next? 21 Ideas for 21st Century Learning**

*Charles Leadbeater, UK Innovation Unit, 29 September 2009*

Charles Leadbeater was invited to visit and observe schools (including Bridgemaury, Cramlington, Darlington Education Village, Eastfeast, Winsford and Yewlands) in The Innovation Unit's Next Practice in Education programme. The result is a fascinating glimpse of how the most innovative of our schools are developing new and successful approaches to adjust to the conditions of the 21st century.

Leadbeater asks: how can we build on the most radical innovations in today's schools to create a new approach to learning fit for the century to come?

He argues that the current approach to educational reform is running out of steam. Improvements in results have reached a plateau. Educational inequality remains stubbornly high. But some 'next practices' in innovative schools indicate a fresh approach which energises learners and teachers alike.

What's Next? makes 21 recommendations to create an approach centred on children learning

with, as well as from, teachers at schools that would feel smaller and offer more personalised learning. But just as important, Leadbeater sees relationships for learning embracing the family, workplace and community as well as the school as centres for learning

Further information: <http://www.innovation-unit.co.uk/about-us/publications/whats-next.html>

[< top >](#)

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## IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY

### Reflections and learnings from the Scottish Teacher Scheme

*Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, ACER E-News, 25 September 2009*

One of the most influential factors in students' learning is the knowledge, judgement and skill of their teachers. A recent paper by ACER Principal Research Fellow Dr Lawrence Ingvarson in Professional Development in Education reviews the Scottish Chartered Teacher Scheme in the light of international interest in policies designed to promote teacher quality.

The Scottish Chartered Teacher Scheme emerged in 2001, designed to recognise and reward teachers who attained high standards of practice. The scheme aimed to attract and retain effective teachers, and to ensure all teachers continue to engage in effective professional learning.

Some key features of the Scottish scheme include:

- Those gaining chartered teacher status receive a pay rise of about 20 per cent.
- The standards-based professional learning is of a very high quality. Gaining chartered teacher status calls for a major commitment of time, effort and money from teachers.
- Chartered teacher status is portable – not tied to a particular position or job with a particular school.

Dr Ingvarson said the teaching profession in countries like Australia and Scotland is still not fully comfortable with the idea of better pay for better teaching, rather than better pay for extra jobs.

Read entire article: [http://www.acer.edu.au/enews/0909\\_ingvarson.html](http://www.acer.edu.au/enews/0909_ingvarson.html)

[< top >](#)

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## PRIZES & AWARDS

### Schools First

The National Australia Bank "Schools First" initiative announced that they received 1555 applications in Year One. In 2009, there will be 68 local awards at \$50,000 each, eight of which will go on to be awarded a state/territory award which receives a total of \$100,000 each. One outstanding school-community partnership will be judged the national winner and receive an award valued between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

The 20 **Seed Funding Award** winners for 2009 were announced on 7 September. Full list with project descriptions is at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-2009-awards-winners/index.phps>.

The **Local Impact Award** winners in ACT, NT, SA & WA were announced on 24 September, see <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-2009-awards-winners/impact-awards.phps>. The other state winners will be announced 13 October.

The **State Impact Award** winners in each state/territory will be announced between 22 and 29 October.

Read the full schedule of winner announcements at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/stories/announcement-of-schools-first-award-winners.phps>.

Read more at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/>

[< top >](#)

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## **Dorothea MacKellar Poetry Awards 2009**

The winners of the annual Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards, the oldest and largest poetry competition for school students in Australia, have been announced.

The poetry awards aim to capture the imagination of students, inspiring them to express their thoughts creatively through poetry. It is a unique national event, giving Australia's young people a voice and an opportunity to strive for excellence in literature.

The awards are hosted by the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society based in Gunnedah, north-west NSW and supported by the Australian Government.

The theme this year marks a change from past years in more ways than one. As the competition moves totally online, we invite students to look further than usual.

"Searching for Stars" contrasts to our earlier themes relating to this vast land, its rivers, oceans, fauna, flora and people. Chosen to coincide with the International Year of Astronomy, it evokes images of spaces above and beyond us, of heroes and role models and even television stars.

Full details of the 2009 winners and their poetry at [http://www.dorothea.com.au/index.cfm?page\\_id=1083](http://www.dorothea.com.au/index.cfm?page_id=1083)

[< top >](#)

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## **HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

### **Cyber-bullying: a challenge in the digital age**

*Annabel McGilvray, ABC Health & Well-being, 17 September 2009*

Being digitally connected around the clock brings huge benefits for many of us, but for an increasing number of children this new connectedness also brings with it the frightening world of 24/7 bullying.

Cyber-bullying is the official title given to the bullying that occurs via electronic technology: on the internet via online tools such as email, MySpace, Bebo or Facebook, or with the help of mobile technology, such as the mobile phone.

The old-fashioned practice of picking on someone who can't fight back has turned into SMS harassment or 'flaming', social network shaming, cyber stalking and chatgroup exclusion.

The most comprehensive research to date, the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS), released in May, suggests 10 per cent of students in years 4 to 9 have been victims of cyber bullying. That number is increasing, reports the study, and the older students are, the more likely they were to have had some connection to the 'behind the screens' bullying.

But research by the Australian Catholic University suggests the number of young people being bullied may be much higher, given that many children won't report it for fear of losing access to the technology.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/health/thepulse/stories/2009/09/17/2679508.htm>

[< top >](#)

---

### **Steroid use putting body conscious teens at risk**

*Mark Russell, Brisbane Times, September 20, 2009*

Body image has become so important that teenage boys are prepared to risk their health by taking steroids if it helps to make them appear more attractive, says clinical psychologist Rita Princi. She says boys are using steroids possibly taken from older brothers or parents, or ordered over the internet.

A body image specialist at Flinders University's school of psychology, Marika Tiggemann, was not aware of any recent research estimating the number of young boys using steroids. "But the suggestions are that more younger people are taking steroids," she said.

University of Sydney child health researcher Jenny O'Dea said she conducted a 2002 study that found teenage boys had started using steroids or buying pills from a gym or drug dealer to "bulk up", not knowing what the tablets were.

The Melbourne doctor Rick Kausman, who specialises in weight and eating issues, said he was not surprised teenage boys were using steroids. "What I am seeing is more boys in distress around their body image," Dr Kausman said. "There's a shift towards doing gym to make my body look better compared to doing gym to be fit for footy."

The misuse of anabolic steroids can cause cardiac, liver and renal problems and lead to severe mood swings.

Read entire article: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/lifestyle/steroid-use-putting-body-conscious-teens-at-risk-20090920-fwqx.html>

[< top >](#)

---

### **Girl violence on the rise – with links to cyber-bullying**

*Margaret Wenham, Courier Mail, September 23, 2009*

Queensland University of Technology School of Justice Professor Kerry Carrington said yesterday she believed there was a direct link between cyber bullying and rising rates of adolescent girls' violence.

Prof Carrington said her global research encompassed a range of international and Australian studies and data, notably the collection of 47 years of youth delinquency statistics from NSW. Over that 47 years, the ratio of delinquent girls to boys had gone from one in 14 to one in five, "so you have (had) a trebling of the rates of female delinquency".

A range of solutions needed to be developed to combat the trend, Prof Carrington said, including new educational programs about female violence and greater regulation of cyber space and its usage.

Read entire article: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0%2C27574%2C26112509-3102%2C00.html>

[< top >](#)



[< top >](#)

---

## RESEARCH

### Study shows staying at school key to success in job search

*ABC News, 25 September 2009*

A study has found there are major social and economic benefits from keeping students in school until the end of year 10.

The Treasury Department study shows people are 20 per cent more likely to find a job if they have finished year 10.

It says staying at school at least that long affects a student's ability to find a job twice as much as going to university or TAFE.

New South Wales Education Minister Verity Firth says today's findings are backed up by other studies. "So all of this research is one of the reasons we did pass landmark legislation here in New South Wales," she said.

New South Wales lifted the school leaving age to 17 earlier this year. All states and territories have agreed to do the same.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/25/2696122.htm>

[< top >](#)

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## DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION

### Microsoft offers massive student discounts on Windows 7

*Shaun Nicholas & Brett Winterford, 21 September 2009*

Microsoft has announced that it will be offering a discounted version of its Windows 7 operating system for students.

In the US, eligible students are being offered the Student Edition for US\$30 - which is a similar price to what Apple Mac users are paying to upgrade to the new Snow Leopard operating system.

To qualify for the discount, students must be attending a registered and approved college or university, have a valid student email address at the educational institution and have a PC that will run Windows 7.

The exact pricing for the Australian region will not be made available until October 22. But if US and UK pricing is any guide, it should not differ too wildly from the thirty dollar mark.

The company plans to release Windows 7 worldwide on 22 October. The release will be the first major Windows overhaul since the 2007 release of Windows Vista.

Source: <http://www.crn.com.au/News/156335,microsoft-offers-massive-student-discounts-on-windows-7.aspx>

[< top >](#)

---

## **MATHEMATICS EDUCATION**

### **Maths drain subtracts top talent**

*Miki Perkins, The Age, September 29, 2009*

THE "disastrous" state of maths education in Australia has led to a slump in the percentage of graduates with a major in maths or statistics and the flight of the country's best mathematical minds to other countries.

It has also limited the country's research capabilities and left many teachers without sound mathematical knowledge, argues the head of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, Jan Thomas.

"Australia has gone from having mathematics education in schools that had some problems but gave most students at least a chance, to one where access to a decent mathematics education is largely determined by where you live and parental income," Ms Thomas writes in the October issue of Australasian Science Magazine.

Read more at <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/maths-drain-subtracts-top-talent-20090928-g98b.html>

[< top >](#)

---

## **INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

### **International students to have say on education sector**

*Bonny Symons-Brown, Sydney Morning Herald, September 23, 2009*

International students will be able to air grievances about higher education in Australia after the federal government called for advice on improving the embattled sector.

Education Minister Julia Gillard last month asked former Liberal MP Bruce Baird to conduct a review of the \$15.5 billion international education industry.

Mr. Baird released his issues paper, which looks at the effectiveness of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000, on Wednesday.

The paper identifies key areas affecting education quality and the experiences of international students in Australia.

It notes that the ability of consumer protection mechanisms to support students' interests is questionable.

Read entire article: <http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-national/students-to-have-say-on-education-sector-20090923-g1w0.html>

[< top >](#)

---

### **National review of international education suggests limits on enrolments**

*Dan Harrison, Sydney Morning Herald, September 24, 2009*

COLLEGES could face limits on how many foreign students they enroll, or how many students they take from a single country, under possible changes to the laws governing Australia's \$15 billion international education industry.

The proposals are floated in an issues paper released yesterday as part of a review of the industry's legal framework being conducted by the former Liberal MP Bruce Baird.

The paper says that "a heavy concentration of international students, particularly from a single country" could lead to a poorer student experience, and the review was an opportunity to consider whether a "regulatory mechanism for ensuring diversity" would be desirable.

Glenn Withers, the chief executive of Universities Australia, said a lack of diversity in the student body was not often a problem for universities, but that the problems in other parts of the industry had the potential to do damage to Australia's reputation as a study destination.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/limits-suggested-on-foreign-students-20090923-g2pu.html>

[< top >](#)

---

## **AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES**

### **ACT: Unions, preschool teachers raise qualification concerns**

*ABC News, Sep 21, 2009*

The ACT Education Department and unions are meeting concerned preschool teachers today about their qualifications and the change-over to longer operating hours.

Up to 20 per cent of preschool teachers in the ACT are expected to be affected by new federal qualification standards requiring them to have four-year university degree specialising in early childhood by 2013.

Some older teachers fear they will be forced to return to study or to leave the preschool system.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/21/2691412.htm>

[< top >](#)

---

### **NSW: Further consultation and trial on plans to dilute special needs teaching**

*Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, September 18, 2009*

A PLAN to dilute the expertise of special education teachers so they can be spread more thinly across an increasing number of children with disabilities has been put on hold.

The NSW Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth, said she would extend the consultation period for the proposed changes until the middle of next year. The initiative will be trialled in some schools next year.

The decision follows the Herald's recent report about the concerns of principals and teachers that funding for students with autism and mental health disorders would be capped for the next three years at 2009 levels. The Government had planned to allocate school grants based on the prevalence of disorders in the wider community and no longer according to the number of individual students.

Schools now attract funding of up to \$6000 for each child with low-level special needs. Children with severe needs will continue to attract at least \$6000 under the proposed changes.

Under the education department's plan, teachers would no longer specialise in reading and language, autism or behavioural difficulties. They would be expected to cover a broader range of special needs after undergoing 110 hours of online learning.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/firth-postpones-revamp-of-special-needs-teaching/2009/09/17/1252780407116.html>

[< top >](#)

---

## **NSW: Rural MP supports proposed new truancy laws**

*ABC News, 23 September 2009*

The state MP for Barwon, Kevin Humphries, says the New South Wales Government has acknowledged the problem of school truancy needs a more comprehensive approach.

The Government is introducing new laws that focus on the causes of school non-attendance and gives more power to the courts that will include rehabilitation programs and counselling for families.

Mr Humphries has long been an advocate for changes to the laws governing truancy that would include a "whole social" framework approach.

He says the Government has had its head in the sand regarding the problem for some time.

"Many of these kids are two and three years behind their peers," he said.

Read entire article:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/23/2694235.htm?site=newengland>

[< top >](#)

---

## **NSW: TAFE cuts will cost \$20b in revenue**

*Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, September 29, 2009*

VOCATIONAL education has been so starved of funding by the NSW Government that our international reputation is at risk and the economy will miss out on \$20 billion in revenue, analysis shows.

The Government has cut funding in relative terms to TAFE more than any other state or territory, despite having the largest population and more than 500,000 students and 5000 full-time teachers.

Recurrent funding for vocational education and training, unadjusted for inflation, increased by 13.6 per cent in NSW compared with 80.7 per cent in Victoria, 43.7 per cent in Queensland and 60.4 per cent in Western Australia between 1997 to 2007.

Peter Kell, the academic who led the TAFE Futures inquiry in 2006, has warned that Australia's underinvestment in vocational education has undermined its international reputation and taken its toll on an ageing workforce and infrastructure, forcing increases in student fees.

He said students in Hong Kong were being told to go to the US instead of Australia.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/tafe-cuts-will-cost-20b-in-revenue->

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## **NT: Anger at delay on indigenous boarding schools**

*Natasha Robinson, the Australian, September 24, 2009*

ABORIGINAL leaders in East Arnhem Land are angry at Labor's failure to progress its plans to build a boarding school to educate indigenous children living in some of the most remote corners of the country. East Arnhem Land had been named as one of four regions on a federal government shortlist to receive one of three boarding schools promised before the 2007 election.

But plans to build the schools are still in the early stages, with Education Minister Julia Gillard saying consultations are occurring in the shortlisted regions and that no building will go ahead unless there is strong community support.

The government committed \$43.9 million over four years towards building the schools after its election promise. The money is supposed to be spent from this year.

A spokeswoman for Ms Gillard said yesterday that consultations had begun in East Arnhem Land late last year about a potential boarding school.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26117113-5013871,00.html>

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## **NT: Bilingual education 'a scapegoat' for inadequate resourcing:**

*Gina Marich, ABC News, 25 September 2009*

Opponents of the Northern Territory Government's policy on cutting bilingual education say it is gambling with Indigenous children's futures.

The Government is making schools teach the first four hours of classes in English, putting an end to 30 years of support for bilingual education.

A group made up of church and community leaders, scholars and non-government organisations has sent letters to Federal and Territory politicians.

The group says all the evidence suggests bilingual education is the best way for Indigenous children who speak their native language at home to learn English.

The group's representative, Bishop Gregory Thompson, says underfunding, not bilingual education, is to blame for poor outcomes in remote Aboriginal schools.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/25/2696894.htm>

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## **QLD: No sprinklers for schools despite arson attacks**

*News.com.au, September 21, 2009 (AAP)*

THE Queensland Government has rejected a call for sprinklers to be fitted in all schools.

A fire destroyed three historic buildings at Silkstone State School in Ipswich yesterday.

It was the fourth fire at a Queensland state school in recent weeks, with an arson attack at Browns Plains High School in Brisbane late last week and fires last month that destroyed buildings at Sandgate High School in Brisbane and at Trinity Bay High in Cairns.

Ipswich councillor Paul Tully said all schools should be fitted with sprinkler systems, because it would be cheaper than rebuilding classrooms in the long run.

Mr Tully said barely a school holiday went by without a school fire somewhere in Queensland.

But Acting Premier Paul Lucas said fitting all school buildings in Queensland with fire sprinklers would be expensive and would do little to prevent further fires.

Read entire article: <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,27574,26103636-29277,00.html>

[< top >](#)

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### **QLD: Qld Govt to publish asbestos in schools register**

*ABC News, 28 September 2009*

The Queensland Government's register of asbestos in state schools will be published online.

Education Minister Geoff Wilson says it will list areas in schools where building materials may contain asbestos and it will be updated during each school term.

Asbestos has been found in flooring, roofing and play areas like ovals at Queensland schools.

Mr Wilson says the State Government has appointed former Master Builders president John Gaskin to review its asbestos identification and removal procedures.

"We believe the safety practices are strong and robust but we're taking no chances," Mr Wilson said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/28/2698024.htm>

[< top >](#)

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### **SA: ICAN school retention program expansion plan**

*Hon Jane Lomax-Smith MP, SA Education Minister, 22 September 2009*

The Rann Government's plan to roll out the highly successful ICAN school retention program across South Australia has been detailed today in State Parliament.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith joined with Federal Minister Kate Ellis in July to announce the Australian Government would fund a \$30m expansion of the initiative.

Dr Lomax-Smith says a three-year roll out schedule has been developed to take the Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) to more regions of the State.

"We know that this initiative works well. Since the beginning of 2005, it has achieved an average 80% success rate in keeping young people in learning or earning. Considering these students have either dropped out of school, training or work altogether or are on the verge of dropping out, it's an amazing achievement."

Read entire release: <http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=5397>

[< top >](#)

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## **SA: First students graduate in new compulsory subject: Personal Learning Plan**

*Hon Jane Lomax-Smith MP, SA Education Minister, 22 September 2009*

Two hundred Year 10 students have become the first in South Australia to successfully complete the compulsory new SACE subject, Personal Learning Plan. The students attend four schools which scheduled the six-month subject in the first half of 2009. Other Year 10 students will complete the subject at the end of the year.

"The Personal Learning Plan is a new opportunity for students to learn life, personal and work skills, and map out a study plan for Year 11 and 12," Dr Lomax-Smith says. "Across the State, about 20,000 Year 10 students in Government, Catholic and Independent schools are undertaking the subject for the first time this year.

"Through this subject, students can explore their strengths and interests and how they relate to further education, training or employment options for the future. This work allows students to make informed decisions about the future, while also encouraging students to participate and contribute to the community as effective citizens.

"The subject requires students to achieve skills such as communication, teamwork, initiative, planning and problem solving, which are critical in the workplace and in community life."

Read entire release: <http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=5393>

[< top >](#)

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## **SA: Protecting schools from bushfires**

*Hon Jane Lomax-Smith MP, SA Education Minister, 23 September 2009*

Sixteen schools located in bushfire-prone areas of the State will share in \$1.4 million to improve bushfire safety ahead of the next fire danger season.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says the bushfire protection grants will provide fire-fighting water to schools in the highest risk category.

"These funds are part of the Rann Government's \$36 million School Pride Asset Program Grants, first announced in 2008 as a three-year program.

"The bushfire protection grants allow schools to install up to 72,000 litres of water storage to supplement water supplies in the event of a bushfire. Some schools will also install fire hydrants and boosters that increase water pressure for fire fighting purposes."

Read more at <http://www.premier.sa.gov.au/news.php?id=5400>

[< top >](#)

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## **TAS: New computers for campuses**

*David Bartlett MP, Premier, Tuesday, 29 September 2009*

Tasmania's Polytechnic, Academy and Skills Institute are undertaking a massive computer replacement program this financial year, Premier David Bartlett announced today.

He said the campuses had agreed to release \$1.1 million from capital funds to replace 1000 PCs that are more than four years old.

"These replacements are in addition to 345 new and replacement PCs already provided in the first six months of 2009," he said.

"We will also replace a further 300 PCs as part of our annual PC Replacement Program.

"On top of that, the joint Academy and Polytechnic Campuses will also benefit from the Commonwealth's Digital Education Revolution that will provide a further 1,000 new PCs/laptops or net-books over the life of the program."

Read more at <http://www.media.tas.gov.au/release.php?id=27932>

[< top >](#)

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## **WA Government names first 34 "independent" public schools**

*Paul Lampathakis, Perth Now, September 23, 2009*

THE State Government has named the first "independent" public schools - while unionists and the Opposition warned a two-tiered system was coming.

Education Minister Liz Constable released the names of what she called the "first 34 schools to be empowered with greater freedom to make decisions best suited to the needs of their students and local communities".

She said this "heralded a new era in public education in Western Australia" and schools had been waiting for this opportunity.

"It means greater responsibility for principals and flexibility in their recruitment of teachers and other school staff," she said. "For the first time, principals can work with their schools to form the best local solution to their problems rather than relying on a one-size fits all approach."

But Dr Constable said the 34 schools remained "very much part of the public school system". The Education Department would still be the employer for staff and public sector standards would stay in place.

Read entire article: <http://www.news.com.au/perthnow/story/0,27574,26116688-2761,00.html>

[< top >](#)

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## **WA: Budget blowout due to extravagant spending: Opposition**

*ABC News, 28 September 2009*

The State Opposition has accused the Government of extravagant, unconstrained spending over the past financial year and has warned it will lead to higher household fees and charges.

The government has announced a \$318 million budget surplus for the past financial year, \$1.6 billion lower than the original budget estimate.

Expenditure ballooned by 13.5 per cent in 2008-2009, almost double the figure forecast at budget time.

Government debt more than doubled from the previous year to \$6.8 billion.

The budget blowout is due in part to the implementation of election commitments such as Royalties for Regions, and higher than expected staff numbers and wages growth.

The state's two biggest departments, Health and Education, were also hundreds of millions of dollars over budget.

The Health Department was \$370 million over budget, and the Education Department was \$229 million in the red.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/09/28/2695858.htm>

[< top >](#)

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## CONFERENCES & EVENTS

### Beyond Beliefs

*Free One-Day Professional Development Workshop for Secondary Teachers*

ADELAIDE Monday 19 October, Adelaide Convention Centre  
MELBOURNE Thursday 22 October, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre  
PERTH Thursday 29 October, Hyatt Regency Perth  
SYDNEY Monday 2 November, Hilton Sydney  
BRISBANE Thursday 5 November, Stamford Plaza

All workshops 9.00 am to 2.30 pm. Registration from 8.45 am.

This professional learning opportunity is brought to you by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) in conjunction with Issues Deliberation Australia (IDA), and The Myer Foundation. For further information call ACSA on 02 6260 5660.

BEYOND BELIEFS is a powerful new curriculum resource for secondary students exploring the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims living in Australia. The resource includes a DVD of the award-winning documentary Beyond Beliefs (Winner IQ One World Award and Silver Screen Award, US International Film and Video Festival), a study guide and information booklet.

All participants at the workshop will receive this resource kit at no cost.

BEYOND BELIEFS provides a compelling insight into one of the most challenging social issues of our times. This professional learning opportunity will give you the confidence and tools to tackle this difficult issue with your students.

This is a free workshop and places are strictly limited.

Register online by visiting <http://www.acsa.edu.au>

[< top >](#)

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## REMINDERS

2-4 October - Australian Curriculum Studies Association Biennial Conference - Canberra, ACT - <http://www.acsa.edu.au/pages/index.asp>

6 October - Ed Directions - Sydney, NSW - <http://south09.webdirections.org/workshops#ed-directions>

11-17 October - Anti-Poverty Week - <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/>

12-13 October - ACSSO National Conference - Hobart, TAS - <http://www.acsso.org.au/natconf09/>

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

23-24 October - Art Education Victoria Annual Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.aev.vic.edu.au/pd/conference/2009/index.html>

24-25 October - Asian Conference on Education - Osaka, Japan - <http://ace.iafor.org/>

9 November - Innovation in Education One-Day Conference - London, UK - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/innovation-education>

9-12 November - London International Conference on Education - London, UK - <http://www.liceducation.org/>

18-21 November - NAEYC Annual Conference & Expo - Washington DC, USA  
<http://www.naeyc.org/conference/>

24-26 November - Family Relationship Services Australia National Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://www.frsa.org.au/site/>

25-27 November - International Conference on Primary Education 2009 - Hong Kong - <http://www.ied.edu.hk/primaryed/>

24-26 March - Going Global 4 - London, UK - <http://www.britishcouncil.org/goingglobal.htm>

9-10 April - National Coalition against Bullying Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.amf.org.au/NCABConference/>

4-7 July - National Conference for Teachers of English & Literacy - Perth, WA - <http://www.englishliteracyconference.com.au/index.php?id=46&year=10>



[< top >](#)

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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/news/> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)

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Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at [letters@acsso.org.au](mailto:letters@acsso.org.au). 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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