



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 4 Number 9, 30 March 2010

- [PARENTS INVITED TO SPEAK UP: \(4 items\)](#)
- [TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: \(7 items\)](#)
- [THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION: \(3 items\)](#)
- [COMPARING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE: \(5 items\)](#)
- [SCIENCE EDUCATION: Secondary students to benefit from 3D science resource](#)
- [ASIA LITERACY: Funds needed for Asia literacy in schools](#)
- [BULLYING: \(4 items\)](#)
- [BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION: \(5 items\)](#)
- [AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES: \(12 items\)](#)
- [REMINDERS](#)
- [ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS](#)

PARENTS INVITED TO SPEAK UP

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

On Wednesday 10 March 2010 the Minister for Education, Hon Julia Gillard MP, asked the Committee to inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;
- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;
- the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;
- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians; and
- the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

Submissions are invited – and must be lodged by Friday 16 April 2010

Public hearings will be scheduled in due course, probably from latter April 2010.

Further details: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/index.htm>

[< top >](#)

What makes a great teacher tick? Have your say!

Insight Program, SBS, Tuesday 20 April 2010

This outstanding studio-based discussion show is hosted by Jenny Brockie and goes to air every Tuesday night at 7.30pm on SBS TV. For more information on the program please see our website at: <http://news.sbs.com.au/insight/>.

On Tues April 20 we'll be producing a program on the subject of what makes a great teacher. Some of the questions we're interested in exploring are:

- Are great teachers born or can they be made?
- How important are factors like personality, educational background and experience?

- Can teacher quality be fairly measured?

If any parents around the country would like to share their views on this subject, or if they'd like to nominate someone they think is a great teacher – producer Clair Absolum would love to hear from them.

Because of the Easter break, contacts before Friday 2 April would be welcome.

Claire's contact details are: 02 9430 3059 / claire.absolum@sbs.com.au.

[< top >](#)

Government releases draft Australian Teacher Professional Standards for public consultation

Have your say – consultation closes on 7 May 2010

On 8 March 2010 the draft Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were released for public comment and consultation. The draft Standards describe what is required of teachers at four levels of professional expertise - Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher - across three domains: Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement.

They seek to make explicit, for those within and outside the profession, the knowledge, skills and dispositions required of teachers at each level.

The Standards are designed to provide a continuum of capabilities and expectations and a nationally consistent basis for valid, fair and reliable identification and recognition of those who meet the standards.

These standards are also intended to form the basis for accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses, initial teacher registration, and performance appraisal and professional accreditation of teachers at higher levels of professional expertise.

Consultations will also be conducted by the states and territories with teachers and school leaders and by the Australian Government with national organisations, including those representing parents and families in school communities in all parts of Australia.

For detailed background information, including the Draft Standards and how to make a submission, see: http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/npst2010-consultation-call_for_submissions.30532.html

[< top >](#)

Consultation on the draft Australian Curriculum

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

The draft Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history (K-10) will be available for consultation from 1 March 2010 to the end of May 2010. The draft curriculum for these learning areas will be available online through the Australian Curriculum Consultation Portal, and will include content descriptions, achievement standards, content elaborations and some annotated work samples.

The consultation website will be available for everyone to read, review, download or print the draft K-10 curriculum. It will also be the place where individuals and groups can provide feedback and where the online feedback survey can be completed.

The K-10 consultation process and the K-10 part of the website will be open until 23 May 2010.

Work on the senior secondary years' curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history is proceeding according to the agreed timeframe. From April 2010 to June 2010, the senior secondary curriculum will be available online for consultation.

Read more at: <http://www.acara.edu.au/consultation.html>

[< top >](#)

TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

“Enriching the new Australian Curriculum - Designing a rich, creative & coherent plan for education”

National Symposium at University of Melbourne, 25-27 February 2010

Immediately prior to the launch on 1 March of the first four discussion drafts of the Australian Curriculum for years K-10 in English, History, Mathematics and Science, the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne presented an important symposium event centred upon presentations by an extensive and varied range of leading figures in education, including:

- Professor Robin Alexander, Cambridge University
- Professor Barry McGaw, Chairman of ACARA
- Professor Richard Noss, University of London
- Professor Celia Hoyles, University of London
- Professor Jo Lo Bianco, University of Melbourne
- Leaders of the Curriculum Development Teams not only in the first four elements of English, History, Maths and Science, but also in Languages, Geography, Health and the six critically important elements of the Arts.

Much of these proceedings including, full address, video and audio files now available online at:

http://www.education.unimelb.edu.au/news/National_Curriculum_Symposium/2010_National_Curriculum_Symposium.html

[< top >](#)

The English experience of national curriculum

Robin Alexander, Life Matters, 01/03/2010

A three-year review of primary education in England says that the national curriculum and national testing has narrowed schooling and placed too much emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy.

The lead author of this Cambridge study, Professor Robin Alexander, is in Australia to talk about the British experience as we prepare to move to a national curriculum.

Listen online: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2010/2832502.htm>

[< top >](#)

Introducing the Australian Curriculum

Barry McGaw & Peter Freebody, Life Matters, 02/03/2010

The first draft of a national curriculum in maths, English, science and history is now online for public consultation. It covers kindergarten to year 10, with the planned changes for years 11 and 12 to be added in April.

We discuss what's proposed with Barry McGaw, chair of the Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, and Peter Freebody, who led the English curriculum panel.

Listen online: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2010/2833502.htm>

[< top >](#)

English: New philosophy to make up for the syntax of the past

Neroli Colvin, Sydney Morning Herald, 21 March 2010

THE problem is huge: low levels of literacy among up to half of Australians. The solution: a new national school curriculum, literacy for the 21st century and, gasp, grammar.

Some say dropping grammar in the 1970s began the slide to today's textese - "yng peeps cant rite proply". But many older Australians live with literacy levels lower than young people. The issue is the needs of people and the economy are changing and so is the curriculum.

Is boring old grammar the answer? Well, not really. It's a modern approach to grammar that's being introduced. And the ambitions are broad: lift children who slip through cracks in the education system to a level of reading and writing that reflects Australia's wealth.

Almost half of adult Australians have literacy skills lower than those needed to meet the demands of everyday life and work in a knowledge-based economy, Bureau of Statistics figures show. Scarily, nearly two-thirds of those whose first language is not English scored below the minimum.

...The problem is that achievement differs across the country - and between the disadvantaged and the better off. Last year's national tests reveal nearly one in three year 9 students in the Northern Territory is below the minimum standard in reading, writing, spelling and grammar and punctuation - they do not have rudimentary literacy skills. In NSW, about one in 10 students is at this low level.

The draft national curriculum puts grammar, spelling and punctuation at the centre of English teaching and learning. But why now?

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/new-philosophy-to-make-up-for-the-syntax-of-the-past-20100320-qn7m.html>

[< top >](#)

New history curriculum lame and impotent, says Asian expert

Rowan Callick, the Australian, 23 March 2010

THE new national curriculum's attempt to tell the Australian story in its Asian context is "lame and impotent", according to Tony Milner, Basham Professor of Asian History at the Australian National University.

Professor Milner, who is speaking today at the Asia Education Foundation's national summit in Sydney, has discussed the history curriculum with those drafting it, led by Stuart Macintyre of Melbourne University.

"Their heart is in the right place," Professor Milner said yesterday, but the final version still "fails to prepare Australians for the world we are moving into, which we have to negotiate. I am quite worried."

Professor Milner said while he strongly disagreed with opposition education spokesman Christopher Pyne's criticism that there was too much Asia in the curriculum, he supported Mr Pyne's view that it should be more explicit about Australia's British heritage.

That would enable a clearer comparison between Australia and Asia, Professor Milner said.

"The history curriculum is going to be central in creating a framework for all Australians to think about themselves and the world around them," he said. "The focus on World War II, for instance, was originally on Germany and Hitler. For Australians, they need to know something of that - but the total transformation of our region as a result of Japanese conquests is much more important."

Professor Milner said a textbook from the 1950s that he discovered recently "was a hell of a lot better at the challenges Australia was facing, than the current curriculum".

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/politics/new-history-curriculum-lame-and-impotent-says-asian-expert/story-e6fgrczf-1225844011350>

[< top >](#)

History curriculum 'may be pared back'

Leah McLennan, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 2010 (AAP)

A draft national history school curriculum may have to be pared back following complaints from teachers who say they don't have enough time to teach the subject, Australia's curriculum chief says.

History, which is not taught as a separate subject in some states, will become a compulsory subject, with many teachers fearing this might result in a teacher shortage.

ACARA chief executive officer Peter Hill said the subject of history might have to be pared back given the time restraints of teachers.

"One of the dangers in all curriculum development is that one starts with too much," Dr Hill told reporters in Sydney on Thursday, the first day of ACARA's consultations with teachers in NSW.

"What we're focused on is ensuring we have in the curriculum that which all young Australians need to know. If we have too much, sure we have to pare it down, we will look at that."

Read entire article: <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/history-curriculum-may-be-pared-back-20100325-ty5t.html>

[< top >](#)

ACARA Update

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, Issue 4, 30 March 2010

In this edition:

- Australian Curriculum Phase 1
- The Australian Curriculum Consultation Portal
- Australian Curriculum Implementation
- Australian Curriculum Phase 2
- Update on My School website – Financial Information
- Update NAPLAN 2010 and 2011

Read more at: http://www.acara.edu.au/acara_update_30032010.html

[< top >](#)



[< top >](#)

THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Stephen Heppell – the needs of 21st century learning

On Thursday, 25 March, Education Services Australia (<http://esa.edu.au>) presented a free, interactive webcast with Stephen Heppell (<http://heppell.net>), whom many see as Europe's leading online education guru.

Founder and former director of Ultralab – an internationally renowned research centre for e-learning and now CEO of his own policy and learning consultancy - Professor Heppell is a long-time thought leader and advocate of using technology to engage, motivate and enhance student learning.

What we've asked Dr. Heppell to address is this:

Given the reform in Australian education (school improvement, national curriculum and media-rich classrooms), what can we here in Australia learn from the UK and other countries' experiences about creating learning institutions for the 21st century? What does this mean for student entitlement and the kinds of resources needed to support such a reform package?

MP3 Audio download 29.5 MB MP3 Heppell25March.mp3

See web-page: <http://educationau.edu.au/stephen-heppell>

[< top >](#)

“The Perils of Policy: Success, Amnesia and Collateral Damage in Systemic Educational Reform”

Professor Robin Alexander, public lecture, 10 March 2010, Melbourne University

Synopsis: In the space of just two decades, England's school system has been transformed from one of the least centralised to one of the most centralised in the developed world. During the past decade in particular, the UK government has launched numerous initiatives aimed at raising educational standards.

As levers of reform it has used high stakes testing and inspection, nationally-prescribed teaching strategies, school league tables and micro-managed curricula for schools and teacher training. Efforts have also been made to import the policies and practices of those countries which head the international achievement survey league tables.

Given that a similar reform trajectory is being followed by an increasing number of countries in the pursuit of 'world class' educational standards (sometimes even citing England's supposed success as justification), the English experience provides a significant case study.

Professor Alexander also discusses Finland's highly successful education system. "People miss the point about Finland - It succeeds without national tests, prescribed teaching methods or other high-stakes government interventions. [It] concentrates instead on securing social equity and educational quality through a teaching profession which is valued, respected and exceptionally well qualified."

The link to an online recording of this lecture can be found at:
<http://www.education.unimelb.edu.au/news/lectures/2010series.html>

Robin Alexander is currently University of Melbourne's Miegunyah Distinguished Visiting Fellow.

[< top >](#)

Rethinking the education revolution

Lyndsay Connors & Jim McMorrow, The Drum, 30 March 2010

In last week's health debate with the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister spoke of the vital importance to families of having access to skilled doctors and nurses when their children need them.

When it comes to debating policies around the \$40 billion spent each year on government and non-government schools across Australia, he could say exactly the same thing about teachers.

When parents send their children off at the start of each school year, they hope that they will find good friends there. But above all, their hopes are that their children will find a fine teacher. Just as all children deserve the benefits that come with good health, they deserve the life chances that good teachers provide.

This entitlement is the centrepiece of the report, *New Directions in Schools Funding*, launched last week at the University of Sydney.

Australian schools rate well against international standards, but too many of our young people miss out on the full benefits of their schooling. The causes of this persisting failing go well beyond schools funding arrangements. But current schools funding policies entrench rather than improve this problem.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2859101.htm>

Download the Executive Summary of the report at:

<http://www.nswspc.org.au/images/docs/newdirectionsschoolfunding.pdf>

Download Chapter 7: The Funding Model at:

http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/professional_learning/resources/papers/ConnorsL_&_McMorrowJ_10_FundingReport.pdf

The full report will be available for download soon at:

http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/professional_learning/resources/studies_reports.shtml

[< top >](#)

COMPARING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Changes to “My School” on the table

Farrah Tomazin, the Age, 20 March 2010

THE federal government's chief education authority is considering changes to the controversial My School website. It has also moved to placate teachers threatening to boycott this year's national literacy and numeracy test in protest against the present system.

Private talks were held this week between the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority - which developed the My School website - and the Australian Education Union, with the heads of both parties discussing how to improve the way school performance data is published.

But with educators still fearful the information could be used to create damaging league tables that shame underperforming schools, one of the options being considered is to set legally binding conditions of use on the website, so anyone who accesses the data is bound not to misuse it.

The authority also wants to improve the index it uses to group schools according to their student populations, admitting that for some schools it did not accurately reflect their demographics. Information on the resources of all schools will also be included to give parents a more comprehensive picture of how schools fare.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/changes-to-my-school-on-the-table-20100319-qm8n.html>

[< top >](#)

Only one principal in 10 believes My School accurately portrays performance

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 25 March 2010

THREE-QUARTERS of school principals believe the information about their school presented on the My School website is incorrect and nine in 10 believe it fails to present an accurate picture of school performance.

A survey of almost 1200 primary and high school principals found half believe the index of social and educational advantage assigned to their school is inaccurate and about 90 per cent said the schools with which they were grouped were not similar.

The survey conducted by the Australian Education Union is part of its campaign against the website, which publishes the results in national literacy and numeracy tests for schools around the nation.

The survey found about a third of the schools surveyed had been named in a league table ranking schools based on test results but only half the principals thought it would have a negative impact on the students and about 40 per cent thought it would have no impact.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/only-one-principal-in-10-believes-my-school-accurately-portrays-performance/story-e6frg6nf-1225844963953>

Download the Report of the March 2010 Survey of Schools:
<http://www.aefederal.org.au/Publications/2010/LTmyschoolrep.pdf>

[< top >](#)

The value of My School

Doorstop interview, Hon Julia Gillard MP, 25 March 2010

"...I'd also like to take the opportunity to make some comments about the My School website. Yesterday the Australian Education Union released a survey it has conducted of what it says are attitudes to the My School website.

Well the Government has made its view very clear – we believe the My School website is necessary to give parents more information than they've ever had before about their child's school. We believe parents around the country have voted with their fingertips in huge numbers because they were hungry for this information.

The My School website, school by school, tells you about the school in its own words, gives you the national testing information for the last three years, gives you vital statistics about the number of students in the school, the numbers of staff teaching those students, the attendance rates, the retention to Year 12.

And it enables powerful comparisons with schools around the country that serve similar student populations and with what is being achieved through the national average of national testing.

This is information that parents want and I'd call on the Australian Education Union to reconsider its plans to boycott this year's national tests in response to My School.

Read entire transcript:
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_100326_073705.aspx

[< top >](#)

Economic status key to success at school

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, 26 March 2010

THE head of the national curriculum and assessment authority regrets the accuracy of his organisation's new predictor of student performance in tests because it is based on their socio-economic status.

Peter Hill, the chief executive officer of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, said yesterday that despite some anomalies, the index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA) on the new My School website had proven to be a "very robust measure" of student outcomes.

Addressing the findings of an Australian Education Union survey of school principals responding to the My School website, Dr Hill said principals were concerned about the groupings of small rural primary schools with large city high schools in so-called like-school comparisons.

Despite their lack of similarity in appearance, size and location, Dr Hill said the index showed that these schools contained similar students in terms of their academic performance in national literacy and numeracy tests.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/economic-status-key-to-success-at-school-20100325-qzzl.html>

[< top >](#)

Evaluation of My School pushed aside, say critics

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, 30 March 2010

CONFIDENTIAL minutes reveal that state and federal education ministers agreed in 2008 to identify any adverse effects of reporting national school comparisons, but the decision was never implemented.

Public school advocates seized on the documents as evidence of the federal government's attempt to "hide" any adverse consequences of its new My School website in narrowing curriculum and stigmatising low-performing schools and students.

The minutes of the meeting of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs of September 12, 2008, obtained by the Herald, indicate the evaluation was planned for the "outset" of the launch of the My School website in January.

Trevor Cobbold, from the Save Our Schools advocacy group, accused the government of blocking the development of the evaluation strategy. "As a result, there has been no evaluation of adverse consequences," he said.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/evaluation-of-my-school-pushed-aside-say-critics-20100329-r8eo.html>

[< top >](#)

SCIENCE EDUCATION

Secondary students to benefit from 3D science resource

University of Southern Queensland, 29 March 2010

Innovative three-dimensional technology used in motion pictures such as Avatar will be employed by secondary science teachers following the launch of a new 3D online and CD resource for chemistry and biology this month (March).

The Primary Industry Centre for Science Education's (PICSE) The Organic Chemistry Teaching Resource and MoleculeVisualiser provide classroom-ready activities that engage students and teachers, with the focus on Australian science.

However, it is not just these that make this resource unique; new 3D rotational technology will allow students to see molecules in a whole new light.

PICSE USQ Science Education Officer Kay Lembo said up until recently, the technology used in MoleculeVisualiser had only been used by working research scientists and PhD students.

"We are proud to now have the transformed technology in a suitable format for secondary school students and teachers," Ms Lembo said.

The resources are free and available from <http://mv.picse.net/>

Read more at: <http://www.usq.edu.au/newsevents/news/3dscienceresource>

[< top >](#)

ASIA LITERACY

Funds needed for Asia literacy in schools

Rowan Callick, the Australian, 22 March 2010

THE Rudd government's priority to incorporate Asia in the new national school curriculum will only work if the states and territories inject massive funding to equip teachers.

Kathe Kirby, executive director of the Asia Education Foundation, organiser of a conference beginning in Sydney today, said yesterday that despite reports urging Asia-literacy dating back to the early 1980s, and the new requirement of Asian content in the curriculum, retraining teachers remained the missing link.

"Australia can achieve a most beautifully written national curriculum," she said. "But we know that Australian teachers are not equipped to deliver" on its Asia-literacy requirement. "And the federal government is saying it is not their responsibility."

Ms Kirby said with the success of the AEF in making Asia-literacy a cross-curriculum requirement the focus had shifted from policy to implementation.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/funds-needed-for-asia-literacy-in-schools/story-e6frg6nf-1225843483048>

[< top >](#)



[< top >](#)

BULLYING

Open slather on websites as teachers targeted

Jessica Brown, ABC News, 22 March 2010

There's a new target in cyber-bullying. One in 10 children experience bullying on the internet - but social networking sites such as Facebook are now being used by students to vent their opinions about school teachers.

A dozen students from Leeming Senior High School in Western Australia have been suspended after they contributed to a website that targeted a female maths teacher. About 600 people signed up to the site created specifically to criticise and denigrate the teacher.

In another recent incident, a 16-year-old boy received a caution from police after defamatory and threatening comments were made online about teachers at North Albany Senior High School. Although only the one teenager was cautioned, more than 200 students were part of the Facebook group, which named specific teachers and made violent threats towards staff.

Edith Cowan University cyber-bullying researcher Donna Cross says it is an emerging trend. She says researchers have come across certain websites encouraging students to criticise their teachers.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/22/2852762.htm>

[< top >](#)

The right to feel safe: the rise of bullying in our schools

Independent Schools Queensland, Curriculum Leadership, 26 March 2010

Research indicates that many young people do not feel safe at school. An Australian survey of over 25,000 students (Rigby, 1997) found that in the course of any one year as many as half of all school students experience painful and unjustified aggression from individuals or groups of students.

About one in seven experienced bullying weekly or more often. Findings from the Australian Covert Bullying Study (Cross et al, 2009) indicate that there has been a substantial increase in bullying in subsequent years.

The Cross et al study also reports that 7–10% of students in Years 4 to 9 have faced cyber bullying, while a 2009 survey by the Australian Catholic University of 700 students in Years 7 to 10 found that 25% of respondents had experienced cyber bullying, with girls most at risk.

Read entire article: <http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=30845&issueID=12093>

[< top >](#)

Teachers' Union slams Coalition's anti-school bullying plan

ABC News, Mar 27, 2010

The Australian Education Union has poured cold water on a new anti-bullying program put forward by the Federal Opposition.

Under the plan, school principals would be given much greater autonomy to deal with bullying and there would be a particular focus on cyber bullying and a national reporting scheme.

But the union's Angelo Gavrielatos says the \$10 million plan is a meaningless gesture, because it has no funding plan.

He has taken aim at Opposition education spokesman Christopher Pyne and the Federal Government over public school funding policies.

"We have a funding system that continues to increase funding to the schools that least need it, exponentially increasing funding to private schools which least need it," he said. "This funding system continues to deliver increases that are not related to any drift in enrolment."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/27/2857861.htm>

[< top >](#)

Coalition will empower principals to combat bullying

Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education, 29 March 2010

A Coalition Government will seek to empower principals and introduce a new national education campaign to combat bullying and cyber bullying.

Future education funding agreements with state governments will include requirements to empower principals giving them the authority to tackle bullying and cyber bullying occurring both on and off campus within their school community.

Principals will have access to expert advice and be allowed to design flexible anti-bullying policies tailored to the specific needs of their school community and students.

Principals will also have the power to act on bullying and cyber-bullying occurring off campus, holding students to account outside of the schoolyard for how they treat their peers.

Read more at: <http://www.liberal.org.au/Latest-News/2010/03/29/Coalition-will-empower-principals-to-combat-bullying.aspx>

[< top >](#)

BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Teachers fear bullying if they tell of school building rorts

Rachel Brown & Josh Gordon, Sydney Morning Herald, 21 March 2010

FEAR of bullying and victimisation may deter principals and teachers from blowing the whistle on alleged rorts in the federal government's school building program.

The \$16.2 billion program is the subject of eight separate inquiries or audits at state and federal level. But education authorities feel the inquiries may be a waste of time and money if principals and teachers are unable to raise problems without fear of retribution.

Public Schools Principals Forum deputy chairman Brian Chudleigh said principals feared speaking publicly because of a history of intimidation in the NSW Department of Education: "There is a culture of fear in the Department of Education and it's been going on for a long time. ... Our concern is that problems will not be identified because principals are unwilling to speak out unless they can do so without fear of reprisals."

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/teachers-fear-bullying-if-they-tell-of-school-building-rorts-20100320-qn7h.html>

[< top >](#)

Red-tape costs top school handouts

Justine Ferrari, the Australian, 22 March 2010

THE Rudd government's Education Revolution has been dubbed the Administrative Revolution by a senior Catholic education official, after it was claimed independent schools in NSW were given \$8 million to evaluate programs worth just \$3m.

Non-government schools say education agreements between the commonwealth and the states designed to lift school performance have become bogged down by excessive amounts of paperwork and an onerous and expensive evaluation process.

The National Catholic Education Commission and the Independent Schools Council of Australia wrote to Education Minister Julia Gillard in December expressing their concerns about the overly bureaucratic demands of the National Partnership agreements.

The Council of Australian Governments established three main national partnerships in education worth about \$2.5 billion to improve literacy and numeracy, teacher quality and the performance of schools in low-socio-economic areas.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/red-tape-costs-top-school-handouts/story-fn56ulhe-1225843502015>

[< top >](#)

Government should release all School Hall costings

Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education, 29 March 2010

Julia Gillard's desire to expose underperforming schools by displaying results on the Myschool website should be expanded to include the breakdown of the School Hall program costings for each primary school, Christopher Pyne, Shadow Minister for Education said today.

"What's good for the goose is good for the gander. Parents want to see that their child's school is performing well, taxpayers want to see that the borrowed funds going into the School Hall program aren't being wasted on extravagant management fees, state government skimming and price gouging," Mr Pyne said.

"The Labor Government claims the Building the Education Revolution is an open and accountable program, often highlighting the fact that all the New South Wales costings were obtained by the NSW State Opposition under freedom of information," he said.

Read more at <http://www.liberal.org.au/Latest-News/2010/03/29/Government-should-release-all-School-Hall-costings.aspx>

[< top >](#)

BER program saved jobs, says builder

Nicolas Perpetch, The Australian, March 30, 2010

TONY Cafagna is adamant Building the Education Revolution program saved his Perth building company from closure.

The Arcon construction manager said he had sacked 50 staff last year because of the downturn and only had enough work to last until Christmas for the remaining 35 workers.

But when it won a series of contracts for Queens Park primary school under the \$16 billion stimulus program, the company was able to retain those 35 workers and bring back 12 who had been retrenched, Mr Cafagna said.

"Come Christmas, everyone including myself would have had no work," he said yesterday. "Once we got the stimulus package we secured work until November this year. For Arcon, and me personally, it has been very beneficial."

Workplace Relations Minister Julia Gillard yesterday vowed to identify, investigate and crack down on any shonky or incompetent work carried out on her schools stimulus package.

Read more at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/ber-program-saved-jobs-says-builder/story-fn56ulhe-1225847169546?from=public_rss

[< top >](#)

Funds hard won but `dispersal too easy'

Justine Ferrari, Education writer, The Australian, March 30, 2010

UNDER the federal government's guidelines, Sandringham Primary School in Melbourne, with about 550 students, is entitled to \$3 million under the Building the Education Revolution program.

But Victoria's Department of Education, which pools all its BER funding and decides what to allocate to government schools, offered the school only \$900,000 at first, and increased it to \$1.5 million after the school community objected.

It was only after a letter-writing campaign by about 200 parents and the intervention of federal Education Minister Julia Gillard that Sandringham Primary received its full entitlement of \$3m.

Parents are still waiting to hear how the money will be spent, with some concerned at the lack of detail required to secure so much money.

Read more at: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/funds-hard-won-but-dispersal-too-easy/story-fn56ulhe-1225847172977?from=public_rss

[< top >](#)

AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

ACT: parents say Opposition bullying policy not enough

ABC News, 28 March 2010

The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association - the group representing school parents in the ACT - says the Federal Opposition's new bullying strategy does not address the problem.

The \$10.5 million bullying policy gives principals more autonomy to deal with bullying and cyber-bullying in schools, and includes a national education campaign and national reporting requirements.

But the president of the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association, Elizabeth Singer, says she is concerned about the Opposition's emphasis.

"Parents are after cyber-bullying action to be taken in ways that build up capacity within students themselves as part of a school leadership community to deal with and support cyber-bullying," she said.

"The school system [should] have more money and resources around training students in educational issues around cyber-bullying: where it occurs and how to support their friends where it occurs."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/28/2858120.htm>

[< top >](#)

NSW: Letter campaign fights for Dalwood centre

ABC News, Mar 25, 2010

Opposition education spokesman Adrian Piccoli says the community is backing a letter-writing campaign to save the Dalwood Assessment Centre and Palm Avenue School in Sydney.

Temporary arrangements are in place until the end of term two for children with severe learning disorders who have previously been helped by the Dalwood Centre.

Mr Piccoli says he hopes the sheer volume of letters being sent to Education Minister Verity Firth will leave her with no doubt about the value of both facilities in improving learning outcomes for rural students.

He says a Dalwood Stakeholder Group has been established to discuss the ongoing process relating to the closure of the school, but there is no current parent representative appointed to the group.

The Parents Council's Country vice-president, Dorothy Creek, says an assurance has been secured from the State Government that services will continue beyond the end of the next school term.

"We think that it will be more likely that they will do outreach to rural centres perhaps like Wagga, Dubbo and Orange. Even then they really need to come up with a plan for people who are needing it," she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/25/2855971.htm>

[< top >](#)



[< top >](#)

NT: Charles Darwin University helps grow school farm

CDU Media Release, 15 March 2010

A team of CDU Horticulture students has left a mark to last a lifetime after planting 50 edible native bush tucker and tropical fruit trees with Alawa Primary School staff and students.

The CDU students, who are studying a Certificate II in Horticulture, chose plants that have edible fruits including a mix of native bush tucker trees and tropical fruit trees to plant at the school's farm. The produce will be used in the school's cooking classes.

The primary school students pitched in with mulching and watering on the day, and will look after the trees until the CDU Horticulture team returns.

The new trees replace unsuitable varieties that have been removed for safety reasons, with all the new plants meeting NTG vegetation guidelines.

Read entire release: <http://ext.cdu.edu.au/newsroom/a/2010/Pages/100315-CDU-helps-grow.aspx>

[< top >](#)

NT: Failure of leadership in remote education

Nicolas Rothwell, the Australian, 20 March 2010

Evidence of appalling attendance rates at Wadeye has not troubled the NT education establishment. Last weekend's disclosure in Inquirer that only one in five children in the fast-growing Top End Aboriginal township of Wadeye attend school regularly has been met with leaden silence from the education authorities in the Northern Territory.

The detailed figures from Wadeye, contained in a comprehensive report by Australian National University demographer John Taylor, make plain that only 21 per cent of the school-age population are in school for an average of four days in each five-day week.

The official statistics that circulate in the education bureaucracy record student totals for enrolment, a figure measured on eight set days in each year. But enrolment figures are much higher than the true attendance rate and skew the picture completely.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/aboriginal-australia/failure-of-leadership-in-remote-education/story-e6frgd9f-1225842704938>

[< top >](#)

QLD: Students with disabilities 'denied school enrolment'

Andree Withey, ABC News, 22 March 2010

Parents of children with a disability say some are being denied school enrolment because of a lack of resources and support.

Legislation to allow children with a disability to study at mainstream schools was introduced in 2001.

The advocacy group, Queensland Parents for People with a Disability (QPPD), is hoping a survey of families' schooling experiences will help pinpoint problems.

QPPD president Lisa Bridle says inclusive schooling should not be difficult.

"Sometimes schools are reluctant to make a commitment to a child's enrolment because they are not sure that they're going to be able to offer adequate support," she said. "So we would like that to be more transparent and also for resources not to be used as a discouragement."

Ms Bridle says there are still many barriers for children trying to access education. "Anecdotally we're finding despite good policies that are pro inclusion of students with disabilities, the practices are really lagging behind so many students are continuing to be excluded," she said.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/22/2852793.htm>

[< top >](#)

QLD: Mining scholarships for Central Qld students

Paul Robinson, ABC News, Mar 25, 2010

Several Central Queensland students have been awarded scholarships to encourage them to take up careers in the mining industry.

The Queensland Resources Council's Chief Executive Michael Roche says the scholarships help young people move to resources related subjects as a way to address the skills shortage.

The Education Minister Geoff Wilson presented scholarships worth two-thousand-500 dollars to Jessica Murphy from Emerald High School, Chantel Selmanovic from Toolooa High in Gladstone, and Jess White from North Rockhampton High School.

There were also 500 dollar teacher recognition awards presented to students from Leanne Colthup from Moranbah High School, North Rockhampton student Victoria Neilsen, and Shannon Smith from Blackwater High School.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/25/2855930.htm>

[< top >](#)

SA: Hon Jay Weatherill MP

Jay Weatherill is the South Australian Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development.

Jay was born and educated in Adelaide's western suburbs, completing his secondary education at Henley High School.

He is a lawyer with an economics degree and established his own law practice in 1995, Lieschke & Weatherill. He practised law until he was elected as the Member for Cheltenham at the 2002 State election.

He has previously held the portfolios of Urban Development & Planning, Administrative Services, Local Government and Gambling, Families & Communities, Housing, Ageing and Disability.

Jay and his wife Melissa have two young daughters, Lucinda and Alice

Source: http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39&Itemid=28

[< top >](#)

TAS: "Tasmania Tomorrow" roll back easy: union

ABC News, Mar 26, 2010

One of the leaders of Tasmania's education union believes it will be a simple process to roll back changes to post year-10 education.

The Liberals and Greens promised to get rid of the Tasmania Tomorrow system as a pre-election pledge.

In the new hung parliament, the two parties will together hold more seats than Labor who are the architects of Tasmania Tomorrow.

The president of the union's secondary colleges sector, Greg Brown, says a roll back can be achieved quickly and with little expense.

"From all of the advice that I've been receiving, most of the problems can be alleviated just by some simple IT work and it will not involve any disruption at all," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/26/2856680.htm>

[< top >](#)

VIC: Together, it's a class action for harmony

Julia Adler, Moonee Valley Leader, 22 Mar 10

BUDDING Avondale Heights poets have been rewarded for their creative writing skills, as part of the State Government's Cultural Diversity Quest 2010.

St Martin de Porres Primary School teacher Deborah Athaide said grade 3/4 students collectively wrote a prize-winning poem, Together, as part of a study of immigration called Pack your Bags.

Ms Athaide said the six-verse poem explored the contribution of migrants to Australian society, while honouring the traditional, indigenous custodians. "The students wrote their poem in honour of the Wurundjeri people who occupied the land on which our school now stands," Ms Athaide said.

With more than 20 different nationalities, the young scribes drew on their own experiences.

Read entire article: <http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/together-it-s-a-class-action-for-harmony/>

[< top >](#)

VIC: School anger over payout backflip

Farrah Tomazin, the Age, 26 March 2010

SCHOOLS are being told to dip into their already stretched budgets to help fund a state government promise to pay bored or washed-up teachers to leave the classroom.

As part of a five year shake-up of public education, "disengaged" teachers are allowed to volunteer for a \$50,000 payout to leave the profession and make way for new talent.

So far, 168 Victorian teachers have taken up the offer, and another 50 will get the chance over the next few months. But as demand for the program grows, a department memo obtained by The Age reveals that schools have been asked to finance the payouts in the future.

Teachers and principals are outraged by the department's request, and warn that forcing cash-strapped schools to dig into their own budgets could result in cuts to student programs, specialist teachers, and teacher training.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/school-anger-over-payout-backflip-20100325-qzvg.html>

[< top >](#)

WA: Edith Cowan Uni working with Clarkson schools to address literacy

Edith Cowan University Media Release, 24 February 2010

Edith Cowan University's (ECU) Fogarty Learning Centre has launched a research project in partnership with the West Coast District Education Office and ten schools in the Clarkson area to support literacy for at-risk students.

The project, funded by ECU, the West Coast District Education Office and five of the schools will offer training and support for schools to implement innovative intervention strategies for students not achieving key reading milestones in Year 2.

The program was officially launched at the professional development workshop, held on Joondalup campus on Friday, 19 February.

Achieving reading milestones in the early years of schooling is critical for success in school and later life, and this project puts ECU's latest evidence-based research and strategies into practise in ten schools.

Read entire release: <http://www.ecu.edu.au/media/media-releases>

[< top >](#)

WA: WorkSafe prosecutes Education Dept in WA first

ABC News, Mar 26, 2010

WorkSafe is prosecuting the Department of Education over an accident at the Western Australian College of Agriculture's Morawa campus in the state's mid-west.

Three years ago, a year 12 student almost lost her leg when it was caught in farm machinery at the college. The 16 year old was connecting a rotary hoe to a tractor when she was caught in the machinery, suffering serious foot and leg injuries.

The Education Department is facing two charges over its alleged failure to provide a hazard-free workplace. It is the first time the state's workplace safety watchdog has prosecuted another government department.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/26/2857225.htm>

[< top >](#)

REMINDERS

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

6-9 April - Digital Diversity Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://acec2010.info/>

7-9 April - Career Development Association of Australia Annual Conference - Adelaide, SA - <http://www.onqconferences.com.au/pages/CDAA2010.php>

8-11 April - Global Language Convention - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.wesleycollege.net/convention.cfm>

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

17 April - Early Career Teachers' Conference - Melbourne, VIC - [http://www.vate.org.au/vate.nsf/file/2010%20Early%20Career%20Teachers%20Day/\\$file/ECTC-2010.pdf](http://www.vate.org.au/vate.nsf/file/2010%20Early%20Career%20Teachers%20Day/$file/ECTC-2010.pdf)

19-20 April - Kidsafe Playground Conference - Perth, WA - <http://www.kidsafewa.com.au/>

19-21 April - Language Education: An Essential for a Global Economy - Singapore - <http://www.relc.org.sg/seminar.html>

26-28 April - Canada International Conference on Education - Toronto, Canada - <http://www.ciceducation.org/>

27-29 May - Council of Educational Facility Planners International Conference - Perth, WA - <http://australasia.cefpi.org/>

22 April - 21st Century Learning Spaces Networking Event - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.educationau.edu.au/21st-century-learning-event>

29-30 April - 8th Annual Higher Education Summit - Adelaide, SA - <http://www.highereducationsummit.com.au/>

7 May - National Walk Safely to School Day - <http://www.walk.com.au>

14 May - Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria Annual Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.mltav.asn.au>

17 May - Tackling Underachievement: Engaging Boys and Girls - Sydney, NSW - <http://conferences2010.schoolevent.org>

17 May - The Tender Bridge, ACER - Adelaide, SA - <http://www.acer.edu.au/1/index.php/seminar/the-tender-bridge/>

18 May - Tackling Underachievement: Engaging Boys and Girls - Melbourne, VIC - <http://conferences2010.schoolevent.org>

25-28 May - Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/conference/>

4-5 June - Early Childhood Education Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au/2010registration.html>

17-18 June - National Conference of Australian Special Education Principals' Association & Australian Association of Special Education - Darwin, NT - <http://www.gemsevents.com.au/aase2010/>

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

6-9 July - 17th International Conference on Learning - Hong Kong - <http://thelearner.com/Conference-2010/>

7-9 July - Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.aifs.gov.au/conference>

21-24 July - Second Paris International Conference on Education, Economy & Society - Paris, France - <http://education-conferences.org/default.aspx>

26-27 August - Annual School Leaders' Conference - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/pdn-leadership-conference-2010>

6-8 September - London International Conference on Education - London, UK - <http://www.liceducation.org/>

27-30 September - National Australian Association for Environmental Education Conference - Canberra, ACT - <https://www.conferenceco.com.au/aaee>

[< top >](#)

ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/australian-education-digest/> (weekly)
- International News Roundup : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup/> (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/public-education-voice> (quarterly)

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