



# 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 11, 13 April 2010

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### COMPARING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

#### My School and League Tables

*Australian Education Union, March 2010*

Rigorous assessment and reporting is an integral part of successful teaching and learning. Parents have every right to information on their child's progress and the effectiveness of their child's school.

This information must be accurate, comprehensive and reliable – and it must support the efforts of schools to continually improve opportunities and outcomes for students. Unfortunately the My School website has fallen well short of these standards, a problem compounded by the misleading and invalid league tables that followed within 24 hours of the site going live.

The current version of the site is flawed because it:

- Facilitates the publication of league tables
- Misuses NAPLAN results
- Uses a flawed index to produce invalid and misleading comparisons of schools
- Fails to deliver vital information parents need

The AEU believes that it is possible to achieve the goals of greater accountability and reporting without harming students and school communities and without damaging the quality of education delivered in our schools.

The changes suggested in this proposal are designed to ensure that My School provides accurate and meaningful information to parents in a way that will have a positive impact on the provision of education in Australia.

Read more at <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/2010/AEUproposalLT2010.pdf>

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### Principals report on My School

*EdPod, ABC Radio National, 1 April 2010*

The My School website is popular with parents and the federal education minister but it hasn't made the grade with teacher unions and principals.

Responding to a survey by the Australian Education Union, more than eighty percent of school principals said the website doesn't give an accurate description of their school.

They also say the website has been used to create damaging league tables and schools are pressured to teach to the Naplan test.

Listen to or download the audio at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/edpod/stories/2010/2858886.htm>

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## **Teachers demand My School website changes**

*The Australian, 8 April 2010*

THE scores of every student in a school in the national literacy and numeracy tests would be reported on the My School website under a proposal by the Australian Education Union to prevent a threatened teachers' boycott of the tests scheduled for next month.

In a letter to Education Minister Julia Gillard last week, AEU federal president Angelo Gavrielatos outlines a peace package of changes to the My School website that would replace a school's median score in the five national tests with the range of student scores in every test.

The union plan also advocates reporting the change in student scores from test to test and an explanation from the school about its results.

The AEU suggests student scores be plotted on a graph that shows the national average and the percentage of students above and below the average, in a school performance report resembling the individual student report on NAPLAN (National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy) parents already receive.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/teachers-demand-my-school-website-changes/story-e6frg6nf-1225851125557>

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## **Failure to Meet Must Be Explained**

*Australian Education Union, April 9, 2010*

The Australian Education Union has questioned why Education Minister Julia Gillard refuses to meet with the union to discuss a proposal which would improve the My School website and stop schools being ranked in damaging league tables.

AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos said it was regrettable the Minister had refused to meet with the union since January despite the clear damage to students and school communities caused by the publication of crude league tables.

"We have put forward a proposal that would stop league tables and provide more accurate and comprehensive information to parents about schools," Mr Gavrielatos said.

"Our proposal would see the full range of student results at schools reported on the My School website, not just a misleading average figure.

"Parents would also get a plain-English analysis of the results of each school in literacy and numeracy rather than just general information.

"Full details of school funding and resources would be added to the site and, under the AEU plan, the progress schools were making with students would be shown for the first time.

"It is disappointing that the minister refuses to meet. Instead she has handed an alleged letter addressed to the union to the media without sending it to us."

Read more at <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Media/MediaReleases/2010/0904.pdf>

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## Television Interview

*Insiders Program, 11 April 2010*

JULIA GILLARD: What the Australian Education Union is asking me to do is to gut My School and I just won't do it. My School is all about putting more power into the hands of parents than they've ever had before by giving them more information about their child's school than they've ever had before.

I'm asking parents if we need them to consider working with us to make sure that the tests continue to run out this year.

BARRIE CASSIDY: But what will you be asking them to do?

JULIA GILLARD: Well, we're obviously looking at a range of options, Barrie. We haven't closed in on a final option yet.

But one option clearly on the table is asking parents to assist with supervising the test. Obviously they would do that under instruction from qualified supervisors and we would need to make sure that people had working with children checks and the like, but asking them to work with us to make sure that the test goes ahead.

BARRIE CASSIDY: They would need the support of the principals would they for that to happen?

JULIA GILLARD: They certainly would but the national principals association, which represents principals in state schools, independent schools and Catholic schools, is not supporting any ban on the tests.

BARRIE CASSIDY: So this is in effect inviting parents to revolt; to revolt against the teachers?

JULIA GILLARD: Well, it's certainly inviting parents to help us do what we know parents want.

Read entire transcript:

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article\\_100412\\_104329.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Transcripts/Pages/Article_100412_104329.aspx)

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## Teachers Place Moratorium on NAPLAN Tests

*Australian Education Union, Media Release, 12 April 2010*

The Australian Education Union Federal Executive today voted unanimously to impose an immediate moratorium on the national NAPLAN tests.

AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos said the decision means the national tests will not go ahead in May unless the Federal Government addresses the concerns of the profession about the misuse of student data to name and shame schools.

"Teachers cannot hand out the tests until something is done to stop the results being used to publicly brand students and schools as failures in league tables," he said. "That is damaging for students and school communities.

"No other test, student assessment or report will be affected by this decision.

"The primary concern of teachers is the fact that nothing has been done to stop test data being taken from the My School website to create damaging league tables in which schools are ranked on test results alone.

"We also have serious concerns that the NAPLAN results are being used on the My School website in a way that is misleading for parents."

Read more at: [http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Media/MediaReleases/2010/1204\(2\).pdf](http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Media/MediaReleases/2010/1204(2).pdf)

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## **Education Union executive votes to shut down My School**

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, 12 April 2010*

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has condemned a decision by the Australian Education Union to deny parents information about their kids' literacy and numeracy by banning this year's NAPLAN national tests.

The AEU National Executive earlier today voted to order teachers to boycott the tests in an effort to shut down the My School website.

If successful, the boycott would mean parents of kids in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 would not receive national report cards and the My School website would be missing information for this year.

Ms Gillard said the selfish decision was a clear indication that the AEU Executive was not interested in what is best for parents or students but rather imposing their ideology on school communities.

She said it was simply unbelievable that a union would ask its members to boycott tests that are used to help distribute \$2.5 billion of new funding to schools. The new funding will be used to improve literacy and numeracy, provide assistance and training to teachers and help our most disadvantaged schools.

The Government intends to work with the States and Territories to ensure the tests are held despite the boycott. State and Territory Ministers will meet later this week in Sydney.

The boycott only affects state schools. State school principals and Catholic and independent schools have said they will run the tests.

The AEU Executive's threats against the Government and bully tactics have put classroom teachers in public schools in a very difficult position pitting them against parents and the community.

Read entire release: [http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_100412\\_133358.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_100412_133358.aspx)

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## **NSW Federation of P & C Associations opposes AEU NAPLAN ban**

*NSW Federation Media Release, 12 April 2010*

The Federation of Parents and Citizens Association strongly opposes the Australian Education Union's ban on teachers conducting the NAPLAN testing to take place from 11th to the 13th May this year.

Federation acknowledges the value of the NAPLAN testing as a diagnostic tool providing valuable data on the achievements of children in the areas of numeracy and literacy.

'Federation is not against the testing as such but the manner in which this data is used' stated Federation President Di Giblin. 'Indeed, in NSW, NAPLAN testing, and the Basic Skills Test prior to NAPLAN have been a valuable contributor to student assessment over the past decade. Our major concern is that this data is now being used as the only source of information that ranks school performance.'

The Federation is adamantly opposed to the use of parents as supervisors of the NAPLAN tests. While we disagree with the ban, it is not the parent's role to step in and ensure that these tests are undertaken.

Read more at <http://www.pandc.org.au/media-release.seo>

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## **Tasmanian parents wary on national testing**

*ABC News, 12 April 2010*

Tasmania's state school parents want details about a Federal Government suggestion they could run national tests.

The Tasmanian Council of State School Parents and Friend's Jenny Grossmith says without details, parents cannot make informed decisions about the proposal.

"We would see the choice should be available to parents," she said. "So that if they do choose for their kids to do the NAPLAN testing, then if the teachers aren't going to be available to supervise the tests, then if parents see that they want to do that we would support that."

"As I say though it's all about the way it's implemented that we would be most concerned with."

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/04/12/2869909.htm>

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## **NSW Parents outraged by strike-breaker plan**

*Kelsey Munro & Jewel Topsfield, Sydney Morning Herald, 12 April 2010*

THE NSW Parents and Citizens Association has expressed outrage at a plan by the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, to recruit parents as "strike-breakers" to supervise this year's national numeracy and literacy tests if the Australian Education Union votes today to boycott the tests.

However, the state Labor government has backed the plan and threatened to take the union to the Industrial Relations Commission should a strike go ahead.

"NSW would support any action taken by the federal government to ensure that the tests go ahead," said Samantha Wills, a spokeswoman for the Education Minister, Verity Firth. "But we would hope that teachers would do the right thing so we don't have to bring in outside supervisors.

"Most teachers don't support the ban and we would strongly encourage them not to take part."

But lawyers warned that parents used as strike-breakers and asked to supervise tests could be legally liable if students were injured under their watch. "There is the potential for legal liability issues that can mean parents are not indemnified for any actions they carry out while undertaking this role," the chief executive of the Law Institute of Victoria, Michael Brett Young, said.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/parents-outraged-by-strikebreaker-plan-20100411-s0wa.html>

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## **BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION**

### **Commonwealth to establish Building Education Revolution Taskforce**

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, Media Release, 12 April 2010*

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today announced the formation of a Commonwealth BER Implementation Taskforce to further insure the Commonwealth Government's \$16.2 billion school infrastructure investment.

The Taskforce will be led by Mr Brad Orgill, former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of UBS Investment Bank Australasia, and will have an initial budget of \$14 million.

It will employ or contract investigators with a range of skills in building, design construction and safety, quantity surveying, architecture, financial audit and law. It will also have access to the full resources of DEEWR.

The BER program helped save Australia from recession. It continues to protect jobs and help families manage the impacts of the global financial crisis.

The BER is also a long overdue investment in every school in Australia. It is 24,000 projects in 9500 schools both supporting students and teachers now and investing in our future.

Ms Gillard said she is proud that the BER helped save Australia from the worst effects of the GFC while delivering modern facilities in our schools that will give our kids a better pathway to a job.

She said she also wanted to ensure maximum value for money and is concerned that any allegations of waste are investigated fully.

Read entire release: [http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_100412\\_132612.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_100412_132612.aspx)

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## **Schools inquiry must be just the start of clean-up**

*The Australian, April 13, 2010*

JULIA Gillard had looked increasingly uncomfortable lately as she tried to hold the government's line on the schools infrastructure debacle. But the Minister for Education now recognises the problems revealed, largely by this newspaper, cannot be dealt with by fiddling around the edges of the \$16.2 billion program.

Her full-scale inquiry into the Building the Education Revolution is a victory for common sense, and for a minister who understands the community's dismay at the money being wasted.

Ms Gillard has acted correctly to set up a taskforce to investigate cost blowouts, excessive commissions, and whether state education departments are delivering value for money. If the inquiry is to be more than an election smokescreen, she must ensure it results in reallocation of dollars so that this "once in a generation" funding is not misspent.

The inquiry, which must deliver its initial report in three months, cauterises the problem in the short term. But Labor can only win politically if it then acts to clean up the mess.

It is a good sign that the taskforce will continue to report throughout the life of the BER program and that it can recommend changes to contracts and projects. This clean-up is not about cutting the money, but about revising contracts blatantly above cost, and revisiting the needs of individual schools.

It is also about forcing transparency from state governments that have been tardy or, in the case of South Australia, downright obstructionist in revealing detailed costings.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/schools-inquiry-must-be-just-the-start-of-clean-up/story-e6frq71x-1225852928277>

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## **SCHOOL LIBRARIES**

### **School libraries' future under threat**

*Farrin Foster, The Independent Weekly, 12 April 2010*

Thousands of school libraries have been built around the country as part of the Rudd Government's Building the Education Revolution program, but most won't be staffed by qualified librarians.

"There's been a lack of foresight. They haven't considered how the staffing and resourcing requirements will keep up with the infrastructure," said executive officer of Australian School Library Association Karen Bonnano.

Ms Bonnano says school libraries are effective only when staffed by trained teacher librarians.

“A teacher librarian is dual qualified. They have a teacher background to understand what’s needed in terms of curriculum and a librarian background to understand how to access and use the resources properly,” she explained.

After years of pressure from the sector, the Federal Government launched an inquiry into school libraries and the role of teacher librarians last month.

“About two years ago a group of us started talking to each and trying to get school libraries back on the agenda,” said Georgia Phillips, a retired teacher librarian and founder of The Hub website which advocates for school libraries.

Ms Phillips says budget cuts have forced principals to replace teacher librarians with unqualified staff.

Read more at <http://www.independentweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/school-libraries-future-under-threat/1800298.aspx?src=rss>

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### **Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools**

The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to make submissions addressing the terms of reference by Friday 16 April 2010.

Terms of reference: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/tor.htm>

Read more at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/index.htm>

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### **Petition for a Qualified Teacher-Librarian in Every Australian School**

So far this petition has attracted over 2,000 signatories – and climbing.

We, the undersigned, call on the federal government to ensure that all Australian primary and secondary students have access to a school library and a qualified teacher librarian.

As it has done in the past, the federal government is in a position to influence state school library funding and staffing. To do this, they can: collect national data on school library staffing, funding, and scheduling; tie funding so that states can and must adequately staff and fund school library programs and services; require that literacy programs and other national curricula should explicitly recognize the central role school libraries have in student achievement, literacy attainment, and preparation for post-secondary success; develop national school library standards; increase teacher librarian training positions in university programs.

All Australian students deserve 21st century schools staffed by 21st century professionally qualified teacher librarians.

Find out more at: <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/a-qualified-teacher-librarian-in-every-school.html>

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## **RELIGION & ETHICS**

### **Keneally: Ethics trial to face review**

*AMS Staff, sydneyanglican.net, 12 April 2010*

After a private meeting last month, Archbishop Peter Jensen says Premier Kristina Keneally has assured him there will be a full independent assessment of the trial of ethics classes in NSW schools.

A secular group, the St James Ethics Centre, has been allowed to conduct classes in 10 primary schools across the state, although the syllabus has not been made public.

Two heavyweights of Labor's socialist left faction — NSW education minister Verity Firth and former premier Nathan Rees — overruled existing guidelines to allow the trial in term two of this year. The Left has long championed secularist policies.

Dr Jensen met Premier Keneally — a Roman Catholic and member of Labor's Right faction — early last month to express his concerns.

"She has promised the trial will be fully evaluated and that we and other SRE providers will have the opportunity to discuss important matters of principle," he says.

Roman Catholic educators have indicated they have received similar promises from the Labor Government.

Read more at: [http://www.sydneyan Anglicans.net/news/stories/keneally\\_ethics\\_trial\\_to\\_face\\_review/](http://www.sydneyan Anglicans.net/news/stories/keneally_ethics_trial_to_face_review/)

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### **Keneally allows Anglican Church to vet content of ethics lessons**

*Jacqueline Maley, Sydney Morning Herald, 13 April 2010*

THE Anglican Archbishop of Sydney has privately lobbied the Premier, Kristina Keneally, against the permanent introduction of secular ethics classes in public schools, saying they would jeopardise the future of religious education.

Archbishop Peter Jensen said Ms Keneally had promised the Anglican Church would have input into the trial, which would be subject to an independent review.

Dr Jensen met Ms Keneally in February to voice his concern that the limited trial of ethics classes, which begins on Monday, could lead to scripture classes being abolished. He sought the Premier's assurance that the trial would be genuine, not just a "showpiece which heralds the beginning of classes anyway - in other words a fait accompli".

During the initial consultation process Dr Jensen refused to meet representatives from the St James Ethics Centre, which will conduct the trial, according to its executive director, Simon Longstaff.

A spokeswoman for the Premier confirmed that the government would contact the Anglican Diocese of Sydney "regarding their input into the trial".

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/keneally-allows-anglican-church-to-vet-content-of-ethics-lessons-20100412-s43m.html>

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### **Anglican archbishop will have input into ethics classes trial**

*CathNews, April 13, 2010*

The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney Peter Jensen says NSW Premier, Kristina Keneally, has promised that the Anglican Church would have input into trial introduction of secular ethics classes in public schools.

Dr Jensen met Ms Keneally in February to voice his concern that the limited trial of ethics classes, which begins on Monday, could lead to scripture classes being abolished, the Sydney Morning Herald reports.

Catholic Church representatives have also met Education Department officials to express concern that the enrolments for religion classes might drop as a result of the ethics classes.

Dr Jensen sought the Premier's assurance that the trial would be genuine, not just a "showpiece which heralds the beginning of classes anyway - in other words a fait accompli".

Read more at: <http://www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aeid=20594>

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## **Churches must not be allowed to sabotage ethics lessons**

*John Kaye, Greens MP, 13 April 2010*

Moves by the Sydney Anglican church hierarchy to interfere with the development of an ethics-based alternative to religious instruction in public schools could severely disadvantage children from non-believing families, according to Greens NSW MP John Kaye.

Dr Kaye said: "For 130 years organised religion has exercised absolute domination over one hour a week of public school time.

"Children from families that do not support a particular creed or prefer to arrange their own religious instruction have been forced to waste an hour of their valuable school week.

"The ethics-based alternative is a sensible plan to allow these students to use the school time profitably.

"This has nothing to do with the Anglicans, Catholics or any other religious group. They remain free to attract students and instruct them as they have always done.

"The ethics based classes are absolutely none of their business."

Read more at: <http://johnkaye.org.au/media/churches-must-not-be-allowed-to-sabotage-ethics-lessons>

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## **HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

### **Fruit juices 'worst offenders' in children's drinks investigation**

*Parents Jury, 22 March 2010*

A new breed of sparkling fruit juices that contain more sugar than Coca-Cola have been labelled 'Worst Offenders' in a review of 40 popular drinks by Dr Rosemary Stanton and children's health lobby group The Parents Jury.

The results of their investigation reveal that carbonated fruit juices are the new Worst Offenders for being heavy on marketing spin, but light on good nutrition, after comparing the on-pack claims with nutrition content.

This emerging range of sparkling fruit juices, such as Golden Circle's LOL and P&N Beverage's Fuze are made from around 99 per cent fruit juice, and are made to appear as a healthier alternative to soft drinks.

However a quick look at the fine print will reveal that these drinks contain more kilojoules and sugar per glass than regular soft drinks, yet they retain little, if any, of the fruit's original vitamins and nutrients.

[http://www.parentsjury.org.au/downloads/mediareleases/MEDIA\\_RELEASE\\_Food\\_Detectives\\_drinks.pdf](http://www.parentsjury.org.au/downloads/mediareleases/MEDIA_RELEASE_Food_Detectives_drinks.pdf)

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## **Now children counselled for missing out on school plays**

*Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, 6 April 2010*

TEACHERS are sending home notes with students to help them cope with the disappointment of missing out on a role in a musical or as school captain or prefect. The development comes as principals have urged parents to allow their children to fail and learn valuable lessons from mistakes and disappointments.

At Meriden, an Anglican school for girls in Strathfield, one teacher collated ideas from primary-aged students on how to deal with the disappointment of not getting a part in the junior school musical. The suggestions included: "be proud you gave it a go" and "remember the huge number of people who tried out for only eight roles".

At the bottom of the note she gave to students, the teacher wrote: "Being able to bounce back is the most valuable lesson you can learn ... Here's to growing from life's setbacks!"

At Loreto Normanhurst, students are given counselling every three weeks to discuss their "successes and failures".

The headmaster of Barker College, Rod Kefford, believes larger families equipped children better for life's disappointments, with older brothers and sisters often correcting younger siblings. "We are not equipping children to deal with disappointment," Dr Kefford said.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/now-children-counselled-for-missing-out-on-school-plays-20100405-rn63.html>

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## **Kids who walk are on track to better health**

*Australian Council for Educational Research, 8 April 2010*

Children who walk to school are more physically active in their day-to-day activities around their neighbourhood than those children who are driven to school, a new study finds. The study also suggests that children who walk to school are significantly more connected with their local community.

ACER Chief Executive Officer, Professor Geoff Masters said: "The research involved analysing surveys and pictures drawn by 659 primary school aged children between the ages of 9 and 12.

"Our study found that only 26 per cent of the years 3 to 6 primary school aged children walked to school in the past five days."

"Children who walked to school demonstrated a greater awareness of, and familiarity with, their local environment. They drew detailed elements of green space such as parks, trees, grass, flowers, sporting ovals and children playing football, people riding bikes, walking their dog and playgrounds."

"In contrast, children who travelled to school by car tended to depict abstract, isolated images of their neighbourhood environment with the car and the road as the central theme. They drew images of traffic lights, road signs, school crossings, local schools, office buildings, shopping centres, and fast food outlets. They also drew their own street and a lot of empty blank spaces," Professor Masters said.

VicHealth CEO Todd Harper said: "This study is a great insight into the hearts and minds of our children. It shows that we need to invest a lot more in their physical and emotional wellbeing."

Read entire release: <http://www.acer.edu.au/media/kids-who-walk-are-on-track-to-better-health/>

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## **School starts too early for dozy teens**

ABC News, Apr 9, 2010

Researchers at the University of South Australia say school hours should be changed to accommodate the sleep needs of teenagers.

A study published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health today looks at the sleep patterns of young people and its links to health problems such as obesity.

Professor Tim Olds says many teenagers are not getting enough sleep through the school week and would be better off if school started later in the day.

"It certainly seems that it's not so much the absolute amount of sleep that teenagers are getting but the fact that they have these sorts of cyclical sleep deficits," he said.

"So they are under-slept on school days and they accumulate a big sleep deficit through the week, then they get rid of that sleep deficit Friday and Saturday, then the whole thing begins again on Sunday.

"Adolescents who tend to go to bed a bit later don't get enough sleep in the school days, so by putting back the school starting time to 10:00am or 11:00am that may remedy that."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/04/09/2868052.htm>

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## **BULLYING & CYBER-SAFETY**

### **Research: Parents don't act on cyber-safety fears**

*Stilgherrian, ZDNet.com.au, March 22nd, 2010*

Most Australian parents are concerned about the safety of their children online. But new research shows that parents don't back up their concerns with meaningful actions, and that in any event they might well be concerned about the wrong risks.

Research by "For Safety's Sake" (PDF) for Microsoft Australia found that while 64 per cent of parents were concerned about cyber-safety, 65 per cent don't use any parental control software and 62 per cent allow their kids to access the internet unsupervised.

Parents perceive their kids to be more at risk accessing the internet from friends' homes than their own, and rate the risk from online predators as being more dangerous than exposure to pornography. In turn that's seen as more dangerous than bullying - which is seen as more dangerous than identity theft.

Few parents knew who their children's friends were online.

In Patch Monday this week, Stilgherrian discusses the research results with Microsoft's chief security advisor in Australia, Stuart Strathdee, as well as with child protection expert Karen Flanagan from Save the Children Australia. Both point out that the risks are not as they seem, and provide some practical tips.

Audio: <http://www.apo.org.au/audio/patch-monday-safety-sake>  
Report: [http://www.cnet.com.au/story\\_media/339301950/Microsoftforsafetyssake.PDF](http://www.cnet.com.au/story_media/339301950/Microsoftforsafetyssake.PDF)

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## **Coalition will empower principals to combat bullying**

*Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Opposition Education Spokesman, 29/03/10*

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

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## **Research looks at predictors to help protect kids at cyber bully risk**

*Cheryl Critchley, Herald Sun, 3 April 2010*

KIDS bullied in year 7 are more likely to cyber bully or be picked on themselves later, research has found. Hanging around with naughty friends also was a predictor of cyber bullying, but a student's home life and rules did not make much difference.

The Murdoch Childrens Research Institute study of Victorian students found traditional forms of bullying were still more prevalent than cyber bullying.

Girls were much more likely than boys to be victims of both cyber and traditional bullying.

Boys were more likely to be traditional bullies than girls, but no more likely than girls to cyber bully. Cyber bullying involves anything electronic, including computers, answering machines and mobile phones.

Murdoch research fellow Dr Sheryl Hemphill said the reasons for cyber bullying were complex. Dr Hemphill said parents, schools and the community needed to co-operate on possible solutions. "Clearly this is a complex problem and we're in the early days of understanding it," she said.

Read entire article: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/research-looks-at-predictors-to-help-protect-kids-at-cyber-bully-risk/story-e6frf7kx-1225849079430>

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## **The keys to tackling cyber-bullying**

*Joseph Sapienza & Chalpat Sonti, WA Today, 6 April 2010*

The growing phenomenon of cyber-bullying is set to get much worse, according to a Perth expert at the forefront of the battle.

As technology improves, Professor Donna Cross says soon everyone will be able to see what is posted about victims, leading to a potential surge in incidents such as that involving Leeming Senior High School mathematics teacher Robyn Hodgkin, who was attacked on a Facebook page by current and former students.

The Australian Education Union, which represents teachers, is seeking legal advice on whether its members can take legal action if attacked online.

Professor Cross, a bullying prevention expert at Edith Cowan University, said children needed to understand they could open themselves up to a law suit, with those from the age of 10 upwards criminally liable for online threats such as stalking.

"Cyber-bullying will worsen as technology gets better and better, and everyone will be able to see what is posted about the victim," she said.

The education of parents, teachers and children was the key to tackling the vicious trend. Schools needed to involve students in developing cyber-bullying policies, including calling on their pupils to help educate parents and fellow students.

Read entire article: <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/the-keys-to-tackling-cyberbullying-20100331-rer2.html>

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## **Eliminating bullying - improving well-being: important national education goals**

*Hon Julia Gillard MP, Address to National Centre Against Bullying Conference, 9 April 2010*

Improving achievement is crucial – and I'll never relent from challenging students and schools to have high expectations.

But to reach our highest expectations, we need to understand one simple proposition: happier and safer schools are better schools; and happier and safer students are more successful students.

The benefits of increased student wellbeing are well known. It has a direct impact on academic achievement through greater levels of engagement with schooling, better classroom behaviour and a greater sense of classroom ethos and togetherness.

The higher the level of a student's wellbeing, the higher their retention levels and year-12 results tend to be and this has very positive effects on economic goals like productivity, social inclusion and the building of social capital.

So improving wellbeing and eliminating bullying aren't side issues, they are major educational goals for the nation.

Indeed few things endanger the learning experience of our children more than bullying. It has been linked to aggression, depression and, in the most tragic cases, suicide. In recent weeks there have also been disturbing stories about cyber bullying, especially by predatory adults.

Conversely, we know that few things damage children more than being the perpetrators of bullying. Our leading researchers tell us that children who bully at age 14 are likely to behave aggressively at age 32, putting them into conflict with the law. They also are more likely to have children who are bullies.

These facts make bullying a crucial issue for our schools; one that some studies suggest is increasing and taking on new dimensions as students up their use of information and communications technologies. There is certainly growing parental concern.

Read entire address: [http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article\\_100409\\_124939.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_100409_124939.aspx)

Read more about NCAB: <http://www.ncab.org.au/>

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**OPINION**

## **Education standards: stupid is, is what stupid does**

*Chris Bonnor, On Line Opinion, posted Tuesday, 13 April 2010*

I guess being the co-author of a book entitled *The Stupid Country* I've already declared my hand on the extent to which Australia, at least in education, might be clever. To cut a long story short, our kids and schools are reasonably clever by most accounts but our organisation of schools, especially the way they are increasingly socially and academically separated, is demonstrably stupid. It has not and cannot deliver improvements in overall student achievement and may be instead delivering a lengthening tail of low achievement. In the words of Forrest Gump, stupid is, is what stupid does.

There is ample literature and commentary about the standard of achievement of Australian children. Using the results of international testing programs they variously conclude that the achievement levels of our students are up with the OECD best in reading and usually around tenth or so in mathematics and science. But what they also say is that the gap between our highest and lowest achieving students is far higher than it should be. In other words, our schooling comes across as high in quality but low in equity.

What has been increasingly evident is that this has filtered into the consciousness of politicians (including Julia Gillard) and is often the subject of public discourse. This is a welcome change from the standards crisis which seemed to dominate public debate about schools for most of the 1990s and the earlier part of this decade. It doesn't mean that standards are safe - but at least we are better focusing our concerns rather than just recycling the language of crisis.

There is no doubt that the underachievement of our tail is a serious issue but it is worth restating exactly why. Even people without a social justice gene in their bodies need to start adding up the downstream economic cost of under-resourcing the education of low achievers. Alternatively they should hunt around for examples of countries and education jurisdictions that can sustain a high average achievement without trying to lift up those at the bottom. There aren't any.

Read more at: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=10268>

Chris Bonnor is co-author with Jane Caro of *The stupid Country - How Australia is dismantling public education*, UNSW Press. He also manages a media monitoring website on education issues <http://www.futureforum.blogspot.com>.

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## **RESEARCH**

### **Schools fail kids over divorce**

*Danielle Teutsch, Sydney Morning Herald, 11 April 2010*

SCHOOLS are not doing enough to deal with the reality of divorce, according to new research.

And fathers, in particular, feel excluded from activities such as school carnivals, working bees and parent-teacher interviews.

Professor Thea Brown, from the department of social work at Monash University, said it was time all schools adjusted to the reality that 22 per cent of schoolchildren have divorced or separated parents.

Research led by Professor Brown found that about two-thirds of non-residential parents - which are, in most cases, fathers - said they did not receive anything from the school, not even school reports.

About the same number said they did not receive notices for events or information about parent-teacher interviews and felt "marginalised" and treated unequally compared to the resident parent. The study, involving interviews with parents and primary schools across Australia, is in an article published in the latest issue of *Children Australia* journal.

Professor Brown said many of the schools surveyed had "little sense of modern family forms", despite the introduction of family law legislation in 2006 emphasising equal shared parental responsibility and decision-making after divorce.

Read more at: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/schools-fail-kids-over-divorce-20100410-rzsd.html>

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## AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

### **ACT: Expert group to smooth school transitions for students with disabilities**

*Natasha Rudra, Canberra Times, 8 April 2010*

The ACT Government will establish an expert group to help students with disabilities make the switch from primary to high school or from public to private school.

Education Minister Andrew Barr said the announcement would fulfil one of the recommendations from a review of special education in the ACT. The Shaddock Review, conducted in 2009, made a number of recommendations to improve education for students with disabilities. Mr Barr said more recommendations from the review would be included in the upcoming May budget.

The expert working group will be made up of senior officials from Catholic, private and public schools, but Mr Barr said he would issue a list of names "in due course". He said there was often a "disconnect" when students with disabilities moved from one school to another.

The expert group would help smooth those transitions, allowing students to continue certain types of education or make links at the new school.

Read entire article: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au>

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### **ACT: Uniforms are in for public schools**

*Frances Stewart, Canberra Times, 11 April 2010*

By the end of the year all public school students and teachers in the ACT must wear a uniform or conform to a dress code.

Government pre-schools, primary schools, high schools and colleges will all be required to develop and implement a uniform, colour code or dress standard before the next school year.

Students must wear the uniform or colour code during school hours, while travelling to and from school and when engaged in school activities outside school.

Education and Training Minister Andrew Barr said the move, which delivers an election promise, would encourage school identity, spirit and pride, especially in high schools.

"A strong uniform policy is something parents have been calling for," he said. "For the high school years it is particularly important."

Read entire article: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au>

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## **NSW: Science to be put on hold as schools play catch-up**

*Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, April 9, 2010*

NSW and Victorian high school students will be put in a holding pattern in year 7 science classes to allow children from other states to catch up, under proposals for a new national curriculum.

Students in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland complete year 7 in primary school and start high school in year 8.

As a result, NSW high school students would be held back from making full use of high school science laboratories and microscope equipment in year 7. They would then be forced to cram what is now taught across four years of high school science into three years, from year eight to year 10.

The president of the Science Teachers Association of NSW, Margaret Watts, said NSW students would "have to go back to the bad old days of rote learning because there will not be enough time to do much else" under the national science curriculum.

Ms Watts said material now taught in year 7 would have to be condensed with material taught in years 8 to 10. "That is a big concern science teachers are raising," she said. "It is really cramming a lot into years 8, 9 and 10 because of the waiting in year 7."

Read more at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/science-to-be-put-on-hold-as-schools-play-catchup-20100408-rv60.html>

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## **NSW: Kids these days: the older they get, the more trouble they are**

*Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, April 10, 2010*

A GROWING number of NSW parents are struggling to control their teenagers, new data from a state government-funded advice line reveals.

While parents have traditionally turned to the service for advice on rearing children aged five or younger, parents of teenagers are now calling for help.

Of particular concern were managing rude and aggressive behaviour, use of the internet, social networking and gaming, and relationships with other teenagers. Parents also found it difficult to connect with their children and want advice on those who run away from home or who are violent.

The number of calls from parents seeking advice on how to raise adolescents has risen 36 per cent, from 2685 in 2007 to 4179 in 2009.

Release of the data from Parent Line, a 24-hour-a-day service operated by Catholic Care, follows concerns raised by school principals about parents who fail to set boundaries and want to be popular with their children.

Read more at: <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/lifematters/kids-these-days-the-older-they-get-the-more-trouble-they-are-20100409-rytv.html>

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## **QLD: Schools reintroduce Aboriginal skills**

*ABC Radio Pacific Beat, April 6, 2010*

Australian police in central Queensland have turned to Aboriginal culture to help solve some modern day problems. They've developed a program which encourages indigenous boys to re-connect with their traditional culture. The program is proving so successful it's now being expanded to other areas.

Presenter: Maria Hatzakis

Listen: Windows Media

Read transcript and listen to program online: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/201004/s2864785.htm>

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### **QLD: Are Queensland tuck-shops a smart choice?**

*Kate Higgins, Brisbane Times, April 8, 2010*

The state government's Smart Choices campaign to provide healthier food in Queensland's tuck-shops appears to be struggling due to a drop in volunteers and inexperienced management.

Queensland Association of School Tuck-shops executive services manager Chris Ogden said it was hard for some tuck-shops to provide foods in line with the Smart Choices program because they did not have enough volunteers.

"Currently P&Cs run tuck-shops ... and the vast majority of them do a fantastic job, but in some areas there are P&Cs that struggle with all of their businesses," Ms Ogden said. The running of tuck-shops could be improved if schools were more involved, she said.

Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations vice president Ben Thompson said P&Cs should receive more support from schools to help run tuck-shops.

Read entire article: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/are-queensland-tuckshops-a-smart-choice-20100407-rrxf.html>

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### **QLD: Isolated Children's Parents Association supports Ag College shake-up**

*Sam Burgess ABC News, 9 April 2010*

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) has welcomed the Queensland Government's overhaul of agricultural training.

The State Government wants to expand the Australian Agricultural College Corporation from five campuses to 14 by selling farmland.

ICPA state president Lorraine McGinnis says it will mean less travel for some students.

"I think anything that brings courses to where people are looking for them - short courses in areas that people are interested in getting not only credentials but skills in - they're important and if they can be delivered closer to the students and even the adults, well then it's making good use of both the skills they have to offer the local facilities," she said.

Read more at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/04/09/2868088.htm>

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### **SA: State siphoning school funds 'to fight fires'**

*Gavin Lower, The Australian, April 10, 2010*

THE South Australian government has been accused of using the Building the Education Revolution to pay for school bushfire-fighting water storage tanks that parents say should be a state responsibility.

The governing council of Yankalilla Area School, 75km south of Adelaide, is angry the school has had to spend \$103,191 of its BER funds on water tanks demanded by the state government as part of building conditions for schools deemed a high fire risk.

Chairwoman Anna Richards said the state government appeared to have taken advantage of the federal government's \$16.2 billion building stimulus for schools to fulfil its own responsibility for water tanks.

"The state government is saying, 'Oh, we now want to put these storage tanks in, there's all this federal money floating around, let's get some of it done through that'," Ms Richards said.

She said the school, which is classed as a high fire risk, has never had bushfire water tanks before.

Read more at: [http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/state-siphoning-school-funds-to-fight-fires/story-fn56ulhe-1225852032558?from=public\\_rss](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/state-siphoning-school-funds-to-fight-fires/story-fn56ulhe-1225852032558?from=public_rss)

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### **SA: Data withheld from public**

*Michael Owen, The Australian, April 12, 2010*

SOUTH Australia has refused to provide a breakdown of building costs under the schools stimulus program because it does not want to "create issues" similar to those in NSW, where price gouging has been exposed.

The Rann government believes the public cannot be trusted with detailed information about how taxpayers' money is being spent on individual projects because they may misinterpret the data.

South Australian Co-ordinator-General Rod Hook, charged with overseeing the rollout of the Building the Education Revolution in the state, ruled out the same level of transparency as in NSW, which had created a school-by-school website breaking down costs for each new structure.

"I am happy to be transparent. I just think what NSW did before they even got most of their projects under way created so many issues," Mr Hook said.

Read more at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/schools-watch/data-withheld-from-public/story-fn56ulhe-1225852475244>

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### **VIC: Union anger over Exclusive Brethren schools money**

*Tom Nightingale, ABC News, 8 April 2010*

The Education Union wants the Federal Government to re-consider the funds going to two school campuses run by a religious sect in northern Victoria.

Documents show \$2 million is being spent at the Exclusive Brethren's campuses in Bendigo and Swan Hill.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has previously labelled the group a cult.

The union's federal president, Angelo Gavrielatos, says the money would be better spent at other schools.

"There are other schools with a greater demonstrable need that should be given a priority with respect to these funds," he said.

"The Government needs to justify why an organisation that was described as a cult by the Prime Minister himself is receiving such large amounts of government funding."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/04/07/2866112.htm>

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## **WA: Islamic school director guilty of fraud**

*ABC News, Mar 31, 2010*

The director of three Islamic schools in Perth has been found guilty of illegally claiming millions of dollars in Federal and State Government funding.

Abdullah Magar had been on trial for the past three weeks accused of inflating the number of students attending the schools to claim additional funding in 2005 and 2006.

He set up the schools in Dianella, Kewdale and Thornlie.

The principal of one of the schools was also found guilty of five fraud offences, while the principal of a second campus was acquitted of three charges.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/03/31/2861672.htm>

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## **REMINDERS**

16 April - Submissions close, Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools - <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/schoollibraries/index.htm>

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>

19-25 April - Global Action Week - <http://www.ei-ie.org/globalactionweek2010/en/index.php>

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>

7 May - Public consultation closes - draft National Professional Standards for Teachers - [http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/npst2010-consultation-call\\_for\\_submissions,30532.html](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/npst2010-consultation-call_for_submissions,30532.html)

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>

23 May - Public consultation closes - draft K-10 Australian Curriculum English, mathematics, science and history - <http://www.acara.edu.au/consultation.html>

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/>

15-17 September - SPERA Conference, University of Sunshine Coast, Queensland - [http://www.spera.asn.au/articles.php?req=list&root\\_id=13&sub\\_id=65](http://www.spera.asn.au/articles.php?req=list&root_id=13&sub_id=65)

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

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## 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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