



# 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 24, 13 July 2010

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### EDUCATION TAX REFUND

#### PM Extends Education Tax Refund to School Uniforms

*Press conference, Prime Minister, Parliament House, Canberra, 13 July 2010*

Today I would like to announce a policy about extending the Education Tax Refund to school uniforms. The Government introduced the Education Tax Refund to help families with cost of getting the kids to school. The costs covered by the Education Tax Refund at the moment includes the cost of books, of stationary, of computer items that support kids in their learning at school.

Our experience with the Education Tax Refund is that not all families have claimed it and not all families have claimed the full amount. The full amount at the moment is \$390 for primary school students and up to \$780 for secondary school students, and obviously that amount is indexed year by year.

Eligible families are families who receive Family Tax Benefit A. That means that the Education Tax Refund is a benefit for 1.3 million families and around 2.7 million students. I have determined that if the Government is re-elected, we will extend the coverage of the Education Tax Refund to school uniforms.

Obviously this is a measure to help ease the cost of getting kids to school for families. It's something to take a little bit of pressure off. Obviously there are a number of ways we could choose to assist families. I've chosen to assist families through this new measure to help with the cost of school uniforms because of my belief in the transformative power of education and the need for that education to be one of discipline and rigour.

Read more: <http://www.pm.gov.au/node/6890>

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#### Parents applaud Prime Minister's extension of education tax break

*Peter Garrigan, President, ACSSO, 13 July 2010*

The parents of the some 2.4 million young people attending Australia's public primary and secondary schools have put their full support behind Prime Minister Julia Gillard's pledge to extend the education tax break in ways that will

provide significant and much-needed assistance to those families doing it tough, in their efforts to provide their children with the best possible educational opportunities.

We see this as a further practical step in Julia Gillard and the government achieving the pledge she made to Australia's families – 'to make sure that every student – in every community – can achieve their potential'.

All parents want the best for their children, have strong aspirations for their children's progress, are committed to supporting their development and take joint pride with the school in their achievements. But there are very many parents who, through no fault of their own, find the financial pressures that go with this commitment are hard to manage. They need and deserve a helping hand, a fair go, in carrying out their vitally important role as the first and continuing educators of their children.

This government has a driving commitment to nation building. And this Prime Minister understands that the starting point for real nation building is in the learning skills and positive personal qualities, attitudes, values and aspirations of all our young people – who are our future.

Read more and add your comment: <http://www.acsso.org.au/2010/07/parents-applaud-extension-of-education-tax-break/>

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## **FEDERAL ELECTION 2010**

### **Education and the 2010 Federal Election**

*For Our Future, Australian Education Union, 13 July 2010*

"With the federal election just around the corner, it is important you have all the facts about what the parties are offering and who will deliver for public schools.

That's why we have set up a new section on the For Our Future campaign website.

This page will be updated all the way to election day with the latest from the major parties so keep an eye on it.

You can also read an analysis of their positions on school funding so far by AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos.

The greatest concern at the moment is the Coalition's plan to cut more than \$3 billion from education programs, and to keep the discredited SES schools funding model which puts private schools first.

If you think that is the wrong approach, send a message now telling Tony Abbott it's time to invest more, not less in our public schools."

Read more: <http://www.forourfuture.org.au/697913.html>

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## **NATIONAL REVIEW OF SCHOOL FUNDING**

### **Education Minister publishes final Terms of Reference for Review**

*Hon Simon Crean MP, Minister for Education, media release 9 July 2010*

Education Minister Simon Crean has released the final Terms of Reference for the first comprehensive Government review of school funding in over 30 years.

Mr Crean said the Review of Funding for Schooling will consider how schools in Australia are funded in the future and lay the foundation for ongoing investment in the sector.

"...The over-arching goal is to ensure we achieve quality outcomes for all students," Mr Crean said.

The review has begun an initial listening tour. The initial stakeholder consultations have been held this week in Hobart, Melbourne and Sydney. This is the first step in a wide-ranging and consultative review process, which will provide opportunities for all key groups – including parents, principals, teachers, business and the broader community - to contribute their views.

"The inquiry will ensure that what we are getting quality outcomes for all students, given the changing nature of demographics and demand of areas," Mr Crean said.

The review will be completed by the end of 2011, before the beginning of the next funding period which starts in 2013.

The terms of reference and more details about the funding review including consultation arrangements can be found at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/fundingreview>

Read entire media release:

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/ministers/crean/media/releases/pages/article\\_100709\\_123244.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/ministers/crean/media/releases/pages/article_100709_123244.aspx)

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### **Crean review to find way to fund students**

*Patricia Karvelas, the Australian, 10 July 2010*

SIMON Crean has asked the review of schools funding to look at whether a "basic entitlement for every student" is required. The new federal Education Minister has asked the first review of school funding in more than 30 years to consider if the entitlement is needed to fund schools, and how the amount should be calculated.

Mr Crean's comment prompted National Catholic Education Commission chief executive Bill Griffiths to warn against any move towards a voucher system, under which money effectively follows a student rather than going to a school. In some cases, parents receive a voucher and present it to a school of their choice.

"We are not keen on vouchers in the hands of students or parents," Mr Griffiths said. "We worry that if the formula comes out against Catholic schools, we will miss out. Even if they keep the money the same, it means within two or three years you are operating on the old value of the money."

The Australian Education Union wants the review to slash funding to elite private schools and boost public education.

Opposition education spokesman Christopher Pyne said Labor was not committed to the existing funding model, which was introduced by former Prime Minister John Howard and has been attacked by the Left because it does not measure individual parent wealth. Rather, it allocated funding based on the average wealth of the suburb in which parents live.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/politics/crean-review-to-find-way-to-fund-students/story-e6frczf-1225890004034>

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### **Simple ambition for all schools**

*Jennifer Buckingham, the Australian, 12 July 2010*

THE people who can explain in detail how school funding works in Australia could probably be counted on one hand. As federal education minister in 2009, Julia Gillard described school funding as complex, opaque and confusing. If anything, this is an understatement.

Each state and territory government has different systems of allocating funds to public schools and to non-government schools. In the case of public schools, in some states there has been a move to student-centred funding formulas with multiple variables, while other state systems have the relics of decades-old industrial agreements based on teacher demands. In all states there are various idiosyncrasies with historical and political precepts. In addition, public schools receive money from the federal government for special programs and initiatives.

Non-government schools also receive a mix of funding from state and federal governments. As they are mostly per capita payments, the mechanisms are more transparent in this sector but are still complex and multi-layered.

And this is just recurrent funding. Capital funding to all sectors is even more complicated, involving state contractors, funding by submission, priority lists, sliding scales of interest subsidies, block grant authorities and numerous other factors. It makes the Building the Education Revolution look like child's play.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/simple-ambition-for-all-schools/story-e6frg6zo-1225890474609>

Jennifer Buckingham is a research fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies <http://www.cis.org.au>.

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## Five key school funding issues requiring to be addressed

*From: Submission of Australian Parents Council to Terms of Reference Consultation, Ian Dalton, 14 May 2010*

APC values the funding review as an opportunity to address five key school funding issues, which in our view are not currently identified or likely to be examined in sufficient depth in the review scope, discussion paper or terms of reference as they currently stand:

- To effectively fund all Australian students' entitlement to 'the very best quality schooling and outcomes' or 'world class educational standards' there needs to be agreed understanding of what constitutes 'high quality schooling' in Australia in the 21st Century. This needs to be identified and articulated;
- To effectively identify and fund 'schooling funding needs', the real, up to date average per capita recurrent cost of schooling in Australia must be investigated, understood, agreed across the states and territories and adopted as a reference point for future funding;
- In excess of \$30 billion is invested in schooling each year in Australia yet, to the best of our knowledge, an efficiency audit in respect of how federal, state and territory funds allocated to schooling are spent has never been formally conducted or published. An investigation of how much of the money allocated by governments to schooling actually reaches classrooms, how much is diverted into other areas such as bureaucracy and research, and whether such funds are in fact being usefully and efficiently applied should be incorporated into the funding review.
- The SES Funding model has, for the most part, been the best funding model for schooling yet seen in Australia. Its deficiencies have primarily resulted from the fact that it has never been resourced to a level that enabled it to be fully and properly implemented. The utility of a fully resourced SES funding model applied across the government and non-government schooling sectors should be investigated as a key element of the review.
- Parental attitudes to education are critical to students achieving successful schooling outcomes. However the potential of the parental factor in improving the outcomes of schooling is still under-researched, misunderstood and under-funded. Schools provide a fundamental point of outreach to parents both before and during the compulsory schooling years. APC has long considered that a pool of funds should be established and made available to school communities for projects and programs to engage parents in active participation in their children's schooling in accordance with the National Framework for Family-School Partnerships.

APC proposes that the relative benefits of funding parent capacity-building and partnership is an essential issue to be examined under the proposed terms of reference which refer to, "what lessons can be learned from funding arrangements overseas and in Australia ...", and "the appropriate composition of school funding, including teaching, capital and other costs of schooling".

Read entire submission at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/Documents/APC.pdf>

Read all 17 published submissions from stakeholder groups:  
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/Pages/Reviewsubmissions.aspx>

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## Research finds “Believe or burn in hell” messages delivered to young children in public schools

*Catherine Byrne, Macquarie University, media release, 25 June 2010*

Research by Macquarie University has found extreme approaches to religion education by untrained scripture volunteers.

The survey of attitudes and expectations was conducted in 13 NSW schools from the northern rivers to Western Sydney. It included responses from 121 parents, teachers, scripture volunteers and principals.

It found that children in one school were told if they ‘didn’t believe in Jesus they would burn in hell’. The Department of Education considers such comments as child abuse. The survey also found that scripture (Special Religious Education - SRE) teachers tend to discourage questioning, emphasize submission to authority and exclude different beliefs.

The survey revealed stark differences between what parents want and what is happening in the classroom.

PhD scholar Cathy Byrne, from Macquarie’s Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, found: ‘Most parents and trained teachers want critical thinking about religion, individual responsibility for moral decisions and empathy towards others’.

In contrast, 70% of scripture teachers think children should be taught the Bible as historical fact and should not be given a choice whether to believe in God. 80% of Christian scripture teachers think children should not be exposed to non- Christian beliefs.

Read entire release: <http://www.religioneducation.org.au/Media/MEDIA%20RELEASE%20-%20Believe%20or%20Burn%2025%20June.pdf>

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## Research shows most parents and educators want changes to scripture.

*Catherine Byrne, Macquarie University, Media Release, 2 July 2010*

A Macquarie University survey found that 69 percent of parents and trained educators want world religions and beliefs taught rather than segregated scripture.

The survey results, the first in Australia to examine Special Religion Education (SRE) in public schools, were presented at the Australian Association for Studies of Religion conference in Brisbane.

PhD scholar with the university’s Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Cathy Byrne said that the survey of 121 parents and teachers across the state found that parents and trained educators want change. ‘Most schools don’t have any world religions until senior primary, if at all’, she said. Scripture (SRE) gets more than 7 times the amount of school time as General Religion Education (GRE). ‘The imbalance in favour of indoctrination is not supported by parents and educators’, she said.

Ms Byrne said that ‘children need to learn the skills to live with difference’ and that ‘segregated instruction is an outdated practice’. ‘Scripture is the first experience of social separation on the basis of belief’ she said. ‘There is no analysis about the effect this has on children and what values they are learning as a result’. She said ‘extreme scripture teaches about religious difference in negative ways’.

‘Internationally, governments are involved with religion education because of its implications for social inclusion, said Ms Byrne. ‘Australia needs to review its hands-off approach’, she said.

Read entire release: <http://www.religioneducation.org.au/Media/MEDIA%20RELEASE%20-%20Parents%20want%20end%20to%20SRE%202%20July.pdf>

Read Catherine Byrne’s presentation to the Australian Association for Studies of Religion Conference at: <http://www.religioneducation.org.au/Media/AASRPRESFINALBurnJuly2.pdf>

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## **Public schools need ethics, not religious education**

*Glen Coulton, Online Opinion, 2 July 2010*

Prominent clerics in New South Wales are claiming that ethics which are not based on Christian teaching are somehow not proper.

They are labouring under the delusion that ethics and religious belief are interdependent. In fact, religion is to ethics as pseudoscience is to science.

In each case, the proselytisers of the former try to establish a right to make significant statements about the latter by presenting the latter as being somehow owned by the former.

In NSW, the anxious clerics are even going to the extent of insisting that they should have a prominent role in evaluating the ethics courses being tried out in ten schools because, as they falsely argue, ethics is a subset of religion.

In fact, far from the churches being allowed some role to play in the design or evaluation of ethics courses in schools, they should be not allowed within a bull's roar of them.

Ethical and religious teachings are both concerned with how people should behave in particular situations and to this extent have a seeming similarity, but there are at least three ways in which they are starkly different and largely incompatible.

Read entire article: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=10631&page=0>

*Glen Coulton is a retired teacher with eighteen years experience in government primary and secondary schools, and subsequent extensive involvement in the areas of curriculum development and student assessment.*

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## **SA academic to assess NSW school ethics trial**

*Heath Gilmore, Sydney Morning Herald, 5 July 2010*

THE future of the ethics classes in NSW public schools rests with a little-known South Australian academic. Dr Sue Knight, a philosophy lecturer at the University of South Australia, has been appointed to evaluate the ethics trial, which finished last week.

Dr Knight's speciality is the teaching of philosophy and ethical inquiry in primary and secondary schools.

The Education Minister, Verity Firth, said the evaluation would canvass the views of major stakeholders, including the religious faiths, which have fiercely opposed the classes.

Neither the public nor the parents of participating children will be invited to make a submission.

Dr Knight will determine whether the management of the trial by the St James Ethics Centre is a viable model for wider implementation in NSW state schools. She also will examine the efficacy of the course for improving students' understanding and skills in ethical decision-making, as well as make any recommendations for improvements.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/sa-academic-to-assess-school-ethics-trial-20100704-zvxo.html>

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## SELECTIVE SCHOOLING

### Hierarchy of schools leads to bad performers

*Chris Bonnor, Sydney Morning Herald, July 8, 2010*

The focus on selective schools promotes thought about how to provide secondary schooling to our children - particularly how to encourage students who are identified with gifts and talents, without neglecting those who apparently aren't.

Selective schooling is pitched as both part of the encouragement and being partly responsible for the neglect. Such schools are alternatively seen as a lottery-winning pathway to achievement and success; or a blight on the landscape of schools, gathering up the best and the brightest students and leaving everyone else to struggle.

Selective school teachers know about both sides. Their principals are aware their schools are served up an advantaged clientele. During the recent dispute over the National Assessment Program for literacy and numeracy, they forthrightly objected to My School's absurd comparisons between their schools and comprehensive schools.

But significant problems are created by providing separate schools for those with gifts and talents. If they are a good idea then our problem is they are only accessible to some. Your win in this lottery not only depends on how you prepare for the test but on where you live. If they are a bad idea, then we have a much bigger problem.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/hierarchy-of-schools-leads-to-bad-performers-20100707-100k5.html>

*Chris Bonnor is co-author of The Stupid Country - How Australia is dismantling public education*

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## Social Segregation Between Schools Blights Children and Society

*Trevor Cobbold, Save our Schools, 12 July 2010*

Social segregation between schools is increasing in Australia. Its effect will be to reduce the results of students from disadvantaged families, increase the achievement gap between students from rich and poor families and undermine the potential for different social groups in Australia to learn, work and live together with tolerance and mutual understanding.

Chris Bonnor, co-author of *The Stupid Country*, and Professor Richard Teese from Melbourne University have raised the spectre of increasing social segregation in Australia's schools [Sydney Morning Herald, 5 July and 8 July]. They have pointed to the increasing social division as more students from richer families attend private and selective government schools while low income students attend other government schools. Australian education is under threat from increasing "social and academic apartheid" according to Bonnor.

Their concerns are well supported by the evidence.

Social segregation between government and private schools is significant in Australia and it has increased over the past twenty years or more. Government schools are increasingly becoming schools for lower and middle SES families and private schools have increased their enrolments of students from middle and high SES families.

There is also evidence of increasing social segregation between schools in the government sector.

Read entire article: <http://www.saveourschools.com.au/equity-in-education/social-segregation-in-schools-blights-children-and-society>

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## HOW SCHOOLS ARE RUN

### Schools fleeced as red tape leads to waste

*Anthony Klan, the Australian, 12 July 2010*

MANY public schools are overpaying when buying goods through government-endorsed delivery channels. The overpayments run to hundreds of dollars - and in some cases thousands - each year.

An investigation by The Australian has found wastage in education departments is not isolated to the \$16.2 billion schools stimulus building program. Public schools are being overcharged for products from projectors and calculators to refrigerators.

The problem appears worst in NSW, where the state government collects a fee of up to 2.5 per cent on all items purchased by government departments - and public schools - through its Smartbuy procurement program. A survey by The Australian has found many products offered through Smartbuy can be bought on the open market for less than those prices offered through the government scheme.

Government supplier Corporate Express is quoting \$1708 for a 564-litre, LG refrigerator. An identical item is advertised online for \$1276, including delivery. Another Smartbuy supplier is quoting the Bison AMP-1715 wireless projector to schools at \$2905. The same product is advertised at \$2499, including delivery. All prices and quotes include GST.

NSW public school principals must purchase all items through Smartbuy - regardless of their value - unless they provide the Education Department with details of the product, and the department approves each request.

The Public Schools Principals Forum, which is calling for centralised procurement to be scrapped, said the additional red tape meant schools rarely opted to purchase outside the program. "The (NSW) Education Department is saying it doesn't trust principals to do the right thing, that the department knows better than principals do when it comes to school requirements," said forum chairwoman Cheryl McBride.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/schools-fleeced-as-red-tape-leads-to-waste/story-e6frg6nf-1225890495336>

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## UNDERSTANDING & IMPROVING LEARNING

### Wanted: a new respect for learning

*Caroline Milburn, the Age, July 12, 2010*

As anti-social behaviour is more evident on our streets, it is also becoming more of a problem in our schools in tandem with disrespect for learning.

A recent paper by the Australian Primary Principals Association warned that "increasing numbers of children are attending school who are inattentive, disruptive, under-motivated and disengaged. This is evident from the earliest years of primary schools. Disproportionate numbers of these children come from disadvantaged backgrounds where often there is a high level of dysfunction in the household."

Australia's most disadvantaged schools, where large proportions of parents depend on welfare, are the most obvious places where bad attitudes create poor academic achievement. But education statistics suggest that a lack of

enthusiasm for learning is a much broader problem, causing underperformance in many schools, not just those in poorer areas.

National school drop-out figures and literacy results point to a huge waste of student potential. More than 60,000 teenagers leave school each year without going into a job or further study. Thirty per cent of year 9 students perform at only the basic minimum levels of writing literacy, according to data from the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy.

The extent of the nation's attitude problem with learning was outlined in March when the federal government received a report by a group of top scientists and educators given the task of predicting the nation's needs 20 years from now. The report was commissioned by the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council, an independent group that provides advice to Commonwealth governments.

Almost 90 per cent of all jobs now require some type of post-school qualification. Yet at least half of Australian workers do not have these qualifications, or have not even completed secondary school, says the council's report, *Transforming Learning and the Transmission of Knowledge: Preparing a Learning Society for the Future*.

Read entire article: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/wanted-a-new-respect-for-learning-20100709-103do.html?rand=1278649324640>

Read the report: <http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/pmseic/Documents/TransformingLearningEWGreportFINAL.pdf>

Read more about the PMSEIC meeting: <http://www.innovation.gov.au/section/pmseic/pages/21.aspx>

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## HEALTH & WELL-BEING

### Researchers delve into disadvantaged students' resilience

*ABC News, 9 July 2010*

Deakin University researchers want to know what is behind the resilience of successful students at socially disadvantaged schools.

It is conducting a study at Colac, Geelong and Mount Dandenong to find out how students overcome difficult circumstances.

The project leader, Professor Jill Blackmore, says the community can play a big role.

"Schools are not isolated things," she said. "Schools are actually quite central to communities, particularly rural and isolated communities.

"They're places where people congregate and meet; they're where social networks are made.

"Kids themselves get their social networks built out of their school relationships."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/09/2949179.htm>

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## AWARDS & PRIZES

### NEiTA Awards for Inspirational Teaching 2010

*Final Chance to nominate Great Local Teachers*

Nominations for the NEiTA 2010 ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards are closing soon. All nominations must be received by Friday 30 July 2010.

This year NEiTA – the National Excellence in Teaching Awards – carries the theme ‘Great Teachers Lead The Way’ to acknowledge the leadership qualities that inspirational teachers bring to their work and the teaching profession, as they guide and inspire their students in learning, provide support and encouragement to parents and colleagues, and build two-way community connections .

NEiTA is Australia’s only national, independent community-centred teaching awards program that gives Australian secondary students, parents, early childhood and school communities the opportunity to formally thank their hard-working, inspirational teachers, principals and directors.

Who can nominate? Australian parents, school councils, committees of management, parent associations, secondary student councils, and community organisations.

Who can be nominated? Early childhood and school teachers from the entire spectrum of education, and leaders (principals, deputy principals, early childhood centre directors, team leaders, and department heads).

Read more: <http://www.neita.com.au>

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## AROUND THE STATES & TERRITORIES

### ACT: Schools overuse suspension power: Greens

*Ewa Kretowicz, Canberra Times, 10 July 2010*

ACT public school principals have handed out suspensions of six days or more 15 times since new laws granted them powers to bar students for up to 15 days without departmental approval. In 2009 only four students were suspended for six days or more.

Greens leader Meredith Hunter said the increase was excessive, as the laws only came into effect on March 4. "I'm concerned that this will continue to trend upwards ... under the previous regime there was someone independent of the situation as a check and balance and monitoring, that's obviously no longer the case," Ms Hunter said.

But Education minister Andrew Barr said principals knew best. "Principals know their schools and they know their students. They are on the ground every day ... It is principals who are best placed to make these important decisions.

"They know that if reading, writing and arithmetic are the building blocks of a good education then behaviour management in the classroom and in the playground is the foundation stone," Mr Barr said.

Read more: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/local/news/general/schools-overuse-power-greens/1881772.aspx>

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### NSW: Public school enrolments rise

*ABC News, 6 July 2010*

The New South Wales Department of Education says public school enrolments have grown enormously over the past year, especially in primary schools.

Department director-general Michael Coutts-Trotter says while the effects of the global financial crisis partly explain the increase, there has been a visible boost in confidence in the public system.

He says the upward trend for the second year in a row reverses a decade-long decline in public schools.

"That's been reversed emphatically this year in NSW with a rise of 3,600 enrolments," Mr Coutts-Trotter said.

"It's because of the quality of what our teachers, school staff and school principals do in our schools, and it's because people want their children to get involved in their community through their local public school."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/06/2945681.htm>

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## **NSW: School kids' films chosen for major festival**

*ABC Illawarra, 8 July 2010*

Organisers of a film project for South Coast Indigenous school children say their work has been chosen for major festivals.

Sixty children from Nowra, Bomaderry and Huskisson in NSW took part in the 2009 Bundanon Sprout project run by Bundanon Trust.

The Trust's CEO Deborah Ely says the films have attracted a lot of attention.

"There was a fantastic opportunity for the films at the international film festival in Boston in April and they selected three of the films for screening their which was a wonderful international outing for the kids," she said.

"They've now been picked up by the Sandfly Film Festival and indeed the travelling Sandfly Film Festival will be showing them at the Tea Club 26th of July."

A selection of the films is also being screened by Shoalhaven Council as part of the NAIDOC week event, Black Screens.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/08/2948035.htm?site=illawarra&section=news>

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## **NT: Education's the answer for Indigenous disadvantage**

*Comment, NT News, July 5th, 2010*

THERE are many reasons for the terrible dysfunction afflicting the Territory's indigenous communities. Most of us would name alcoholism, gambling, addiction to ganga and domestic violence. But they are symptoms, rather than causes.

At the heart of indigenous disadvantage is a lack of education; many people living on remote communities can barely write their own names or do simple sums.

The federal and Territory governments neglected Aboriginal education for 30 years after the much-maligned missionaries left.

For instance, there was not a single place for senior high school students in NT indigenous communities until 2002.

That was criminal - literally. It is against the law not to provide for children to go to school.

Read entire article: [http://www.ntnews.com.au/article/2010/07/05/161241\\_opinion.html](http://www.ntnews.com.au/article/2010/07/05/161241_opinion.html)

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### **NT: Schools to get busy after hours**

*NT News, 7 July 2010*

TERRITORIANS are being asked to share ideas on how the community can best use school facilities after hours.

The Education Department is reminding people they need submissions on the topic in by this Friday.

The Schools Our Community Heart project wants people's views on ways schools should be used outside normal school hours.

The department will use the submissions to develop rules on ways schools can be used for things such as community group meetings, adult classes and sports training.

Department boss Gary Barnes said schools were important assets for the whole community.

The submission form is available online at: [www.lifestylent.nt.gov.au](http://www.lifestylent.nt.gov.au)

Source: [http://www.ntnews.com.au/article/2010/07/07/162001\\_ntnews.html](http://www.ntnews.com.au/article/2010/07/07/162001_ntnews.html)

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### **QLD: Classes overcrowded from Prep to Year 3**

*Tanya Chilcott, Courier Mail, 7 July 2010*

MORE than 10,000 Prep to Year 3 students are being taught in overcrowded state school classrooms.

Some schools in lower socio-economic areas have particularly high student numbers, despite calls for them to have smaller class sizes.

Figures released by Education Queensland show 7 per cent of Prep to Year 3 classes, which contained 146,122 students in February this year, are over their class target size of 25 students. The figure has remained steady at 7 per cent since 2008.

This year, about 12,000 Prep to Year 3 students are in overcrowded state school classes. Year 4 to 10 classes, which have a target of 28 students, fared slightly better with 5 per cent over.

Despite the figures, EQ deputy director-general Alan Wagner strenuously denied that classes were overcrowded.

Read entire article: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/classes-overcrowded-from-prep-to-year-3/story-e6freoof-1225889125288>

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### **QLD: Year 7 school switch given thumbs up**

*Tanya Chilcott, Courier Mail, 9 July 2010*

MOVING Year 7 into high school looks set to be a reality with most educators supporting the move "as long as it is funded appropriately".

It comes as the State Government decides whether Prep should be made compulsory, while principals and private schools raise the possibility of establishing more kindergartens on their sites - signalling a potential battle with the childcare sector.

The radical proposals are among a raft of changes parents and students could face in the near future in Queensland. If they go ahead, they will be some of the biggest changes in the state's education sector in decades.

The proposals have been raised in, or made during consultation on, the Government's green paper, A Flying Start for Queensland Children. Consultation on the changes has now ended and The Courier-Mail has obtained the responses of key school stakeholders, giving an insight into which changes are likely, and which will face opposition, if they go ahead.

Some are more controversial than others, including an amalgamated education super-body which would have powers to inspect every school - both private and state - in order to monitor performance.

Read entire article: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/year-7-school-switch-given-thumbs-up/story-e6freoof-1225889985014>

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### **SA: Assault charges dropped in school camp exorcism case**

*ABC News, 6 July 2010*

Prosecutors have dropped assault charges against eight men who had been accused of staging an exorcism, in exchange for restraining orders.

Adelaide Magistrates Court heard each of the men denied the allegations, despite agreeing to restraining orders.

They are prevented from contacting a teenager who was the subject of the alleged exorcism at a Lutheran Church youth camp in the Barossa Valley last year.

False imprisonment charges against the men were dropped earlier in the year.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/06/2946053.htm>

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### **SA: Year 12 worries as 'super' campus nears**

*ABC News, 8 July 2010*

Concern has been expressed that the opening of a 'super' school in Adelaide's northern suburbs next year will disrupt Year 12 students.

The Gepps Cross campus is due to open in second term. It will amalgamate four current schools, including Enfield High.

Chair of the Enfield High governing council, Joann Wilkins, says her daughter will be starting Year 12 at one school next year and finishing it at another.

"Their schooling that they're actually supposed to be getting ... they're supposed to knuckle down and actually do to pass Year 12. They're going to be shuttled backwards and forwards from one school to the next," she said.

"How are they supposed to get their scores and their marks if they're moved from pillar to post?"

Principal of the new school Sandy Richardson says it is not an ideal situation, but students will be kept together as they tackle their subjects.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/08/2947982.htm>

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## **SA: Girl's plea to stop bullies**

*Sarah Mennie, Sunday Mail, 11 July 2010*

IT was one of the most frightening moments of Chloe Hill's life: locked in a school toilet and being punched by seven other children. And all because she had autism.

Being taunted, teased and shoved around had been part of the 13-year-old's life - until, fed up and utterly despairing, she decided to make a stand. Tired of trying to put up with the constant bullying, the brave teen wrote a letter and read it out at assembly at her Port Pirie school, Airdale Primary.

"It came from my heart," Chloe told the Sunday Mail. "I wasn't feeling anxious or have butterflies in my tummy when I got up there - I just expressed how I was feeling."

It was a courageous act but, despite her plea, it has had little success - the bullying has continued and Chloe still spends most of her school life in solitude, too frightened to leave the classroom.

"I don't play with anybody, I just walk around by myself at recess and lunch," Chloe said.

"I'm scared to go out of the class room. I get called names like 'retard', 'Minda' and 'spastic' and sometimes I get pushed and punched. It makes me angry and sad.

"Sometimes when I'm absolutely wild when I'm being bullied I wish I was dead."

Mum Kellie Wood, 34, and dad Damien Hill, 37, enrolled Chloe at Airdale 18 months ago after removing her from another local school because of bullying problems.

Read entire article: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/national/girls-plea-to-stop-bullies/story-e6frea8c-1225890336931>

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## **TAS: Bureaucrat rejects sacking claim**

*ABC News, 7 July 2010*

The outgoing Tasmanian education department secretary has rejected suggestions he has been sacked.

John Smyth, credited as architect of the controversial Tasmania Tomorrow education changes, is being seconded to a federal education job.

Mr Smyth denied Opposition claims he thought he would have his old job back when he returned from Canberra. He also rejected a statement by the Premier that he wants another position in the Tasmanian public service when his secondment ends in April. He says the Premier offered him a new contract but he decided to only extend his current contract to cover the secondment.

Mr Smyth says stepping down was entirely his decision.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/07/2946812.htm>

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### **TAS: Poor report card on school science**

*ABC News, 8 July 2010*

The auditor-general has recommended Tasmanian schools adopt a more coordinated approach to teaching science.

Mike Blake has tabled a report in parliament examining the effectiveness of science teaching in the state's high schools. He has found that Tasmanian students marginally under-performed in two international surveys of scientific literacy.

One survey showed a slight improvement between 2003 and 2007.

The audit found half the schools visited had laboratories which were in old or in poor condition.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/08/2948375.htm>

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### **TAS: Questions over school stimulus spending**

*ABC News, 9 July 2010*

The State Opposition has raised concerns about the handling of the Federal Government's schools stimulus program in Tasmania.

The state has been allocated \$327 million under the program to construct new school facilities.

The State Government says it has spent close to half that money but the Opposition has questioned why more than \$20 million has been spent on consultancy fees.

Opposition spokesman, Michael Ferguson, says administration costs should be capped at 4 per cent.

"At the moment it doesn't look good because they've spent \$20.6 million on architecture fees and project management when as far as we're aware, and as we put to the minister, it should be a much lower amount," he said.

A Government spokesman says an 8 per cent cost is standard and additional federal funding was provided to cover administration expenses.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/09/2948978.htm>

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### **VIC: New York-style school mooted for Melbourne**

*Ryan Sheales, ABC News, 8 July 2010*

A high-rise public school, common in big cities such as New York, might be constructed in Melbourne.

The Victorian Government has commissioned its planning body, VicUrban, to conduct a 12-month feasibility study for a primary school, in the highly urbanised Docklands precinct

Education Minister Bronwyn Pike said the cramped nature of Docklands poses unique planning challenges.

"When you have got a small footprint and you want space then go up, rather than spreading wide," she said. "So I think we will be looking at the best practices around the world in cities (like New York), and seeing what it is that Melbourne can create."

Ms Pike thinks the proposed school would look unlike any other in Victoria, because it may not have many outdoor sporting areas.

Opposition leader Ted Baillieu has some concerns about the proposal.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/08/2948352.htm>

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### **WA: University workshops to encourage Indigenous student enrolments**

*ABC News, 9 July 2010*

The University of Western Australia is hosting a series of workshops to encourage Indigenous high school students to go to university.

Almost 100 students from Kununurra to Albany have been invited to attend the workshops from the July 12 to 15.

Students from Broome, Port Hedland and Karratha have also been invited.

The activities include a science and engineering camp, a workshop for health carers and a Year 12 TEE revision camp.

Workshop co-ordinator Brendon DeGois says there has been strong interest from regional students. "We're probably looking at something like 70 to 80 per cent of the total group number from the country, which is great, and it just shows it doesn't matter where you live, the opportunity is out there for you," he said.

Read entire article: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/07/09/2949258.htm>

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### **WA: More than one teacher a week investigated for sexual assault**

*Yasmine Phillips, Sunday Times, 11 July 2010*

MORE than one teacher a week in Western Australia is investigated for sexual assault or grooming students for sex.

For the first time, the Education Department has released shocking statistics that show an alarming spike in sexual misconduct complaints against teachers. Complaints range from sexual contact with students to grooming behaviour and students reporting inappropriate conduct that made them feel uncomfortable.

In the first nine months of 2009-10, the Education Department admitted 66 teachers and staff were accused of "inappropriate conduct, which may be sexually motivated". The number was up from 40 teachers in 2008-09. The department also admitted:

- Fifty-one complaints were made against teachers and staff for unwarranted physical contact of a non-sexual nature, ranging from assault to a slight shove, down from 60 complaints the previous year.
- Three teachers and staff were reported for child pornography, down from four the previous year.

- Of the 120 serious child protection allegations levelled at staff, 46 cases were substantiated and 19 were not proved. The remaining 55 are under investigation.

Acting Education Minister John Day said each misconduct report was "highly concerning" because every child had the right to feel safe at school.

Read entire article: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/national/more-than-one-teacher-a-week-investigated-for-sexual-assault/story-e6frea8c-1225890249585>

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## CONFERENCES & EVENTS

### Becoming Solution-focused in Brief Therapy

*One-day workshops in QLD centres: July – September 2010*

The workshop is targeted towards school staff, counsellors, psychologists, social workers, dieticians, employment consultants, youth workers, disability workers, and other helping professionals.

If you want to produce better outcomes sooner, then this workshop is for you. This is a very popular program, so you will need to act fast to secure a place.

Each workshop runs from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm on these dates and locations:

- Brisbane - Friday 30th July, 2010 Windsor Internat. Motel, Cnr Lutwyche Rd & Bryden St, Windsor
- Townsville - Friday 13th August, 2010 Rydges Southbank Hotel, 23 Palmer St
- Bundaberg - Friday 27th August, 2010 Quality Hotel Burnett Riverside, 7 Quay St
- Gladstone - Friday 10th September, 2010 Gladstone Rydges, 100 Goondoon St
- Kingaroy - Friday 17th September, 2010 Kingaroy RSL, 126 Kingaroy St

For full details and Registration: [http://positivepeoplesolutions.com.au/docs/Flyer\\_Solution-focused\\_Brief\\_Therapy.pdf](http://positivepeoplesolutions.com.au/docs/Flyer_Solution-focused_Brief_Therapy.pdf)

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## National Science Week 2010

*14 – 22 August 2010*

For over ten years, National Science Week has been celebrating the contribution of Australian scientists to the world, encouraging interest in scientific pursuits and inspiring people to become fascinated by the world in which we live.

With ongoing support from the Australian Government and key industry bodies like Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), National Science Week continues to expand and now attracts a wide audience across all spectrums.

Join us to

- celebrate our talents and achievements in science, engineering, technology and innovation in Australia; participate in events and activities that showcase science, engineering, technology and innovation;
- discover sciences' modern explorations, making science interesting, challenging, important, and of direct relevance to our daily lives, from the well being of our society to the environmentally sustainable growth of our economy;
- encourage younger people to consider continuing studies in science;
- connect science studies and science-based careers; and
- foster partnerships throughout the community.

For further information: <http://www.scienceweek.gov.au/Pages/index.aspx>

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## National Literacy & Numeracy Week (NLNW) 2010

*29 August to 4 September 2010*

The week gives schools the opportunity to get involved in a range of activities - and to recognise and support locally the achievements of students and the work of teachers, parents

To help you start thinking ahead for the 2010 events, you can view NLNW 2009 activities at the National Activities for Schools website.

Visit the National Literacy and Numeracy Week website periodically to receive further updates as the 2010 program takes shape: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/NationalLiteracyandNumeracyWeek/Pages/default.aspx>

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## Anti-Poverty Week 2010

*17 – 23 October 2010*

Anti-Poverty Week provides an annual focus on poverty around the world - including those severely disadvantaged in our community right here in Australia. It includes the UN's International Anti-Poverty Day, 17 October.

The Week's main aims are to:

- strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship;
- encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems.

Participation from schools and across the wider community has grown rapidly in recent years, with activities such as public lectures, workshops, conferences, debates, concerts, displays, sports days and media briefings being organised.

Last year, at least 1,000 organisations around Australia participated in more than 400 activities during the Week, with a total participation of more than 10,000 people.

Everyone is very welcome to organise an activity during the Week or join in something being organised by other people. The activities can be large or small, and activities at local levels are especially welcome.

The national website includes basic fact sheets, promotional material, a calendar of activities and links to other sources of information and ideas. It also includes contact details for the National Office and the Co-Chairs in each State.

For ideas about how your school community can get involved, visit: <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au>

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## REMINDERS

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

27 July - The Reading Revolution! - Perth, WA - <http://www.worldliteracy.com.au>

29-31 July - International Conference on Teacher Education - Quezon City, Philippines - <http://www.ictedphilippines.org/>

4-5 August - Isolated Children's Parents Association Conference - Fremantle, WA - <http://www.icpa.com.au/Conference.asp>

12-14 August - National Interactive Teaching and Learning Conference - Gold Coast, QLD - <http://www.iwb.net.au/conferences/australian10/>

14-22 August - National Science Week - <http://www.scienceweek.gov.au/Pages/index.aspx>

15-17 August - ACER Research Conference - Melbourne, VIC - [http://www.acer.edu.au/research\\_conferences/](http://www.acer.edu.au/research_conferences/)

19-27 August - International Conference of Mathematicians - Hyderabad, India - <http://www.icm2010.org.in/>

25-27 August - European Conference on Educational Research - Helsinki, Finland - <http://www.helsinki.fi/ecer2010/index.html>

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

3-4 September - Future Directions in Literacy Conference - Sydney, NSW - [http://sydney.edu.au/education\\_social\\_work/professional\\_learning/teachers/2010/future\\_directions\\_literacy.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/education_social_work/professional_learning/teachers/2010/future_directions_literacy.shtml)

6 September - International Middle Years of Schooling Conference - Adelaide, SA - <http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/middleschool2010/>

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)

22 September - Language and Culture and Social Connectedness in Our Diverse Landscape Symposium - Toowoomba, QLD - <http://www.usq.edu.au/lcdl>

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

27-30 September - Australian Mathematical Society 54th Meeting - Brisbane, QLD - <http://www.smp.uq.edu.au/austms2010/>

27 September-1 October - International Association of School Librarianship Conference - Brisbane QLD - <http://www.iasl-online.org/events/conf/2010/>

October - International School Library Month - <http://www.iasl-online.org/events/islm/>

12-15 October - EDGE 2010: e-Learning: The horizon and beyond - Toronto, Canada - <http://www.mun.ca/edge2010/>

13 November - Hands on Literacy Conference - Singapore - <http://www.handsonlit.com/>

2-5 December - Second Annual Asian Conference on Education - Osaka, Japan - <http://ace.iafor.org/>

11-12 March - Going Global 2011 - Hong Kong - <http://www.britishcouncil.org/goingglobal-gg5-general-information.htm>

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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)

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

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