

# Weekly Briefing for Member Schools

28 January 2011

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## Media Update

### MySchool Website Criticised

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has been criticised for ignoring parents in the top and bottom income-earning categories when calculating the relative ranking of schools for the *MySchool* website. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) was created to group 'statistically similar' schools on the website, to permit parents to compare schools' performance on national literacy and numeracy tests. Schools had provided ACARA with detailed parental occupation data in order to calculate their ICSEA score, but the index only uses the two middle categories (associate professionals and skilled non-professionals) to calculate schools' rankings. Schools in regional and rural areas were critical that the inclusion of families from agricultural backgrounds in the 'associate professionals' category meant that they appeared to be more 'advantaged' than similar schools from metropolitan areas. Critics also stated that the calculation methodology would make schools with large numbers of wealthy parents appear less disadvantaged, and schools with high numbers of unemployed parents to appear to be better off.

A spokesperson for ACARA stated that the ICSEA methodology had been used because resulted in the best prediction of national literacy and numeracy test results. The Chief Executive of Independent Schools Victoria, Ms Michelle Green, argued that the launch of the *My School* website should be delayed until ACARA could demonstrate that the ICSEA rankings accurately reflected schools' level of advantage. She stated that 'if you asked any parent in the community they would believe the ICSEA score does include the number of professionals and unemployed parents at the school. I don't care if it takes another 12 months — if you are going to publish data that can impact on schools' standing in the community and financial viability, make sure it's right.' The Save Our Schools lobby was also critical, arguing that the methodology 'seems to go against all the findings'. Schools also expressed concerns that their ICSEA scores could be linked to the Australian Government's *Review of Funding for Schooling*.

- MySchool: How it Gets it so Wrong – *The Age*: Jewel Topsfield, 24 January 2011

### Newspaper Reports Continue to Criticise School Fees

Following the article in the *Sunday Age* on 16 January 2011 (see Weekly Briefing 01/2011), other Fairfax Group newspapers have printed articles that are critical of increases in Independent school fees over the past ten years. The *Sydney Morning Herald* was critical of the fact that both Australian Government funding and annual fees for some Sydney schools had more than doubled since the introduction of the socioeconomic status (SES) funding model, while enrolment growth had not been as high. The newspaper quoted the Australian Education Union and the Save Our Schools lobby group, which argued that 'the issue at stake here is whether we continue to provide huge amounts of taxpayer funds to the wealthiest schools and families in Australia, while the most disadvantaged students are denied the resources they need to get an adequate education. Taxpayer funding of these wealthy schools would be better used to support the education of disadvantaged students in both government and private schools.'

- Charges Double in 10 Years, Leaving Inflation for Dead – *Sun Herald*: Anna Patty, 23 January 2011
- A Lesson in School Funding Inequality – *Sun Herald*: The Editor, 23 January 2011
- Private School Students Win Bigger Share of Funding – *Sydney Morning Herald*: Anna Patty, 25 January 2011
- Do the Sums – *Newcastle Herald*: Donna Page, 25 January 2011
- Elite School Fees Double in 10 Years – *Canberra Times*: Breanna Tucker, 28 January 2011

### Report Finds that Real Funding for Non-Government Schools is Decreasing

In contrast to the articles critical of government funding for non-government schools, the Productivity Commission's annual *Report on Government Services (ROGS) 2011* has indicated that total government funding per capita for non-government schools has decreased in real terms over recent years, while funding for government school students has increased. The ROGS outlines the performance of all levels of Australian Government in the provision of services during the 2008-09 financial year, with Part B focusing on government funding for children's services (Chapter 3), school education (chapter 4) and vocational education and training (Chapter 5). The ROGS found that total recurrent expenditure from the Australian, state and territory governments was \$13,544 in 2008-09, an increase of 1.6 per cent per annum from 2004-05 in 2008-09 dollar terms. By contrast, non-government schools experienced a real decrease of 1.6 per cent over the same time period.

Year	Australian Government Schools	Australian Non-Government Schools	Victorian Government Schools	Victorian Non-Government Schools
2004-05	\$12,921	\$7312	\$11,715	\$6584
2005-06	\$12,938	\$7233	\$11,913	\$6460
2006-07	\$13,005	\$7053	\$11,737	\$6371
2007-08	\$13,262	\$6933	\$12,006	\$6390
2008-09	\$13,544	\$6850	\$12,382	\$6310

\* All amounts are expressed in 2008-09 dollar terms.

The ROGS also indicated that the Victorian Government continues to spend less per student on education than other states and territories, in both government and non-government schools. Victorian non-government schools received an average of \$6310 per student in 2008-09, \$263 less than students in South Australian non-government schools, the second lowest-funded state, and \$540 per student below the Australian average. The ROGS demonstrated that, in 2008-09, 34.1 per cent of Australian full-time equivalent students attended non-government schools and received 20.8 per cent of total government expenditure (including user cost of capital). In Victoria, 36.2 per cent of students attended non-government schools and received 22.4 per cent of total government expenditure. Visit <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/2011> to access the 2011 ROGS.

- Funding for Private Schools ‘Down’ – *The Age*: Dan Harrison, 28 January 2011

### **Victorian Government Schools Encouraged to Specialise in Areas of Skills Shortages**

The Victorian Government has indicated that it wants government schools to specialise in different areas where there are skills shortages, in order to increase choice for students. The Victorian Minister for Education, Mr Martin Dixon, stated that existing specialist government schools were ‘just scratching the surface’ and claimed that ‘there’s an opportunity to really engage some students, if they have got a real area of interest and a school nearby is offering that area of specialisation rather than just a general certificate’. Mr Dixon indicated also that he would like to see an increase in partnerships between business and government schools, including a possible increased role for businesses in school governance. He stated that ‘we have got to move past the token person from the local chamber of commerce [sitting on the school council]. I think we need to really engage and use the expertise of business and industry.’ He also called for an increase in the number of Victorian government schools that offered bilingual programs. Mr Dixon stated that he was not aiming to attract non-government school students to move to government schools, but indicated that such a consequence might be a ‘natural occurrence’. The Australian Education Union was critical of Mr Dixon’s comments, arguing that such policies would result in ‘further stratification of the government school system’.

- Plan for High Schools to Help Meet Skills Shortages – *The Age*: Jewel Topsfield, 24 January 2011

### **Australian Government Releases Consultation Paper on Regulation of the Not-for-Profit Sector**

The Australian Government has released a consultation paper on the creation of a national regulator for the not-for-profit sector. The consultation paper seeks the views of stakeholders on the goals, scope, functions and form of a regulator which would act as a ‘one-stop shop’ and which would be designed to ‘deliver smarter regulation, reduce red-tape and improve the transparency and accountability of the sector’. Submissions on the consultation paper close on Friday 25 February 2011. Visit <http://www.treasury.gov.au/contentitem.asp?NavId=037&ContentID=1934> for further information and to access a copy of the consultation paper.

- Next Step to a National Not for Profit Regulator – *Media Release*: The Hon. Bill Shorten, MP, and The Hon. Tanya Plibersek, MP, 21 January 2011

### **Parliamentary News**

Both the Victorian Parliament (Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council) and the Australian Parliament (House of Representatives and Senate) will commence sitting in 2011 on Tuesday 8 February 2011.

Seminars for the period Monday 31 January 2011 – Friday 25 February 2011

Date	Event Title	Running Time
Thursday 3 February	VCE Teaching – You're Not on Your Own! (Day One)	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
Tuesday 8 February	ICT Skills for Languages Teachers – Preparing an Entry for the Cultural Diversity Quest	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
Monday 14 February	Bringing about Improvement through a Professional Learning Community (Day One)	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
	Evidence Based Classroom Observation and Coaching Workshop	9.00 am – 3.30 pm
Tuesday 15 February	Getting Ready for the Australian Curriculum in the Primary Years (Day One)	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
	Professional Learning Showcase – Visual and Performing Arts	4.30 pm – 6.30 pm
Wednesday 16 February	Writers' Notebooks	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
	Teaching Innovation: Supporting Implementation in Chinese Classes	12.00 pm – 4.00 pm
Thursday 17 February	Direct Instruction – Elementary Maths Mastery in the Upper Primary Years	9.00 am – 12.30 pm
	Spelling Mastery	1.30 pm – 4.00 pm
	Bringing about Improvement through a Professional Learning Community (Day Two)	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
Friday 18 February	A Whole School Approach to Building a Resilient Primary School (Day One)	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
	Creating Thinking Classrooms	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
	Review of Programs for Students with Additional Learning Needs (Day One)	9.30 am – 3.30 pm
Monday 21 February	Evidence Based Observation/Feedback (Day One)	9.30am – 3.30pm
	From Practice to Publication – Visible Teaching (Day One)	9.30am – 3.30pm
	Support for ESL students in the Primary Years, with a Focus on Persuasive Text	9.30am – 3.30pm
Tuesday 22 February	Evidence Based Observation/Feedback (Day Two)	9.30am – 3.30pm
	Assessment for Learning for Students and Teachers	9.30am – 3.30pm
	Running Phonological Awareness Groups	9.30am – 12.30pm
Wednesday 23 February	Getting Ready for the Australian Curriculum in the Secondary Years (Day One)	9.30am – 3.30pm
	Writing Good Tests and Designing Assessment Tasks to Provide Quality Assessment Data	9.30am – 3.30pm
Thursday 24 February	Getting Started with my IWB	9.00am – 3.30pm
	National Partnership Principals' Forum	9.30am – 2.30pm
Friday 25 February	New VET Coordinators' Workshop	9.30am – 12.30pm
	New Language Teachers' Support Forum	9.30am – 3.30pm
	A Survival Guide for New Individual Needs Teachers	9.30am – 3.30pm

All seminars will take place at Independent Schools Victoria's offices, 40 Rosslyn Street West Melbourne (on the corner of Rosslyn Street and Howard Street).

To remove yourself from the Weekly Briefing email list, [click here](#).

*Note: The Independent Schools Victoria Weekly Briefing is also available on the Independent Schools Victoria web site, including back issues. The Independent Schools Victoria web site is at <http://www.independentschools.vic.edu.au>.*

**To obtain further information on any of the above matters, please contact Independent Schools Victoria**

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