

MY SCHOOL WEBSITE | Countdown to launch

Parents say just get on with it

A CONTROVERSIAL website that will reveal school results should force schools and the Federal Government to become more accountable, a peak parent group insists.

Responding to a barrage of criticism about the site from unions and key educators, parents yesterday moved to back the launch of the My School website, which will give them unprecedented information about the schools their children are attending.

The Federal Government site, to be launched Thursday, will reveal the literacy and numeracy standards of individual schools and allow parents to draw comparisons.

National and state parent bodies have backed the Government's push for greater accountability.

South Australian Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey said it was rare for the Government to volunteer to share information about the quality of its services.

"If there are not resources in the right areas or not adequate staff then it allows the public the chance to put pressure on the Government," he said.

"There's usually a faster response to an issue if there is greater public scrutiny and pressure."

The Australian Education Union opposes the website because it would allow parents to compare schools and to effectively develop "league

EDUCATION REPORTER

CANDICE KELLER



tables". The union has threatened to boycott the NAPLAN literacy and numeracy test if the Government does not change its plans.

Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard has said the website will proceed and the national testing will go ahead in May.

The Government also has announced schools will be given a "disadvantage" ranking based on 16 categories including parents' income, Year 12 retention and numbers of indigenous students.

Australian Parents Council executive director Ian Dalton said parents in the independent schools community also welcomed the site.

However, he believed it was just "part of the picture".

"Mostly parents look for a good school atmosphere," Mr Dalton said.

Anna Solding, of Kensington Gardens, said she was "certainly interested" in the site. Her eldest son, Mereki, 6, will start Year 1 at Marrayville Primary School on Wednesday.

"But not all the factors that affect my choices about schools can be shown on a website," she said.

"I like to go to the school."



ALL SET: Anna Solding and son Mereki yesterday.

Picture: MICHAEL MARSHALL

Grey power health rise

NATIONAL health spending is set to rise up to 12-fold by 2050 as the Australian population ages, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd says.

Australia's health spending will increase massively over the next 40 years.

The Australia 2050 report shows health spending on those aged 65 and over will rise seven-fold and those aged 85 and over 12-fold.

By 2050 nearly eight per cent of gross domestic product would be spent on health, compared to four per cent now, Mr Rudd said.

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PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS

VOTING CLOSES
Noon, Tuesday, January 26

Vote online at adelaidenow.com.au

Earth Hour awareness

WWF-AUSTRALIA is calling on people to mark Earth Hour on March 27.

Last year nearly one billion people, in more than 4000 cities in 87 countries, turned off their lights to raise environmental awareness.

So far this year more than 250 cities have agreed to take part.

"Switching off your lights is a great first step," said WWF-Australia chief executive Greg Bourne.

"But your true environmental impact is much bigger than just your energy bill,"

BIG DAY OUT

381 drug-related arrests

MORE than 300 people were arrested over the two-day Big Day Out music festival in Sydney, with one person caught with 24 ecstasy tablets, police say.

Police targeted drug and alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour at the festival in Homebush. A total of 381 people were arrested, with police laying 104 drug possession and 12 drug supply charges, six assault charges and one malicious damage charge.

The festival comes to Adelaide on Friday.

SOLO SAILOR

Storm lashes teen

TEEN sailor Jessica Watson says a storm that slammed her mast into the ocean has caused her to question her world-record sailing attempt.

The 16-year-old rode out a 12-hour storm on Friday night that brought hurricane-force wind gusts of up to 70 knots and a swell of seven to 10m.

"It was a little hard at times to maintain my positive and rational thoughts policy, but overall I think I can say that the skipper held up as well as Ella's Pink Lady," she said.



Alex just sent some ugg boots to the U.S. and he hardly had to lift a finger.

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