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“Overall, we think the Government’s policies are heading in the right direction.”



– VICE CHANCELLORS RESPOND TO THE BUDGET. Page 27.

“The essence of student politics has changed, the passions are not as heightened.”



– MODERN STUDENT POLITICS. Page 28.

“The brain seemed to learn better at night.”



– NEW BRAIN RESEARCH. Page 62.

School card surge as jobs disappear

LAUREN NOVAK
EDUCATION REPORTER

THE number of families relying on government school cards is the lowest in a decade but is expected to rise sharply this year as more parents lose their jobs. Education Department figures provided to *EducationNow* show the number of families receiving school card assistance last year was the lowest since 1998.

There were 65,101 recipients last year compared with a peak of 93,282 in 1998.

The Education Department has attributed the decline to “record employment levels at the time”.

However, it anticipates an increase in applications this year “as unemployment levels rise as a result of the economic downturn”.

The jobless rate was 4.4 per cent last December. In 1998, it stood at 8.3 per cent in July but slipped to 7.5 per cent by December.

It is projected to rise to 8.25 per cent next financial year. The department would not provide 2009 figures because applications for the school card scheme remain open until the end of the year.

School card approvals, which are given to full-time school students whose parents are on a low income, fell in both the public and private school sectors between 2005 and last year – by 3931 students and 1235 students respectively.

The decline has cut the cost of the scheme from more than \$13.1 million in 2004-05 to almost \$12.3 million in 2007-08. Education Department chief executive Chris Robinson said there was no budget limit to the

SCHOOL CARD BENEFITS	
Number of students approved for School Card benefits	
Year	Total (Government/ Non-Government schools)
1998	93,282
2005	70,267
2006	68,272
2007	68,268
2008	65,101*
*lowest number in the past decade.	
Annual cost of the scheme to the government	
2004-05:	\$13,115,545
2005-06:	\$13,267,866
2006-07:	\$13,295,625
2007-08:	\$12,292,745



scheme and it would be available to any parent who needed it.

“We are expecting there will be some increase in unemployment and, as it does rise, from past times when circumstances have gone that way (we know) more people apply,” Mr Robinson said.

Government primary school students receive \$194 a year. Secondary school students get \$259. Private school students receive a similar amount but it varies between schools, Mr Robinson said. SA Association of State School Organisations

director David Knuckey, who represents the parents of state school students, said it was likely there already had been a “spike” in applications for benefits this year.

Mr Knuckey said the school card system was well publicised but it was important parents needing financial help for the first time were aware of their entitlements.

SA Primary Principals Association president Steve Portlock said schools in the Riverland, Eyre Peninsula and suburbs around Holden’s Elizabeth plant were likely to field

more school card applications this year. Mr Portlock said every parent was offered the opportunity to apply for the scheme but there were “certainly families that are eligible for school card that don’t take it”.

SA Secondary Principals Association president Jim Davies said principals were attempting to “pre-empt” the effects of the economic downturn by ensuring the school card application and approval process was “as streamlined and responsive as it can be”.



To some cancer cells this could be kryptonite.

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