

# Confusion, chaos as teachers halt strike

## Backflip on gene test for cancer

A PRIVATE Melbourne company has backed down on forcing South Australian women to use its services for a breast cancer test.

Genetic Technologies holds the patent for a test for BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, which increase the chances of breast cancer.

Until recently they allowed laboratories at Flinders Medical Centre and the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Sciences to perform the test.

Last month they said they would enforce their patent so, by law, the test would have to be done in Melbourne.

The move drew anger from the public, medical practitioners and the Cancer Council, who said genetic tests should not be controlled by private interests.

In the wake of the outcry, the company now says it will continue to allow other laboratories to do the test as a "gift to Australia".

Clinical Oncological Society of Australia familial cancer group head Dr Graeme Suthers welcomed the move but said it did not solve the bigger issue of who owns genetic material.

**LAUREN NOVAK**  
EDUCATION REPORTER

TEACHERS will go to work today after last night agreeing to a eleventh-hour order to cancel a strike.

But a day of chaos is now expected in schools, with many parents already having made alternative plans and the union unable to guarantee that all teachers would get the message in time.

At about 5.30pm yesterday, the Industrial Relations Commission ordered the teachers' union to call off a full-day strike planned for today which would have closed 350 schools and pre-schools.

Australian Education Union SA vice-president Anne Crawford announced at 9pm the union would comply with the commission's order, which also applies to half-day stoppages planned for next week.

The union lodged an appeal against the decision, but was last night advising members to go to work today as usual.

"At present we are in the process of doing our best, given the lateness of the order, to advise our members of our decision," she said.

While "very disappointed"

with the outcome, the union has only cancelled today's strike and will discuss next week's action at a meeting tomorrow.

All week, the union was adamant the strike would go ahead in an attempt to force the Government's hand in its long-running dispute over wages and conditions.

Parents and business leaders condemned the "ludicrous"

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last-minute decision by the commission, announced after two full days of intense talks between the union and the State Government. Industrial Relations Minister Paul Caica welcomed the decision and the union's response.

Education Department chief executive Chris Robinson said teachers were expected to work today and parents could be confident in sending their children to school. He said the department had contacted school leaders to let them know what was expected.

Many working parents had

planned a day off to care for their children because childcare was too costly or difficult to find.

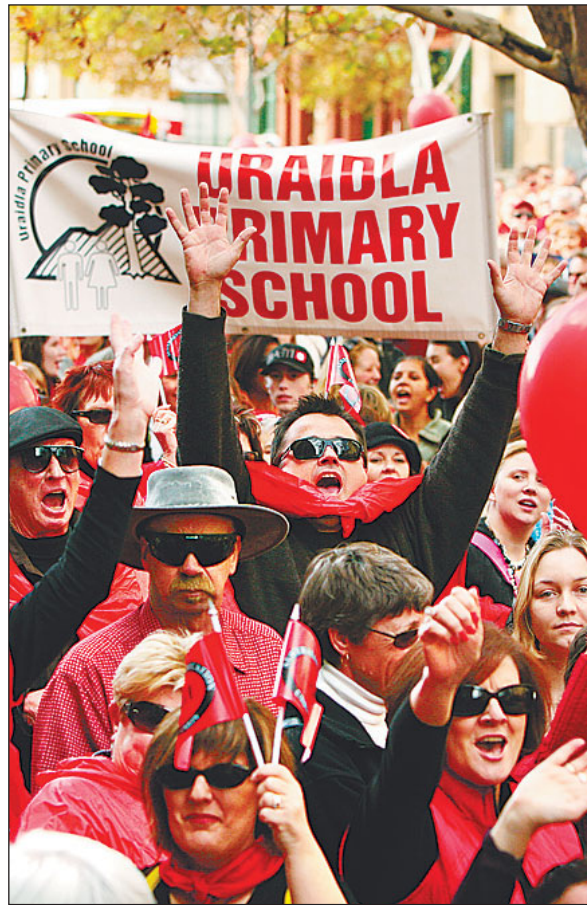
SA Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey - whose organisation represents parents of 90 per cent of public school students - was worried thousands of parents would not find out about the decision until it was too late.

Most would likely keep their children home just in case, he said. "This is now a farce. It will be chaos out there tomorrow."

Business SA chief executive officer Peter Vaughan said the decision would cause "gross confusion" in workplaces and employers may not know whether to expect staff.

"It's on, it's off, it's on, it's off, now it's off by some arbitrary authority at the eleventh hour," he said. "It just creates enormous frustration."

The government's fourth pay offer was rejected by teachers on November 10. The union wants an 18 per cent rise and millions more dollars for schools, while the Government is offering 14 per cent and a guarantee schools will receive the same or more money.



**IN DISPUTE:** Protesting teachers support their cause.



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