

My job

From a degree to a career



RAPID CONTACT

NAME: Nathan Paine, 32.

JOB: Executive director, Property Council of Australia (SA division).

DEGREE: Bachelor of Arts, University of Adelaide.

COURSE: Three years.

STUDY: Arts is a diverse course that allows students to follow their own interests in the humanities including politics, history, anthropology and languages. Politics develops an understanding of the processes of policy development and of the relationships behind power structures.

CAREER: I have always harboured a passion for politics and taking on a Bachelor of Arts majoring in politics cemented my career direction.

When the formalities of the undergraduate degree were out of the way, I toyed with becoming a politics academic, but I was soon captured by the cut and thrust of parliamentary politics, taking up a role working for Paul Holloway MLC – at the time in Opposition.

This experience gave me a feel for grass-roots politics and built on the policy development skills I had gained throughout my studies.

I quickly became aware of the opportunities open to a narrow band of policy specialists and took up a role with Business SA with the aim of building my industry networks and expanding my skills into the advocacy realm.

The fast-paced and diverse nature of the work at Business SA suited me to the ground.

Soon enough I had an offer to move into my desired role as an advocate and this move took me to the national office of the Motor Trade Association of Australia in Canberra. Armed with specialised advocacy and policy development skills, I was given an offer I couldn't refuse back in my beloved Adelaide, so I returned to Business SA in a senior policy role.

With a combination of local and national experience, my networks put me on the fast track to the Property Council of Australia's South Australian division where I am now.

My role sees me fronting the state's peak property industry body, representing more than \$33 billion invested in property assets in SA.

In addition to my principle role of advocacy to government, my team also delivers events, policy development and networking opportunities for our members.

I am regularly in face-to-face meetings with senior Government and Opposition leaders formulating and advocating policies.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, 8303 5245.

A challenge to the tyranny of the school bell

Should Australian schools follow the lead of those overseas and overhaul traditional school hours to better suit teenage body clocks? Education Reporter **LAUREN NOVAK** writes.

ASCHOOL day in China lasts an average 8.6 hours – or up to 12 hours for some diligent students.

In the U.S., some schools offer lessons in morning and night shifts, while institutions in the Netherlands are starting to cater more for parents by structuring the school week around their work schedules and staying open until at least 6pm.

In South Australia, schools are free to stray from the traditional 8.30am to 3.30pm school day – and some do – but commentators are questioning whether more drastic changes are needed to make the most of students' potential.

Changing curricula, growing numbers of students with part-time jobs, peak-hour traffic snarls and adolescent biorhythms are all part of the debate on reviewing school hours.

Sleep researcher Dr Sarah Blunden says there is "absolutely" merit in delaying the start of school for senior students, who are biologically predisposed to sleeping in.

The research fellow at UniSA's Centre for Sleep Research says when children hit puberty they struggle to fall asleep at night and to get out of bed as early as in their primary years.

"They go to bed a bit later but they still have to get up to go to school, which means they cut their total sleep time down," she says. Dr Blunden says the American Sleep Foundation is lobbying schools in the U.S. to delay

the start of school for senior students so they have "finished their sleep and they're not still in sleep mode" when they get to class. "The majority of adolescents could do with an extra hour of sleep," Dr Blunden says. "This would no doubt improve grades."

"If they don't get enough sleep they won't be on top of their game and they need to be in Year 11 and 12. The kids that do have an extra hour's sleep or delay the start of school have improved performance and mood."

Such debate over school hours is not new.

In 2001, then state Education Minister Malcolm Buckley called for a review into the traditional school day, saying it had "not changed for 100 years".

The previous year, Enfield High School switched to a four-day week for Year 11 and 12 students.

Lessons were held from 8am to 4pm and students were given Friday off for vocational training, study and projects.

The project was deemed a success with no drop-off in attendance. This year, the Edu-

“The kids that do have an extra hour's sleep . . . have improved performance and mood

cation Department announced traditional school hours would be revised under the new SA Certificate of Education to encourage more students to finish Year 12. Principals gave feed-

AROUND THE WORLD

■ Australian children spend 205 days in school, compared with about 220 in the UK, 240 in Japan and Germany and 180 in the U.S.

■ German teenagers are required to spend more than 3500 hours of instruction on core curriculum, compared with 1500 in the U.S.

■ **HOLLAND:** One private school operates weekdays from 8am to 6pm and parents can determine when their children take holidays. Similar "flexible schools" are being planned in three other Dutch towns.

■ **U.S.:** In Massachusetts, about

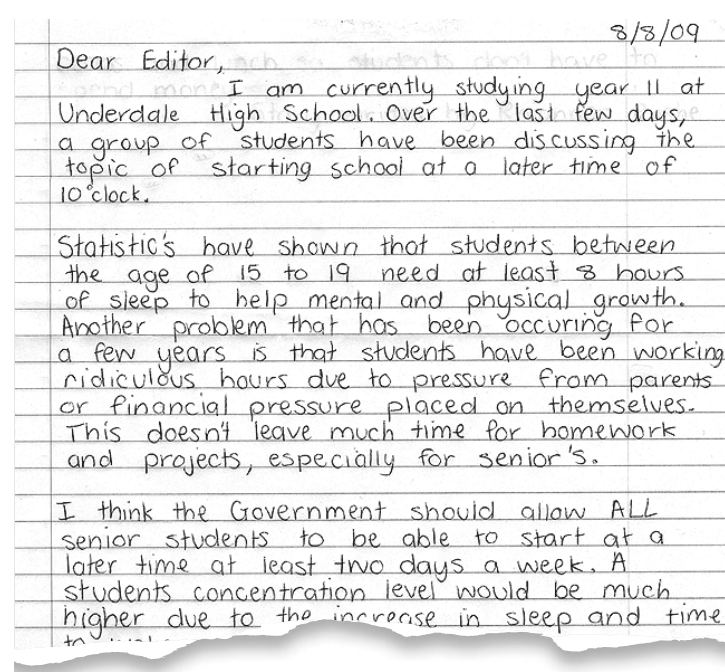
20 districts have applied to lengthen the school day to cover a wider curriculum.

■ **NEW ZEALAND:** Its School Trustees Association has suggested opening schools "well

before" 9am and shutting them "much later" than the traditional school closure times in order to cater for the changing

needs of students.

■ **COLOMBIA:** Authorities are considering cutting the school week to four days to save on school bus costs, following the example of schools in 19 other districts.



back that lesson timetables need modernising to give students who undertook vocational education and training-focused courses more flexibility.

SA Secondary Principals Association convenor of human

resourcing Peter Mader, who also is principal at Hamilton Secondary College, said in June that students would still be required to fulfil a minimum number of hours of learning but schools should look to offer lessons in a more flexible format.

His school was considering "catch up" tutorials or even night lessons in conjunction with other schools.

So concerned about the issue was Underdale High School Year 11 student Rhiannon Rushe that she wrote to *EducationNow* with suggestions for change.

She and classmates have been discussing the merits of starting school at 10am.

"I think the Government should allow all senior students to be able to start at a later time at least two days a week," she writes.

This would allow teenagers more time for sleep, casual work, homework and to eat a substantial breakfast and make their lunch before school and may also ease peak-hour transport pressures," she says. "A student's concentration level would be much higher due to the increase in sleep and time to wake-up."

The SA Education Department requires schools to provide at least 5.25 hours and no more than 5.30 hours of classroom time, not including lunch and recess breaks.

Lunch time can be no less than 40 minutes but schools can decide their own recess times.

The number of weeks in a term and in a year is set by the Education Minister, and is currently 11 weeks in term one and 10 weeks in term 2, 3 and 4.

"As long as regulations are adhered to, the start and finish of the school day can be decided at a local school level, in consultation with the school community," a department spokeswoman says.

"The department is not currently reviewing school hours but considers requests from individual schools on a case-by-case basis."

Decisions about school hours are made by each school community "based on . . . the specific needs of local students".

Principals and the teachers' union say a "significant" number of schools take advantage of the flexibility but the state's peak parent body questions whether enough schools are aware of their options.

SA Secondary School Principals Association president Jim Davies says schools often changed class times to offer more subject options or work around students' employment.

He predicted flexible timetables would become more common with the help of technology such as the internet, allowing students to work from home.

Webcam



CAMERON ENGLAND

SEARCH OVER

HAVING your own website is all well and good, but what if people out there can't find it?

One of the ways of increasing traffic to your site is by using search engine optimisation, or SEO.

SEO involves tailoring the content of your website to make it more attractive to the programs which categorise search results.

For example, one basic measure of how search engines rank sites is by the number of links leading to and from them. Hence, increasing the number of hyperlinks on your site can increase its popularity, which is measured on Google by its PageRank.

PageRank is an algorithm named after Google co-founder Larry Page.

As Google describes it: "PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from Page A to Page B as a vote, by Page A, for Page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyses the page that casts the vote."

Depending on which internet browser you use, the Google PageRank will show up in the toolbar at the top of the browser.

SEO is a valid tool used by businesses and bloggers to increase hits on their sites. Obviously if it were as simple as increasing the number of links to a page – a process known as link-spamming – search results could be easily manipulated.

Sites which are found to use such techniques can be downgraded or blocked by search engines.

Another basic way to optimise your search performance is to use words which other people would use to find your content.

Another way to drive traffic to your site is to link in with community sites such as Facebook, which can be used to post links to it, and where you can set up a Facebook page linking to your external page.

If you are running a business, or have a compelling reason to drive traffic to your site, you can buy search terms from Google, which will list your site highly when those search terms are used, but this is obviously an expensive proposition.



IF the brevity imposed on you by Twitter is inhibiting your creative output, head over to **Woofertime.com** (above). While Twitter demands that you communicate your "tweet" in 140 characters or less, Woofertime demands that you use at least 1400 characters to get your message across.

Woofertime's 11063 users pales in comparison with the millions over on Twitter, but you can try to recruit a few more by tweeting about your woof. Let's just hope Premier Mike Rann doesn't get wind of it, otherwise we'll be in real trouble.



SCHOOL DAY: Underdale High students Steph Cricelli and Rhiannon Rushe have been debating the merits of a 10am start. **Picture:** ALICE PROKOPEC

However, "most often schools have stuck with traditional school hours to fit within the parameters of a normal working day so it fits with parents and family activities", he says.

"You'd start to run into all sorts of issues if you were going to run your school day from 3pm to 10pm."

Representing the parents of state school students, David Knuckey says most parents are used to the structure of a normal school day and aim to organise their family lives around it.

"The average parent would

RECOMMENDED HOURS OF SLEEP

Primary students

■ 9 to 11 hours a night.

Secondary students

■ 9¼ hours a night.

WHAT THEY GET:

Primary students

■ 10 hours.

Secondary students

■ 7 hours, but reported to be much less at times.

think that somewhere it's written down that that's what school hours have to be but it's really more out of habit," the director of the SA Association of State School Organisations says.

"It's a tradition that hasn't really been challenged.

"I don't know how many schools actually know that that flexibility is available to them (but) you do wonder how long the traditional school day of 8am to 3pm, five days a week, will last."

Mr Knuckey, who has previously raised the idea of starting classes as early as 7am during heatwaves or delaying the start of term to avoid the heat of summer, encourages more schools to investigate their options – and he is not alone.

Business SA chief executive officer Peter Vaughan suggests SA schools consider an American model of offering lessons in shifts throughout the day to get better value for money out of expensive school assets.

Mr Vaughan says most school buildings and equipment are idle for "99 per cent of the time after 3.30pm, on the weekends and for six to eight weeks over holidays".

"There are places in the world

DECS REQUIREMENTS

■ Schools are required to provide at least 5.25 hours and no more than 5.30 hours of classroom time, not including lunch and recess breaks.

■ Lunchtime can be no less than 40 minutes. The length of time for recess is determined by the school.

■ The number of weeks in a term

and in a year is set by the Education Minister, and is based on 11 weeks in term one and 10 weeks in terms two, three and four, for a total of 41 weeks per year.

■ The start and finish of the school day can be decided at a local school level, in consultation with the school community.

where schooling is done in shifts so you can get two or three times the utilisation of the equipment and the facilities," he says.

"Particularly at the senior level where people start at 9am to 3.30pm and then there's school that goes from 4pm to 9pm.

"It makes schooling more accessible to people.

"It could double the number of students (the education system could accommodate), potentially."

Mr Vaughan suggests such shifts might increase demand for teachers and appeal to some staff or working mature-age students.

However, such a "change in mindset" would require "cour-

age". "How can we dare let an asset lie idle for that length of time and not maximise the opportunity for young people to learn and older people to upskill," he says.

Making better use of school facilities after hours also is a priority for Opposition education spokesman David Pisoni, who would like to see more sporting, art, music and even self-improvement classes, such as preparation for the workforce, held at schools after normal lessons finish.

"Flexibility is important... but it is certainly something that would be much easier to be managed by each school," he says.