



This week's stories from the media

- Sex, religion lessons 'not for activists'
- Working poor pay rich rebate
- Egg cartons banned from some kindies
- Link benefits to schools
- Brisbane school enforces iPad use
- Fear of maths drives STEM deficit
- Abolish homework and punishment

Working Poor Pay Rich Rebates

Wealthy families would pocket up to \$176 million more in daycare rebates at the expense of the working poor under Labor's childcare policy, the Coalition claims.

Education Minister Simon Birmingham admitted high-earning families would lose money despite the Coalition's \$4 billion boost to childcare subsidies.

He said a family earning \$500,000, with two children in childcare would be \$5000 better off under Labor's plan to increase childcare rebates.

The same family would lose \$6680 a year under the Coalition's childcare package.

Senator Birmingham said Labor "failed the fairness test" in refusing to means-test the Child Care Rebate, which refunds families half their childcare costs regardless of income.

Labor has promised a 15% increase to the Child Care Benefit - which is means-tested and subsidises upfront costs for low- and middle-income families

[Read the full story](#)

Sex, Religion Lessons 'Not For Activists'

An architect of the school curriculum has demanded a stop to the "outsourcing" of religious instruction and sex education to "ideological interest groups".

Ken Wiltshire said controversial subjects should be taught only with parental consent.

He said the Safe Schools furore showed the danger of letting "ideological groups" devise lesson plans without Education Department input.

"Governments should never outsource the development of curriculum content to interest groups, particularly those with an ideological purpose or agenda," he told *The Australian*.

"There is no quality assurance. No controversial material should be taught in schools without the agreement of parents, acting in concert with the school."

Emeritus Professor Wiltshire from the University of Queensland, said the furore over Safe Schools showed why education authorities should vet any lessons involving sex, religious, alcohol or drug education.

Wiltshire said governments often left the teaching of religion and sex education to outside groups because the issues were political "hot potatoes".

He warned it was unfair for departments to expect principals to assess the suitability of religious instruction or sex education materials.

Co-reviewer of the national curriculum, Kevin Donnelly, said parents should have to give consent for religious or sex education in schools, but he disagreed with Professor Wiltshire's call for official vetting of

religious or sex education.



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“if students get a run of teachers who are all fearful of mathematics, the students quickly get the message that maths is something to avoid....”

Egg Cartons Banned From Some Kindies

Egg cartons have been banned from some SA kindergartens while others are offering gluten-free playdough because of allergy fears. Early learning centres are imposing the bans as the number of children with allergies rises.

The Advertiser reports several local kindergartens also choose not to use food products for craft - such as pasta to make necklaces - instead choosing more sustainable, nature-based options.

The Lady George Kindergarten does not allow children at the centre to play with egg cartons. Director Sally Sorrell said products were banned based on the allergies of enrolled children.

Barker Kindergarten director Bronwyn Smith said her centre provided both traditional and gluten-free playdough. She said of the alternative: “The texture is slightly different but the kids don’t mind”.

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Link Benefits To School

Andrew Forrest has called for family payments to be linked to school attendance following another report showing numeracy and literacy levels are not improving in vulnerable communities.

The philanthropist has attacked “wanton callous politics” that he says is driving opposition to recommendations of his 2014 Creating Parity report. The report outlined a series of steps to counter indigenous disadvantage.

He has also called for continued properly funded trials of a cashless debit card that limits the amount of welfare money that can be spent on alcohol, gambling and drugs.

He said the improvement in the primary school assessment of indigenous children in numeracy and literacy over the past 16 years was “zero”.

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Brisbane School Enforces iPad Use

A public school that is forcing - parents to buy iPads for kindergarten kids next year is facing a backlash from families.

Ashgrove School told parents that “Prep” students must bring their own iPad to school next year; a cost of up to \$863, plus pay a \$150 “technology fee”.

As parents grapple with the cost, the requirement to use technology in the classroom raises questions over equity and educational outcomes.

School principals can decide whether and when to require “bring your own” devices, but state departments require that schools give all students access to a computer if their parents cannot afford to buy or lease one.

[Full Story](#)

Fear Of Math Drives Stem Deficit

STEM is a cute acronym but in reality the problem is about mathematics. You don’t get very far in science, technology and, above all, in engineering if you don’t have good maths.

The STEM problem is a First World problem. In First World schools we give children a lot of choice. As students progress through school they can drop a subject such as maths if they’re finding it too hard and choose something easier.

As they need to get a reasonable score if they are going to stand a chance of entering university, students are going to do things to maximise that score, which means not including subjects where their score is likely to be low. Australian kids aren’t stupid.

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Abolish Homework & Punishment

Alfie Kohn, an independent education author wants to get rid of homework because it’s “the greatest extinguisher of curiosity we’ve ever invented”.

“No study, to the best of my knowledge, has ever found any benefit to any kind of homework, but some studies corroborate what many of us know from experience - that homework does have some powerful effects. Namely, it helps kids become less interested in learning”.

Getting rid of punishments is also essential to getting kids to want to learn, Kohn said, as they motivate only “temporary compliance” from kids - so they can avoid the punishment. This kills intrinsic motivation dodging punishment or receiving a treat becomes the goal.

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