



This week's stories from the media

- Families SA to finally be split from education department
- Families SA humiliating backdown
- Targeted cash can lift schools
- Principals directly influence exam results
- SA schools on Whooping Cough alert
- Toughen up teaching degrees
- Students are key to outcomes

Families SA Humiliating Backdown

Daniel Wills writes that the Families SA split is a humiliating backdown for Jay Weatherill.

"Mr Weatherill both created the failed super-department, and oversaw its dysfunctional parents.

What's most striking in the timeline of travesties that have beset DECD over the past five years is how little is learnt from each of the tragedies.

They all follow the same depressing and familiar script, where only the ensemble cast changes.

Whether it's the DeBelle inquiry case of parents being left in the dark about the arrest of an OSHC rapist, or a monster paedophile being hired as a Families SA worker, the common theme is a contemptible culture of ignorance and cover-up.

Something bad happens, the department goes into lockdown and feeds false or incomplete information to a minister who then misleads the public and shields himself with an inquiry."

[Read the full editorial](#)

Families SA To Finally Be Split From Education Department

Tuesday saw an announcement that Families SA would be split from the education department, in a shock retreat by Premier Jay Weatherill, the architect of their merger four years ago.

Weatherill abandoned his defence of the department in the face of scathing recommendations by the woman charged with finding ways to fix the state's child protection system.

Royal Commissioner Margaret Nyland has released interim recommendations now on a system "in crisis" so the Government could "take immediate steps" to begin setting up a new child protection department.

Mr Weatherill conceded merging Families SA with the wider Education Department in 2011 was the wrong decision.

"It was my idea, I put it in place and it hasn't worked, so I have to take responsibility for that," he said.

"This is a fundamental role of government and as a government we've failed little children."

Attorney-General's Department chief executive Rick Persse will replace Mr Harrison, a former police officer who had no specific education or child protection background when appointed.



The Liberals have long called for the agency to be split from the department but Mr Weatherill has fiercely opposed the separation, arguing it was the best arrangement to protect children.

Justice Nyland is due to hand down her full report on August 5. Ms Nyland warned that "public confidence

in the ability of Families SA to fulfil its statutory mandate is at an all-time low".

"The child protection system has not been working for some time and is now in crisis," she said.

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“It’s awful that we don’t have basically a child protection system that’s able to protect every single child....”

Targeted Cash Can Lift Schools

In the lead-up to this year’s federal election, the debate about primary and secondary education has become pretty shrill, and focused almost exclusively on more money versus not.

Work by US scholars in the past decade, has revealed compelling evidence on what factors have a causal impact on student achievement. And the bottom line is that while some of those things definitely cost money, not all of them do.

Harvard economics professor Roland Fryer has revealed five key drivers of student achievement:

1. an extended school day and year;
2. the use of data to drive instruction;
3. commitment to high-quality teacher human capital;
4. a culture of high expectations;
5. and high-dosage small-group tutoring.

Staggeringly, these factors account for roughly half of school effectiveness.

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Principals Directly Influence Exam Results

University of Melbourne economists have determined that school principals have a direct impact on students’ scores in NAPLAN.

Economist Dr Mick Coelli found that principals who set clear strategic objectives for their schools, encourage collaboration between staff and promote professional development have students who perform better in the standardised tests.

These findings could assist policymakers identify effective principals & supporting those who need it. The data isolates the principal’s impact on the child.

“Supporting principals, particularly new and aspiring principals with professional and leadership development and better support will help ensure our kids can get the best possible education, and the best shot in life,” said Victorian Education Minister, James Merlino. “This research shows why we must continue to do this.”

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SA Schools On Whooping Cough Alert

A Northern suburbs school is on high alert after two students were diagnosed with whooping cough.

SA Health has advised anyone infected with whooping cough to stay away from school or work until five days after starting antibiotic treatment.

Communicable Disease Control Branch Director Dr Ann Koehler told the Northern Messenger whooping cough was a serious condition.

“Vaccination provides the best protection for children, the wider community and babies too young to be vaccinated.”

[Full Story](#)

Toughen Up Teaching Degrees

The Grattan Institute is calling for tougher entry standards into teacher education.

Grattan’s Orange Book 2016: priorities for the next Commonwealth Government, is that the federal government should pressure universities to raise the entry standards into teaching education courses.

Director Peter Goss said recapping teacher education places, and regulating them like medicine degrees, could be an option if universities don’t raise the bar on teacher education. Though he cautioned “we should try to improve standards first”.

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Students Are Key To Outcomes

In many situations, our Western education systems are being overtaken by more recently developed countries, which are typically more innovative & more evaluative of their innovation.

Evaluative thinking needs to run right through every level and layer of education. Policymakers need to apply it at the national level, when they’re making decisions about system reforms. Teachers need to apply it at the school level, when they’re assessing student mastery of new concepts.

Even individual students must apply it at the classroom level, when they’re checking their own progress against a learning goal.

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