



This week's stories from the media

- SA public school incidents have skyrocketed since DeBelle
- SA's first autism school
- Hundreds of DECD staff still in head office
- Thousands of SA students still in transportables
- City cycling routes not safe enough
- Families SA finally hires new staff
- New city school behind schedule

SA's First Autism School

Adelaide's first specialist school for autistic children is up and running on the former Ashford Special School site.

Aspect Treetop School opened this week with 22 students in four classes.

That will rise to 60 next year and as many as 88 in future years.

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) has eight schools in NSW as well as a "satellite" presence in many other schools, helping children transition to less specialist environments and in some cases into mainstream classes.

Acting principal Kaye Perry said Aspect schools followed the Australian Curriculum while adhering to an evidence-based, 10-point educational philosophy.

"It's all individualised for the students," she said.

On average, students spend two years in an Aspect school before transitioning to a more mainstream school.

[Read the reports](#)

SA Public School Incidents Have Skyrocketed Since DeBelle Royal Commission

Numbers of critical incidents recorded by SA public schools involving violence, sexual abuse, self harm and bullying have skyrocketed in the wake of the DeBelle Royal Commission.

The 5586 incidents filed last year were more than double the 2642 in 2012.

A critical incident is any significant, unusual or threatening event that might cause disruption and put students or staff in danger, or be contentious and attract media attention.



Sexual abuse reports more than tripled from 47 to 165 between 2012 and 2014 and those of inappropriate sexual behaviour rose even more steeply from 119 to 459 over that period, before significant drops in both categories last year.

- Verbal abuse reports escalated from 564 to 986,
- bullying from 244 to 411,
- e-crime from 84 to 190 and
- drugs/alcohol from 107 to 242 between 2012 and 2015.

The teacher's union said the figures bolstered the argument for hiring more school counsellors.

The Education Department believes the "major factor" behind the growing figures is more diligent reporting into an improved online system, not more incidents.

But SA Primary Principals Association president Pam Kent said the figures were "reflective of the pressures people are under from unemployment and poverty".

"People are feeling marginalised and find it harder to cope," she said.

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“...If Jay Weatherill and the other Labor ministers had listened to parents, and listened to the Liberal Party in 2008, this school would be open already....”

Hundreds Of DECD Staff Still In Head Office

Hundreds of Education Department staff are yet to be moved out of their Adelaide CBD head office almost a year after the Government announced they would be deployed for “frontline” duties in schools or working more closely with schools.

The State Government announced last August that the bureaucracy would be culled and up to 300 staff shifted out of head office in Flinders St.

In March The Advertiser revealed it was likely many would be sent just a few kilometres away to work from the Education Development Centre at Hindmarsh.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner said the lack of action on moving staff was “a complete backdown on what was promised last year”.

Mr Gardner also grilled Dr Close on why more disadvantaged schools were not receiving a share of the \$250 million budgeted for science-related upgrades.

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Thousands Of SA Students Still In Transportables

Tens of thousands of SA students are still being taught out of decades-old transportable classrooms.

There are close to 1600 “temporary” classrooms in the public system, some of which have been in place for decades.

The oldest is a 66-year-old timber transportable at Booleroo Centre District School, which is used for art and drama.

Although their overall numbers have dropped by about 400, from almost 2000 five years ago, some schools still; have a high proportion of temporary rooms.

The teacher’s union says widespread use of transportables raises questions about the department’s planning, if schools are being allowed to grow too much beyond their capacity.

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City Cycling Routes Not Safe Enough

The Government’s proposed city high school would include 170 bicycle parking spaces - but parents are unlikely to let their kids cycle to it, a new report warns.

Adelaide City Council transport experts say current cycling routes to the Frome Road high school would not be considered safe enough for school children to ride unaccompanied.

“Parents are unlikely to permit their children to ride to school if routes between home and school are not considered safe,” a council staff report says.

“Therefore it is likely that a low number of students will ride. That is currently the case at Adelaide High School, where only 10-20 students ride.”

[Full Story](#)

Families SA Finally Hires New Staff

Families SA has finally hired eight extra staff to triage calls to its abuse hotline - 10 months after promising the change.

The Advertiser revealed in September that 15,000 calls to the Child Abuse Report Line went unanswered in 2014-15.

Concerns that serious cases were slipping through the cracks prompted Families SA to promise a trial of new “dedicated call takers” to initially record reports and pass details on to social workers to assess.

However, the union representing social workers argues that it should be qualified social workers who assess calls initially, in case a “call taker” misses details or context which may indicate a high-risk case.

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New City School Behind Schedule

Construction of the new Adelaide CBD high school will start close to half a year behind schedule, the Opposition claims.

It also says the Government has failed to spend millions of dollars that were allocated to kickstarting the project in the 2015-16 budget, and warns the school could become the next public project after the New Royal Adelaide Hospital to suffer serious delays.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner said Minister Close needed to explain “why construction hasn’t started yet and what the Government has actually been spending their money on so far”.

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