



This week's stories from the media

- Children's watchdog needs bite
- Push for more all-girl schools
- SA government abandons Masters plan for teachers
- Dolls encourage teen pregnancy
- Mid-north school employee charged
- Year 7 move leaves families in limbo
- STEM doing wonders for children

### Push For More All-Girl Schools

Leading principals are calling for more girls-only public schools so girls have access to single sex education regardless of where they live or their families' financial means.

They are also urging parents and educators to combat gender stereotypes and stop fostering the "princess mindset" that results in girls expecting others to solve their problems for them.

Mitcham Girls High and the all-girls campus of Roma Mitchell Secondary at Gepps Cross are the only two public girls schools in the state. There are no all-boys public schools.

Education Minister Susan Close said both Mitcham and Roma Mitchell had capacity for more students but she would seek advice on the issue of untapped demand for girls schooling.

Education Department executive director for school and preschool improvement Anne Millard said enrolment data indicated the demand was not there.

[Read the story](#)

### Children's Watchdog Needs Bite

**The Advertiser reports that parents & staff overwhelmingly support giving a children's commissioner the power to investigate and intervene in individual cases, a survey has found.**

More than 800 parents & school staff responded to the survey by the SA Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO).

Both the Layton and Nyland inquiries into the state's child protection system recommended establishing a Children's Commissioner in SA.

Draft legislation put forward by Child Protection Reform Minister John Rau would enable a commissioner to investigate systemic issues and cases which arise during those broad investigations. An individual case could also spark a wider inquiry.

However, the commissioner would not be able to investigate or intervene in the circumstances of an individual case.

The survey by the SAASSO, a peak body representing parents, found 97.8% support for a commissioner to investigate individual complaints.

Of the 871 survey respondents, 89.6% also wanted the commissioner to have the power to intervene in individual cases.

SAASSO director David Knuckey said suffering children "can't wait for 'systemic review' - they need someone to protect them now".

"Surely a commissioner for children should be empowered to protect an individual child," Mr Knuckey said.

Mr Rau said the commissioner should not act as a "complaints clearing house".

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***“...Surely a commissioner for children should be empowered to protect an individual child....”***

#### **SA Government Abandons Masters Plan For Teachers**

**New teachers will not have to obtain masters degrees by 2020 after the State Government abandoned the election commitment.**

The State Government is blaming the Commonwealth for refusing to fund more postgraduate places to accommodate the policy.

Simon Birmingham declined to lift the cap on postgraduate teaching places, arguing that it would lead to a cost blowout.

Senator Birmingham said the State Government had only itself to blame for its “poorly thought-through policy, and they need to take responsibility for any failure”.

“Importantly, we have initiated reforms to guarantee the quality of teaching graduates via minimum graduation benchmarks (literacy and numeracy tests), which the SA Labor Government is failing to implement on time,” he said.

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#### **Dolls Encourage Teen Pregnancy**

**Digital baby dolls that cry in the middle of the night & need feeding, rocking & nappy changes are meant to deter teenagers from falling pregnant.**

But in an ironic twist, researchers have found they have the opposite effect.

The findings of a 10-year program and study involving more than 1250 girls has found the dolls are actually more likely to encourage motherhood.

The program to give babies mimicking the behaviours of a six-week-old to more than 1250 girls aged 14 and 15 had turned popular thinking on its head by proving they encouraged teenagers to fall pregnant.

“...girls are 1.36 times more likely to have pregnancies if they were exposed to the babies,” Dr Brinkman said.

During the program, 213 of the girls who looked after the babies fell pregnant, or 17%, and 113 had terminations. Of those in the control group, 168 fell pregnant, or 11%, and 101 had abortions.

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#### **Mid-North School Employee Charged**

**A Regional school employee has been suspended and charged with unlawful sexual intercourse.**

The Education Department released a statement saying it had been notified of the arrest by SA Police.

The Yorke Mid-North man, 20, was charged with unlawful sexual intercourse.

He has been directed away from the workplace pending suspension and the outcome of the court process.

The school community has been notified of the arrest by letter in line with Debelle protocols.

[Full Story](#)

#### **Year 7 Move Leaves Families In Limbo**

**Catholic primary school parents who want to send their children to public high schools are angry that the looming shift of Year 7 has left them in the lurch.**

Parents say the mismatch of policies between the Catholic and state systems means they will have to find another school for a single year, disrupting their children’s education and wellbeing.

Year 7 is moving into Catholic high schools from 2019, while the state system is the only one in the country to retain it in primary schools.

Public high schools had 472 applications for Year 8 places this year from parents whose children attended private schools.

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#### **STEM Doing Wonders For Children**

**The school science curriculum should focus more on the wonders of science to inspire children rather than concentrate too heavily on theory, says Monash University’s Michelle McIntosh.**

Dr. McIntosh said education in science, technology, engineering and maths should begin in primary school, preferably with specialist science teachers.

She said many primary school teachers seemed to lack confidence in teaching science.

Dr McIntosh said schools could consider getting lab coats or safety goggles to create that sense of wonder and science.

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