



This week's stories from the media

- Australian schools will continue to disappoint
- Nyland Report missed the mark
- \$10 billion fail in school results
- Social media blamed for attacks
- Secret student nuclear forum
- Chief's tired excuse
- Funds useless as advice is flouted

Nyland Report Missed The Mark

The Nyland Royal Commission into the state's broken child protection system has been deemed a missed opportunity by the head of one of SA's foremost welfare agencies, who says its findings "missed the mark".

Uniting Communities CE Simon Schrapel, says the commission's final report, published last month, falls short "in delivering the big and bold reform SA needs".

"Even if implemented in full, the recommendations will do little to improve how SA responds to children and young people experiencing, or at risk of, harm," he writes.

Schrapel told *InDaily* there was a widespread "sense of frustration" among stakeholders "that the report missed the mark".

He said there was "growing frustration that having spent two years and a fair bit of money", the report's approach was "heading down the path of trying to tweak a system that's so broken...it's the wrong starting point".

[Read the story](#)

Australian Schools Will Continue To Disappoint

Australian schools will continue to disappoint if governments don't ensure teaching programs are actually working.

That's the blunt warning in a Productivity Commission draft report released this week.

It says while there's lots of data collected about the outcomes of students and schools, there's not much evaluation about how well policies, programs and teaching practices in Australian schools work.

There was a growing consensus that increasing funding and focusing on accountability alone were insufficient to improve students' achievements.

"Without improving and applying evidence to policy-making and teaching in schools and classrooms, there is a substantial risk that increased resourcing of schools will continue to deliver disappointing outcomes."

There needs to be both top-down monitoring, such as the national tests, and bottom-up evaluation of what is working.

The draft report makes 13 recommendations, including establishing a shared national education evidence base and creating a new education agreement among all governments to define what research should be done.

Commissioner Jonathan Coppel says students in some schools perform better than expected compared with similar institutions.

"We should be lifting the bonnet on these schools to find out what they are doing, and carefully evaluating if we can apply their methods across schools," he said.

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“...we already know a lot about what works best, it just isn't reaching classrooms....”

\$10 Billion Fail In School Results

A \$10 billion increase in government school spending over the past decade has failed to improve the performance of Australian students, with some children continuing to slip further behind their international peers.

In a sobering draft report, the Productivity Commission will today issue a wake-up call to authorities to target school resources better by tapping into the evidence of what programs, policies and teaching practices really work in classrooms, so they can ensure students do not get left behind.

“Notwithstanding substantial increases in expenditure on education over the past decade, national and international assessments of student achievement in Australia show little improvement and in some areas standards have dropped,” the report finds.

Last week one of the architects of the Gonski reforms, Ken Boston, endorsed the push to rethink how education funds are directed.

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Social Media Blamed For Attacks

Conflicts that start on social media are sparking violence in the state's school grounds, with public schools recording an average of 20 attacks by students against their peers each week.

Latest figures show there were 515 student-on-student incidents of violence to August 26 this year.

If the rate of incidents stays the same to the end of the school year, they will reach 792 - an 18% rise on the 669 last year and more than the 771 in 2014.

“The prevalence of social media has contributed to increased interaction outside of school for upper primary and secondary school students.”

However the department at the time said more schools were using an online reporting system and that “certainly contributed” to rising numbers of reports.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner said the number of incidents was a “blight” on the public system, regardless of the source of conflicts.

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Secret Student Nuclear Forum

More than 150 students from across the state will take part in the forum, organised by the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission Consultation and Response Agency and the Education Department.

When asked where the debate was being held, agency director of engagement John Phalen would only say that “safety of the students is our No. 1 priority”.

During a Citizens' Jury, Premier Jay Weatherill had to walk through a group of noisy anti-nuclear protesters chanting “no dump” outside the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute on North Terrace.

[Full Story](#)

Chief's Tired Excuse

Families SA's former boss blamed “tiredness and emotional stress” for his failure to tell the then-minister red flags had been raised about carer and monster paedophile Shannon McCoole.

Mr Waterford quit his post after a series of Advertiser reports revealed McCoole had been reported for behaviour with a child in his care, and psychometric testing had raised concerns.

“The tiredness and emotional stress associated with responding to the alleged offending of the Families SA employee go some way to explaining how it is that I did not read the relevant document as thoroughly as I should have. This does not, however, excuse my omission.”

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Funds Useless As Advice Flouted

A schools expert has warned that research into what works best in classrooms will be pointless if the findings are overlooked because they do not align with “prevailing educational fixations and orthodoxies”.

Writing in *The Australian*, Dr Buckingham argues that the Productivity Commission's draft report into education “fails to adequately address the main problem with the evidence base in education: it is largely ignored by the education establishment”.

“While there are schools around Australia doing exemplary work using evidence-based practice, unfortunately it is not the norm ... the fact remains that we already know a lot about what works best, it just isn't reaching classrooms.”

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