



This week's stories from the media

- Teachers banned over sex charges
- Year 3 NAPLAN: pen and paper
- Children's Commissioner bill flies through lower house
- Calls for school vouchers for parents
- Child protection chief paid \$385,000
- Fears SA schools will abandon music
- Safe Schools opt out

Year 3 NAPLAN: Pen And Paper

Plans to take Year 3 NAPLAN tests from the traditional pen and paper to online, could be delayed or abandoned.

Trials this term confirmed the fears of South Australian principals that Year 3s were producing "very little" in the persuasive or narrative writing tasks because they lacked typing skills.

Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham yesterday said ministers would seek "expert advice" before they met again in December on "whether (Year 3 writing) is an ideal inclusion in the shift to NAPLAN online".

He did not rule out the option of retaining pen and paper tests for Year 3 writing in the long-term.

Schools across Australia were previously expected to administer all NAPLAN tests online by 2019. DECD had intended to move as many schools as possible to computerised testing next year, but this month said it was assessing the trials before deciding how to proceed.

[Read the story](#)

Teachers Banned Over Sex Charges

Four male teachers were banned from classrooms last financial year after being jailed for child sex or pornography offences.

The latest Teachers Registration Board annual report details their cases and those of female teachers suspended for incompetence and harbouring an escaped prisoner.

Teachers are currently subjected to background checks by the Teachers Registration Board but will soon be covered by a central government unit which will screen all people wanting to work or volunteer with children.

The Government has introduced legislation to Parliament to shift to the new screening system.

The board's report reveals four male teachers were individually:

Convicted and sentenced to jail for one count of persistent sexual exploitation of a child.

Convicted and sentenced to jail for possession of child pornography.

Given a suspended sentence on three counts of aggravated indecent assault.

Given a suspended sentence for accessing and possessing child pornography.

All had their registration cancelled immediately and were permanently disqualified from being registered as teachers.

SAASSO director David Knuckey said parents would be disturbed by the revelations.

"It really does strike in the heart of every parent's fear that where you leave your children in trust there are these predators," he said.

"We would expect that those parents (at the schools involved) would be notified."

[More](#)



“...It really does strike in the heart of every parent’s fear....”

Children’s Commissioner Bill Flies Through Lower House

Legislation to establish a children’s commissioner for South Australia flew through the House of Assembly this morning in less than half an hour - 13 years after the establishment of the role was first recommended to the State Government.

A sticking point in a previous Government attempt to introduce the post – first recommended in a report on South Australia’s child protection regime by Robyn Layton in 2003 – has been overcome.

The Government has been opposed to Opposition demands that the commissioner be able to undertake individual investigations, but the Bill passed today will allow such inquiries in certain circumstances, in line with the recommendations of the Nyland commission.

The bill will allow the commissioner to investigate individual cases where he or she believes there are systemic issues involved.

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Calls For School Vouchers For Parents

Parents would be issued with government vouchers to spend on public or private schools of their choice in a bold bid to lift education standards.

Scotch College principal Dr John Newton has proposed the alternative funding scheme, saying it would also create a unique marketplace in which “competition thrives”.

He said low-income families would receive greater funding, making it easier for them to choose private schooling.

He said giving higher wage earners smaller vouchers would force wealthy families who send their children to public schools to contribute more to education costs.

Dr Newton called for schools to be given more autonomy on curriculum, but to be kept accountable by a tighter state-run inspection regime that would report directly to parents on how well schools “deliver on their stated objectives and against national expectations”.

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Child Protection Chief Paid \$385,000

The head of the state’s new Child Protection Department will be paid \$385,000 a year, it is understood.

It comes as Opposition Leader Steven Marshall revealed in Parliament details on the resignation of former Families SA boss David Waterford.

An email by Mr Waterford, dated July 26, 2014, tells Mr Harrison: “I am happy to make a statement to the media if that will assist in management of the fallout. However, I am also happy (to) slip away and refuse to make any comment.”

Minister John Rau said on Wednesday he did not “know anything about this particular email” but would “make inquiries” and return answers to Parliament.

[Full Story](#)

Fears SA Schools Will Abandon Music

Many public schools would scrap their instrumental music programs and hundreds of private instructors would lose their jobs if an industrial ruling won by the education union is enforced, tuition providers and principals have warned.

The SA Industrial Relations Commission has formally adopted Education Department guidelines requiring schools to use private music instructors only as a last resort. The guidelines have been in place since 2008 but widely ignored.

Principals say many schools cannot access the department’s Instrumental Music Service and cannot afford to hire specialist music teachers, so they rely exclusively on private tutors who are paid directly by parents.

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Safe Schools Opt Out

As the government tries to find a compromise between critics and supporters of the controversial Safe Schools program, there are reports that the NSW government is considering giving parents an “opt-in”, instead of an “opt-out”.

That the Government needs to do something is clear. It cannot continue to ignore the growing concerns of parents or the comprehensive report from Sydney University law professor Patrick Parkinson.

The report reinforces parental concern and highlighted that teaching gender theory in schools is a scientifically questionable concept and constitutes a massive breach of trust.

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