



#### This week's stories from the media

- Schools must listen to children who report abuse
- Maths not taught by maths teachers
- How to improve teacher performance
- New name for Families SA, but it's just spin
- Girls more likely to own smartphones
- Year 12 exams begin
- Schools forced to split kids

#### Maths Not Taught By Maths Teachers

Only one-third of Year 7–10 students are being taught maths by a qualified maths teacher, the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute has warned.

AMSI director professor Geoff Prince explained that this figure is not uniform for all types of schools; those in the country are worse off.

As such, he said Australia needs more maths teachers coming out of universities – though the workforce supply must be regulated.

“At the moment, if you graduate out of a teaching degree, if you’ve done a three-year maths degree or a maths major and you go on and do a teaching qualification, the Commonwealth doesn’t know that you’re a maths teacher as opposed to an English literature teacher or a physics teacher,” Prince said.

“They’ve got no clue how many maths graduates, how many new maths teachers, are being produced by the universities every year.

[Full Story](#)

#### Schools Must Listen To Children Who Report Abuse

No matter how rare child sexual abuse may be, an appropriate response is urgently needed when it does occur, one member of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has stated.

Commissioner Helen Milroy, a psychiatrist for children and adolescents, said: “You may only ever have to deal with [child abuse] once in the lifetime of an institution, but my goodness, when you do, you have to do it really well. We need to make sure that we know how to do that.”



Part of this research also involved focus groups with researchers. It found that many of youths were reluctant to report abuse because they felt adults wouldn’t believe them.

The survey also found 1 in 3 of these teens thought there was more their school could be doing to prevent abuse.

Also, just 25% said they would seek help from a teacher if they were sexually abused.

Only about 10% said they believed their teacher would not know what to do in that circumstance.

Co-author professor Morag McArthur warned that rampant bullying at a school could be the canary in the coalmine.

“If bullying isn’t dealt with, what else isn’t being dealt with,” McArthur questioned.

Dr Sally Robinson, a disability researcher from Southern Cross University’s Centre for Children and Young People, reiterated previous findings from the Royal Commission, and from other sources, that children with disabilities are more likely to be bullied and abused.

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***“...We shouldn’t be prepared to say to students, ‘You’re going to have to put up with this’....”***

### How To Improve Teacher Performance

**In NSW, Education Minister Adrian Piccoli has zeroed in on teacher quality, taking to task some principals for accepting low standards and lamenting those teachers who resist change.**

Last month, Piccoli drew audible chuckles at a conference of educators when he quoted a principal saying of an underperforming teacher: “He’s not great but he’s retiring in a couple of years and I’ll just wait.”

He says: “We shouldn’t be prepared to say to students, ‘You’re going to have to put up with this.’”

“Too many decisions are made around what’s in the interests of adults in education - teachers, administrators, principals, unions - rather than what’s in the best interests of students.”

Piccoli calls for a cultural rethink, an embrace of accountability and a rejection of the mentality that says “it’s the best we can do”.

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### New Name For Families SA, But It’s Just Spin

**It’s one of the oldest tricks in the political playbook - if you’ve got a big problem, change its name.**

The renaming of Families SA to the Department for Child Protection, starting today, is being trumpeted as a “fresh start” for the embattled agency.

In reality, it’s closer to going back to the future by ditching the discredited decision to merge Families SA with the wider Education Department in late 2011.

But the new name is about image. Premier Jay Weatherill in June conceded his idea to merge the two agencies hadn’t worked and “we need a fresh start”.

Dr Close’s office did not reveal the cost of establishing the Child Protection Department, saying they were not known because developing the identity of the new department had only just begun.

But this “fresh start” won’t come cheap. Hopefully, the benefits stretch significantly beyond the political and into significantly improving the lives of vulnerable children.

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### Girls More Likely To Own Smartphones

**Girls are more likely than boys to own a mobile phone in Australia, and they can thank their protective fathers.**

But Australia’s love affair with the smartphone starts early for both genders, with one in 10 children owning their first smartphone before grade five.

The surveys, which quizzed more than 4600 people, identified several reasons behind the disparity, with girls less picky about the phone they received, and more eager to stay in touch with family and friends.

“Dads with teenage daughters are around 12% more likely than dads with teenage sons to agree they want family members to carry a mobile phone for security reasons.”

[Full Story](#)

### Year 12 Exams Begin

**The main Year 12 exam period begins on Monday, but students will be on tenterhooks almost until Christmas before they receive their results.**

All up, 13,372 students are sitting at least one Stage 2 SACE exam.

The exam period starts and finishes later this year, in line with later school term dates, pushing the results release back from December 15 to December 20.

The SACE Board will be hoping to avoid a repeat of last year’s bungle, when a computer server malfunction meant 1200 students initially viewed the wrong Tertiary Entrance Statement when they logged in to see their results.

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### Schools Forced To Split Kids

**Primary students are being spread across other classes when their teachers are sick because schools can’t afford relief teachers.**

The teacher’s union says the problem is set to worsen because the cost of relief staff will rise 17.5%, to \$530 a day next year.

The Education Department funds relief staff for a certain number of days a year according to the size of schools. However, schools which exceed their allocations have to fund some of the extra days themselves.

Secondary Principals Association president Peter Mader said the department did not cover the cost of relief staff to cover teachers doing professional development training.

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