

This week's stories from the media

- Parents want NAPLAN to include fitness tests
- Child protection survey
- Year 7 in high school back on the table
- Time for a root and branch renewal of Australian education
- Government blasted by carers
- School cleaning cash runs dry
- Families SA staffing mess

Child Protection Survey

This decade, South Australia has been plagued by child abuse scandals.

A series of reviews, royal commissions, ministers, new departments, sackings, apologies and promises has failed to protect children in care.

Embroyled in yet another Families SA abuse scandal, the Weatherill Government has created a new department, outlined a new child protection plan - while announcing another investigation.

SAASSO is asking if you think the latest changes by the Weatherill Government will protect children....



[Take The Survey](#)

Parents Want NAPLAN To Include Fitness Tests

Close to half of South Australian parents want student fitness tests included in NAPLAN as a health and anti-obesity measure.

A survey by public school parent group the SA Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO) found 46.5% of 832 respondents backed the addition of fitness to NAPLAN tests.

A UniSA expert says Australia should follow Singapore's lead and introduce mandatory fitness testing.

SAASSO director David Knuckey said the results showed parents' concern over children's declining health and fitness, also evidenced by growing obesity rates and Australia's "D" rating in the international Physical Activity Report Card.

Mr Knuckey said "physical literacy and fitness" could be assessed by measuring skills such as running, jumping, cycling, catching and throwing, and testing children's understanding of "the role physical fitness plays in health and academic success".

"Just as with academic literacy and numeracy, these measures are areas of ongoing development, so different levels of comprehension and mastery would be expected at the different year levels," he said.

UniSA professor of exercise science Kevin Norton said all Singaporean students faced annual tests including shuttle running and modified chin-ups.

Parents of overweight children were called in to school to meet with dietitians and there were also funding penalties for underperforming schools.

"Something as significant as that is perhaps what's required (in Australia)," he said.

 "It's like putting taxes on sugary drinks. It changes behaviour."

[More](#)

“...The survey found 63% support for introducing “standing desks” in schools....”

Year 7 In High School Back On The Table

The Education Department is conducting “preliminary” investigations into moving Year 7 to high school, while the Opposition says the state’s latest international test results prove the change must happen.

The State Government has repeatedly rebuffed calls to bring SA in line with other states, arguing there is no evidence of educational benefit to justify the \$300 million cost it estimated four years ago.

Chief executive Rick Persse told a parliamentary committee this week that the question of moving Year 7s had “come on to my agenda” since he took up the role in June.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner said the results of the Program for International Student Assessment, which tests 15-year-olds in maths, science and reading, showed public schools must follow suit.

[More](#)

Time For A Root And Branch Renewal Of Australian Education

The latest TIMSS and PISA results confirm Australia is a nation at risk when it comes to education.

In the 2011 TIMSS Year 4 maths test, we ranked 18th internationally; by 2015 we fell to 28th.

In the 2000 PISA reading test, our students scored 528 points; by 2015 the figure fell to 503, a fall of 25 points.

Notwithstanding we are a First World country with an advanced economy and record levels of expenditure, our results are going backwards and generations of students are leaving school ill-prepared for the demands and challenges of the 21st century.

Our curriculum is dumbed down and substandard, our style of classroom teaching and learning is consumed by fads and misplaced ideology, and teachers are not being properly supported and rewarded.

[More](#)

One Week To Go....

Government Blasted By Carers

Foster carers have blasted the State Government, with almost half saying they had been bullied by department staff.

The survey of carers, obtained by the Opposition, found 46% of carers felt that child protection workers “rarely” made decisions based on the best interests of the child.

About 60% were “completely or mostly dissatisfied” with how staff included them in decision-making.

The Government is spending \$9 million on a campaign to recruit 130 more carers and running an internal review.

[Full Story](#)

School Cleaning Cash Runs Dry

Dozens of public high schools could have to cut staff and subjects as their coffers run dry because of funding shortfalls for basics such as maintenance, cleaning and utilities.

A department spokeswoman said education funding was at a record high but it would work with SASPA and schools “to understand the questions being raised”.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner said the figures “demonstrate all too clearly that schools are doing it tougher than they have had to before”.

[More](#)

Families SA Staffing Mess

A blowout in the amount of money spent by the state’s child protection agency on emergency accommodation – which senior executives have described as “the worst kind of care” – was offset on the financial books because the department recruited 300 fewer staff than it was entitled to.

The new heads of the recently-separated Education and Child Protection Departments, Rick Persse and Cathy Taylor, today fronted parliament’s Budget and Finance Committee, which heard that despite previous claims of a glut of applications, the former Families SA only employed 1652 of the 1949 full-time staff for which it was budgeted in the last financial year.

[Read more](#)