



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

- Overcrowding reaches crisis point
- Xenophon TAFE inquiry
- Federal Minister joins experts seeking smartphone ban
- Liberals would sack whole TAFE board
- Low preschool attendance in SA
- Liberals pledge new technical college
- Childcare workers to strike

#### Xenophon TAFE Inquiry

An urgent Parliamentary inquiry would be triggered immediately after the state election and forced to report within weeks to get to the bottom of the TAFE debacle, under a key demand from SA Best.

Nick Xenophon says both major parties would need to protect whistleblowers, and commit to Parliament "sitting day and night" in order to fix the scandal.

Mr Xenophon said the snap inquiry would need to have answers about how to fix the TAFE crisis by the end of May in a bid to stop another cohort of higher education students from being caught up in the scandal.

He said the inquiry would have the power to subpoena documents and must involve independent experts as well as politicians, because the situation required expert analysis but ultimately needed government backing.

"Fixing it is a political decision," he said. "Whoever forms government needs to fix this as a matter of urgency."

[Read the story](#)

#### Overcrowding Reaches Crisis Point

Sixty-plus students are being crammed into single rooms, classes are being taught in the staffroom and children are complaining of noise-induced headaches as overcrowding at one of the east's most popular schools reaches crisis point.

"The first day we went in all of the parents could not believe it," the parent, who did not wish to be named, said.

"My child came back and said it was too noisy in there, other kids have complained about headaches and I know some children who said they couldn't learn because it was too noisy and there was no where to sit."

The school confirmed more than 60 students in two Year 3/4 classes are being taught in the library, while music classes have been moved to the gymnasium so another class can be squeezed into the music room.

The school hasn't had a proper library for the children to use since the beginning of 2017, yet parents are required to pay a library services fee of \$60 per child.

Teacher Union SA Branch president Howard Spreadbury said he hoped DECD would investigate building a new public primary school in the east to relieve overcrowding but said the relocation of classrooms had to be "put in place in the short term".

Liberal MP Vickie Chapman said the party had committed to moving Year 7 students into high schools if elected.

"It would give us immediate relief as we are talking hundreds of children from each school," Mrs Chapman said.

A spokeswoman for Minister Susan Close said the State Government did not have any plans for a new primary school in the east.



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**“...Whoever forms government needs to fix this as a matter of urgency...”**

### Federal Minister Joins Experts Seeking Smartphone Ban

**Smartphones should be banned in classrooms to prevent student distractions and harassment, the federal Education Minister says.**

SA Senator Simon Birmingham is urging state education ministers and departments to forge consistent national guidelines to give teachers clear direction. “There’s almost no reason students shouldn’t have their phones switched off and in their lockers while they’re at school.”

State Education Minister Susan Close said a classroom phone ban would be considered and teachers consulted.

University of Melbourne Associate Professor Kay Margetts said smartphones were diluting students’ focus in the classroom and curbing valuable social skills.

Child psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg, who sits on the Federal Government’s internet safety working group, said smartphones must be banned in primary schools.

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### Liberals Would Sack Whole TAFE Board

**The whole TAFE SA board would be dismissed under a Liberal state government, education spokesman John Gardner has announced.**

The Liberals would use ministerial powers to dissolve the board and appoint a new one.

“TAFE SA needs a fresh start after 16 years of Labor neglect and a new board will breathe life into the organisation. The new board members will be subject to a much stricter selection (process) and more rigorous management performance reviews.”

A Marshall government would also make the training system “fully contestable as quickly as possible”, meaning allowing private companies to compete with TAFE SA for all subsidised course places.

Minister Susan Close said the State Government was “getting on with the job of fixing the issues at TAFE”.

The only hearing of a federal inquiry into TAFE SA was bizarrely held in Sydney.

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### Low Preschool Attendance In SA

**Preschoolers in South Australia have the worst attendance rate of any state, preventing early learning being extended to three-year-olds.**

The latest figures also reveal South Australia is at risk of losing some funding for the current pre-school program because it has failed to meet nationally agreed enrolment targets.

Mr Weatherill is an advocate of the move, citing research that shows an earlier start improves the chances of addressing children’s developmental issues.

“SA Labor can’t even get their current pre-school program right but they claim to have unfunded plans to expand it,” Senator Birmingham said.

[Full Story](#)

### Liberals Pledge New Technical College

A new technical college able to prepare high school students for careers in shipbuilding and defence would be established in the western suburbs if the Liberal Party wins the state election.

The college could be a new campus of a current school or an expansion of a campus.

The Liberals are willing to work with either public or private schools.

“Our technical college will be heavily-engaged with defence, shipbuilding and other maritime industries to maximise its benefits for the students and the industry.”

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### Childcare Workers To Strike

**In an unprecedented move, early childcare workers around the country will walk off the job next month, forcing centres to close and disrupting thousands of families.**

The Union says staff are struggling on little more than minimum wages. They’ve called for a 30 percent pay rise.

“We’re going to see centres closing down for the full day across the country,” United Voice delegate Helen Gibbons said.

“We’re going to see thousands of educators walking off the job.”

They are asking parents to support the nation-wide campaign on March 27 and keep young children at home.

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