



This week's stories from the media

- Australian kids walk out of class in climate change protest
- Union power waning says Lucas
- Principals call for religious education to be scrapped
- One in five NSW high school kids suffer severe deprivation
- Robot teacher companion trialled
- Where you live is determining your school's NAPLAN score

Union Power Waning Says Lucas

Most South Australian public schools stayed open during the half-day strike by teachers in a "vote of no-confidence in the union bosses", says Treasurer Rob Lucas.

Lucas has also offered more details on the pay and conditions dispute which he says includes demands for a 3.5% pay raise that would cost the State Government \$80 million a year.

692 of SA's 875 schools and preschools indicated they would stay open during last week's strike with 194 of those offering a modified program.

Only 183 schools indicated they would close for the morning.

"Let there be no mistake, this is a resounding vote of no-confidence in the union bosses whose ill-conceived rush to strike has been shown to be puerile in the extreme," Lucas said.

[Read the story](#)

Australian Kids Walk Out Of Class In Climate Change Protest

Thousands of Australian schoolchildren - including hundreds in Adelaide - walked out of class to join an international strike to demand urgent government action on climate change.

But the country's resources minister Matt Canavan says skipping school to protest will only teach them "how to join a dole queue".

About a thousand people showed up outside Parliament House in North Tce, ready with signs and chants in pursuit of government response.

They were joined by thousands of schoolchildren nationwide, with more than 3000 people gathering in Melbourne, while Sydney's Martin Place was also flooded with kids and their parents.

"As a generation, we are sick of those in power failing to stop the climate crisis," Sydney student Jean Hinchliffe, 14, said in a statement.

The 'Strike 4 Climate Action', inspired by 15-year-old Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg, involves children in capital cities and 20 regional centres such as Ballarat and Newcastle as they team up with kids globally to push governments into action on the issue.

"Our future is on the line ... We are striking to tell our politicians to stop all new coal and gas projects and take immediate action to move Australia to 100 per cent renewable energy."

The striking students had to get permission from their parents or guardians before they could walk out today. Each have sent signed forms to their schools to declare they will be participating in the strike.

"It's not an unexplained absence," Ms Wood said.

"The permission slips were written by the parents or guardians themselves."



[More](#)

“...Deprivation not only imposes immediate hardship and suffering but is an obstacle preventing young people from realising their potential....”

Principals Call For Religious Education To Be Scrapped

NSW high school principals want religious education to be scrapped, saying it is taking up valuable time that should be spent on learning.

The Secondary Principals' Council has called for a raft of reforms in their submission to the NSW Curriculum Review, which was announced by the NSW government in May and has been described as a once-in-a-generation overhaul.

The review will look at de-cluttering the curriculum, so the council said Special Religious Education should be one of the first things cut from the high school timetable.

At present, SRE is mandatory for 40 minutes per week. Ethics is not offered in high schools, and those who opt out of scripture are not allowed to do any meaningful activity during that period.

"With the issue around the crowded curriculum, it's one of those things that's in there chewing up time," said council president Chris Presland.

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One In Five NSW High School Kids Suffer Deprivation

More than one million Australians are below the poverty line - so this is hardly a small problem.

A new study has asked young Australians aged 11 to 16 about whether they are missing out on these things their friends enjoy.

And the findings are bleak: nearly one in five students in the schools' and more than double that proportion in a Smith Family component, were suffering "severe" deprivation. We define that as missing out on three or more of the 18 essential items identified in the study.

The list includes: three meals a day, a computer or other mobile device, clothes needed for school, going on school trips and excursions.

Findings indicate that most of these disadvantaged kids are missing out on items that lead to social exclusion - being the odd one out; the kid who's wearing last year's uniform, has got little or nothing for lunch, or can't go on the school excursion or take music lessons after school.

[More](#)

Robot Teacher Companion Trialled

A robot that can speak with students, act out book characters' dialogue and set tasks in the classroom has been rolled out at a special needs school in Victoria.

La Trobe University teamed up with Waratah Special Developmental School to trial the robot, called Matilda, as a teacher companion across four classrooms.

The team hopes Matilda, which can recognise human voices and faces, detect emotions, read and recite text, dance, and play music, helps generate social engagement and create entertaining learning activities for students.

[Full Story](#)

Christmas Countdown

Just 19 days until Christmas and the school year ends next week!



Where You Live Determines NAPLAN

Researchers have found that the area in which a student goes to school is one of the clearest predictors NAPLAN reading scores, painting a stark picture of Australia's socio-educational divide.

"Virtually no schools in any city's advantaged suburbs are below the national average, and almost no schools in disadvantaged areas are above average."

In Sydney "you can literally draw a line" between schools with above-average results and below-average results, Smith said.

The study found a clear divide in educational achievement based on a school's location within every major city in Australia and between regional & metropolitan areas.

[Read more](#)