



This week's stories from the media

- Sniffer dogs get green light
- Minister apologises for school zones changes
- Education department takes control of enrolment caps
- Schools desperately need disability royal commission
- Labor to fund healthy food program
- Studies cast doubt on screen time rules

Minister Apologises For Zones

Education Minister John Gardner has apologised for the “disruption” caused by his controversial decision to restrict enrolments at Adelaide High School and Adelaide Botanic High School.

The State Government has come under fire from families outraged by its decision to shrink enrolment zones for the two schools, meaning students in several western and southern suburbs.

Some parents are angry because they specifically moved to a particular area so they could send their children to a city school while others say the rezoning will mean they will be forced to send their child to a school that is further away.

“The fact is that I am very sorry that there has been disruption in a number of families' lives and their expectation that had built up that next year they would be attending a certain school.”

[Read the story](#)

Sniffer Dogs Get Green Light

Sniffer dogs could start scouring public secondary schools for drugs within months after the State Government signed off on a range of protocols around their use.

School principals must request a visit from sniffer dogs, showcasing a “demonstrated need” for a dog operation before they venture on to school grounds.

The need for a sniffer dog visit could include a high number of drug-related incidents at the school, or possession or dealing in the local area, the protocol document states.

Dogs will only be deployed at public secondary schools, or combined schools with a separate area for secondary students.

Students will be watched for signs of suspicious behaviour.

Police will continue to deploy sniffer dogs to schools without advance notice if they have a warrant or a reasonable suspicion that an illicit drug is in the school.

Teachers and students will have no advance notice of a sniffer dog operation and will gather at an assembly point while the dogs search school buildings.

Education Minister John Gardner said the protocol, developed last year by the Education Department and police, was designed with “student wellbeing and natural justice at its core”.

The protocol said a student or teacher suspected of possessing an illegal drug must be “protected from stigma” and cannot be taken from the assembly area, out of a class or publicly identified.

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“...Education systems often investigate themselves which presents difficulties with conflict of interest...”

Education Department Takes Control Of Enrolment Caps

The Education Department has taken control of setting enrolment caps for Adelaide’s high schools, formerly set by schools themselves, to ensure all children can attend their local school.

It means there should be greater transparency about how far schools are over or under their capacities in future.

Under the previous system, schools alerted the department when they believed they were near full, triggering investigations into their use of space. The rough capacity figures kept by the department were not considered accurate enough to make public.

Now, the demographic analysis behind the State Government’s \$185 million commitment to lift capacities across the state - and its highly contentious removal of inner western suburbs from the CBD high school zone - has resulted in the department determining firmer caps for metro schools.

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Schools Desperately Need Disability Royal Commission

Federal parliament has agreed on a motion to support a royal commission into the abuse of disabled people.

Looking at school education alone in the latest ABS statistics, 336,000 students with a disability are enrolled in schools. This does not include thousands of children with a disability who are home schooled, often because of the abuse or discrimination they experience in education settings.

Inquiries in SA, NSW and reports from Queensland reveal widespread denial of enrolment, denial of supports and funding, denial of learning, children being beaten, hit and isolated.

Education systems often investigate themselves, which presents difficulties with conflict of interest. Most abusers tend to abuse in private, so the findings are either not proven, or a quick confidentiality settlement is made to silence the alleged victims. A royal commission would mean an independent authority would do the investigating.

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Labor To Fund Healthy Food Program

School children would again be taught about how to grow fruit, vegetables and herbs and use them to make healthy meals if Labor wins the next federal election.

The opposition has pledged to restore funding for the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program, which it rolled out nationally when last in government, in an effort to curb obesity.

That comes as one in four Australian children is overweight or obese.

“Without intervention, many of them will become overweight or obese adults,” Labor health spokesperson Catherine King said.

[Full Story](#)

School Post



Studies Cast Doubt On Screen Rules

Screen time science is far from settled.

A University of Oxford and Cardiff study involving 19,957 interviews with parents of two to five-year-olds found that there was “little or no support for harmful links between digital screen use and young people’s psychological well-being”.

Another Oxford study, analysed three lots of data, totaling 355,358 responses, on wellbeing and adolescent screen time. “The association we find between digital technology use and wellbeing is negative but small.”

A 2017 study found “little or no support for the theory that digital screen use, on its own, is bad for young children psychological well-being”.

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