



This week's stories from the media

- Education boss slaps down AEU call on anti-mask kids
- SA Government \$33 million digital guarantee
- All systems go for full classroom return
- School hours face major change for first time in decades
- Labor plans digital license
- Short Sightedness on the rise

\$33 Million Digital Guarantee

The state government says low income families can expect it to deliver millions of dollars worth of devices and internet connections in “digital guarantee”.

More laptops and tablets and better internet connections for low-income families – as well as devices for teachers – will be provided to schools under a \$33m funding increase promised by the state government.

Some \$23m of the funding will go toward devices & connectivity for families “where cost is a barrier”.

“We expect all our high school students will need access to appropriate devices for both learning at school and at home and this strategy will enable this to happen,” Mr Gardner said.

The strategy promises that all staff will have an appropriate personal device by 2023.

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Education Boss Slaps Down AEU Call To Kick Out Anti-Mask Kids

A call on teachers to evict students from the classroom if they refuse to wear a mask has been firmly rejected by the Education Department.

The call was made by the teacher's union to its members on Thursday.

However, a contrasting message was sent to all staff by chief executive Rick Persse.

“To be clear, the AEU does not set policy for the Department for Education nor issue instructions to our staff,” Mr Persse said.

Mr Persse said the AEU advice was “unnecessary & confusing”.

“Some of the ‘recommendations’ are directly contradictory to policy set and guidance provided by the Department for Education, additionally they do not align with the advice of SA Health and our chief public health officer Professor Nicola Spurrier,” he said.

Mr Persse said if a student refused, teachers should use “the least exclusionary methods to prevent, reduce or redirect” the bad behaviour.

“A student should not be removed from the class,” he said.

Australian Education Union SA president Andrew Gohl said the call was based on member concerns.

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“...A student should not be removed from the class...”

All Systems Go For Full Classroom Return

All students will return to school next week as planned, with fewer children and teachers than forecast contracting COVID in the first week back, the State Government says.

Premier Steven Marshall said it was “all systems go” for a full return to classrooms next Monday, February 14, as scheduled, despite about 100 students testing positive last week and a similar number of teachers also becoming infected.

“All systems go for next Monday, that was confirmed at the CRC this morning,” he said.

Marshall said the State Government’s “staggered” return to classrooms “got the balance right”.

“But certainly after the first week of school returned, the numbers of COVID-positive students and teachers were probably well below the forecast but we still need some further time to see exactly what that’s likely to be.”

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School Hours Face Major Change For First Time In Decades

The long standing 9am-3pm school day could be in for a change soon, NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet revealed Monday.

Suggesting the hours were out of date and out of step with modern life, Mr Perrottet revealed trials were already underway in some schools to see which hours could work better.

“The school hours of nine till three, that was set up at a very different time in life ... the world in the 1950s is very different from the world we live in today,” he said.

The Premier says trials are being conducted at several NSW schools to evaluate varied learning times, although any changes to the system would come with challenges.

Alternatives include a 7am to 1pm day, or extended after-school care.

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Labor Plans Digital License

A \$6 million Labor plan will see children as young as five needing to earn a “digital licence” before they’re allowed on the internet.

Similar to issuing a “pen licence” for a child to graduate from writing in pencil, the eSmart Digital Licence program equips students with the necessary skills to use the internet safely, but is currently only available to individual schools able to afford it.

Labor’s assistant Communications and Cyber Security spokesman Tim Watts said it was important to “act now” to ensure every child can confront challenges online, including cyber-bullying and disinformation.

[Full Story](#)



Short Sightedness On The Rise

Increased screen time is putting a strain on children’s eyes across Australia.

The combination of remote learning and lockdowns has seen 71 per cent of parents report an increase in their child’s screen time because of Covid.

The effect of this is that myopia - or short sightedness - is on the rise in Australian children. Clinical data from SpecSavers shows rates of myopia in 8 to 15-year-old children increased by 4% from 2016 to 2020.

Medicare data shows the number of kids aged under 14 having an eye test has been steadily increasing during the past decade, rising 33% over the 10 years.

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