

# Class out on super schools

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LIFTOUT STARTS PAGE 29

THE state's super schools will open just three-quarters full, figures reveal.

Education Department preliminary enrolment data provided to *The Advertiser*, show the six super schools – the first of which opened this month – will be more than 1000 students under capacity once all are in operation by Term 2 next year.

While the department played down the low enrol-

ments, the state's peak parent body says the numbers were "not surprising" considering the questions raised by parents and teachers over whether the hubs would provide students with a better education.

The super school scheme, part of the state government's Education Works initiative, combined 20 schools and pre-schools into six new hubs at a cost of more than \$300 million.

The largest of the com-

bined schools, Mark Oliphant College at Munno Para West, has an enrolment capacity of 1420 but an anticipated opening enrolment in Term 2 next year of just 1090 enrolments.

Roma Mitchell Secondary College at Gepps Cross is expected to open more than 400 students below capacity while John Hartley School, which opens later this term at Smithfield Plains, will open 225 students under its limit.

South Australian Association of State School Organisations director David

Knuckey said aside from saving money and offering improved subject choice, studies showed "massive schools" offered little educational benefit to children.

"With so many schools closing around them, many parents may have been left with little alternative but to enrol their children in a super school but clearly many parents who still have an option are choosing to send their children elsewhere," he said.

In February, the Association called for the State Gov-

ernment to suspend the scheme, pending an audit to determine the viability of the super schools, however Mr Knuckey said they were "yet to receive a response".

A spokeswoman for the department said interest has been strong and consistent with enrolment estimates.

Opposition education spokesman David Pisoni said it was "obvious" parents still had concerns about the super school initiative and growth in independent schools had given parents a choice.

## Imports hard for farmers to swallow

From Page 1

Figures from business information analyst IBISWorld show that imported fruit and vegetables – both processed and fresh – represent 20.4 per cent of national consumption, while imported seafood accounts for 30 per cent. Together they are worth \$2.75 billion.

Even dairy imports – including milk, cheese, butter, cream and ice cream – have experienced a significant growth of 7.1 per cent a year, to be worth \$682.7 million in 2010 because drought and the high Australian dollar have made imports cheaper.

China, Thailand, the US and New Zealand are the primary suppliers of fruit and vegetables, with convenience foods such as individual serves of vegetable suitable for microwave cooking being the most popular product category.

"Looking towards 2015, IBISWorld believe these processed imports will grow by a further 3.6 per cent per annum, to reach \$2.06 billion in value," IBISWorld general manager Robert Bryant said.

NSW Farmers' Association vice-president Peter Darley, an apple-grower at Orange in the state's central west, said: "We grow enough food here to feed every Australian – we don't need imports."

Richard Mulcahy, head of AUSVEG which represents the country's vegetable growers, said there was no compelling argument to suggest that Australian farmers could not meet demand, except in the case of garlic and asparagus – not largely grown in Australia and then only in season.

"There is an oversupply of imports in many categories that undercut local suppliers, which is unacceptable," Mr Mulcahy said.

He said there were even concerns that the country-of-origin labelling was not reliable, with some countries importing food from others and claiming it to be their own.

In their search for home-grown garlic alternatives, Aussie Farmers Direct, a home-delivery grocery company that provides 100-per-cent-Australian produce, has found a grower in Victoria to help meet local demand because its consumers want to know where their food comes from.

The company's CEO Braeden Lord said Australia could produce enough raw produce to feed up to three times the population, so there was no logic for imports.

"We work closely with farmers and growers to optimise crops for demand, so we source everything locally," Mr Lord said.

Meanwhile, Australia imports less than 1 per cent of all meat consumed – a figure that has remained constant since before the introduction of the "mad cow" meat import ban in 2002.

Despite concerns over the possible lifting of bans on American and British beef imports, he said Australia still remained the leading global producer, exporting \$7.4 billion in 2008/2009.

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**BAD TASTE:** Jacqueline Tols holds garlic from China at the Central Market yesterday.

Picture: NAOMI JELICOE

## Council could forfeit powers

RUSSELL EMMERSON

A WARRING Adelaide council would risk losing its right to govern, the Property Council warns.

State executive director Nathan Paine yesterday welcomed Lord Mayor-elect Stephen Yarwood's "optimistic" vision of a revitalised city centre but said development-shy councillors could frustrate that vision. This would give the State Government a trigger to remove the council's remaining planning powers and perhaps the council itself, Mr Paine said.

"There was clearly a message from voters they want an exciting and vibrant city (by voting for Mr Yarwood),"

**PAGE 23:**  
Delivering the vision

he said. "If they (the rest of council) choose to ignore that, they do it at their own peril."

Mr Yarwood would not discuss whether he would use the threat of State Government intervention to convince conservative council members to take a more liberal approach to city development.

"The council hasn't even had a chance to sit down yet but ... I am incredibly optimistic we have a pragmatic and professional team."

But there are signs the same tensions will dominate the new council.

Councillor Sandy Wilkinson, whose return to council has not yet been confirmed, said the State Government had "the mistaken belief" that "an ad hoc free-for-all" was a positive environment for development and investment.

"The pressure is to say yes to everything ... but that is not what most property developers want," he said.

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PAGE 26

