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Counting the cost of SA's big dry



PAULA THOMPSON

PARTS of South Australia have missed out on nearly a year's worth of rain in the past two years it has been revealed, as a report shows rainfall deficiencies in the Murray-Darling Basin are the third worst on record.

The Bureau of Meteorology report shows northern Murray-Darling Basin storage levels are lower than during the Millennium Drought. The dry conditions are limiting the state's cattle supplies, with many farmers selling off stock in recent months.

The report comes as the Federal Government pledges \$70 million to protect, meter and monitor water flows in the Murray-Darling Basin.

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TAKING STOCK: Fleurieu Peninsula farmer Kym Endersby says the drought has forced him to prematurely sell his cattle due to the shortage of dry feed and hay.

Picture: TAIT SCHMAAL

Call to help revive EDs

BRAD CROUCH

MORE emergency department doctors are urgently needed at two major Adelaide hospitals as serious understaffing is putting the lives of patients at risk, two peak health bodies warn.

They have called for another six doctors per shift at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and eight doctors at the Lyell McEwin. The Australasian College of Emergency Medicine president, Dr Simon Judkins, said Adelaide had no public EDs that complied with college staffing guidelines.

FULL REPORT PAGE 2

EXCLUSIVE SA parents push for higher teacher standards



CLASS ABOVE

TIM WILLIAMS
EDUCATION REPORTER

SOUTH Australian parents want a higher minimum entry standard for teaching degrees, to attract better candidates to the profession.

More than 60 per cent of nearly 1000 respondents to a survey by a public school parents' group backed lifting the minimum ATAR to a uniform level across the nation.

Respondents to the survey, run by the SA Association of State School Organisations, said the move was needed to restore the prestige of the profession and stop teaching being "every one's last choice".

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Parents push for elite teaching standards

Centre to make our teachers top grade

TIM WILLIAMS
EDUCATION REPORTER

FROM PAGE 1

The survey comes after the federal Opposition announced in January that under a Labor government, universities would have to restrict entry to the top 30 per cent of students, equating to an ATAR of about 80.

It would not ban alternative entry methods but non-ATAR entrants would also have to be high achievers. If universities did not co-operate to lift entry requirements, Labor would cap places in teaching degrees to force a rise in ATAR cut-offs.

The survey question asked: "Should students with an ATAR below 80 be barred from entering the teaching

profession?" In his report, SAASSO director David Knuckey said comments from participants "showed strong community support" for higher standards. Almost all respondents were parents and more than four in 10 worked in schools.

Only a third of school staff supported a minimum 80 ATAR, compared with more than 80 per cent of others. One respondent said:



"Teaching needs to stop being everyone's last choice".

UniSA and Flinders University are SA's two big suppliers of teaching graduates, and have both previously said they do not accept applicants on the basis of ATARs below 70.

A Flinders spokeswoman said many students were admitted by alternative pathways that were "no less rigorous or valid". Last year, only a third of admissions to Flinders teaching degrees were by ATAR.

More than a third were transfers from other higher education courses, or people who had done bridging or foundation courses.

Most others were accepted based on "work and life experience" or previous vocational study.

Federal Labor's education spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek said: "Like parents, Labor wants Australians with a track record of achievement, motivation and capability to teach the next generation. We will give our nation's top achievers bursaries of up to \$40,000 to encourage the best and brightest Australians into teaching."

"And it's why a future Labor government will target entry to teaching degrees to our top achievers."

The federal Liberals have

previously flagged concerns over low ATAR scores of some teaching students and say while in Government they have introduced a suite of measures, including literacy and numeracy tests for teaching students to improve quality.

State Education Minister John Gardner said it was up to unis to determine the conditions of entry into their courses. "But I am open to working with them in relation to proposals that may positively impact the quality of our teaching workforce," he said.

UniSA could not provide a response by deadline.

PAGE 22: EDITORIAL

A MULTI-million-dollar centre for training teachers to deliver better literacy and numeracy tuition has been launched at Hindmarsh.

The State Government is investing \$16 million over three years into the centre, known as Orbis, which will also fund leadership training for principals.

The centre is part of the Education Department's plan to match the world's best-performing school systems within a decade. As *The Advertiser* revealed last year, every school has been rated on academic results, current and over time, and placed on a five-level improvement scale.

The University of Melbourne will deliver three pilot courses for 180 teachers this year - literacy and numeracy for Reception to Year 3, and literacy for Year 8 and 9.

They involve eight days of face-to-face training, and coaching in between.

Education Minister John Gardner, pictured, said Orbis would provide a stronger focus on the most important areas, after a review found schools were using "myriad" different training options.

"Orbis will focus professional development around our key drivers for school improvement to lift literacy and numeracy outcomes and develop instructional leadership to accelerate improvement in schools," he said.

However, it will not replace all other training programs.

Participating schools will send at least two teachers to the pilot courses.

"The intent is to generate a ripple effect of shared knowledge and responsibility to lift capabilities and champion this learning in their own school," Mr Gardner said.

"This is not about achieving a quick-fix. The intent is to get this right so we can achieve sustainable growth in teaching quality and leadership capabilities across the system. Orbis will expand its offerings and details will be made clearer once the pilot is evaluated."

Thirty principals will take Harvard University courses next year. Orbis is in a refurbished wing of the Hindmarsh Education Centre.



SCARY: After its brakes failed yesterday, this truck was forced to use an arrester bed at Mt Osmond to avert disaster on the freeway. Picture: BEN HARVY

Truckies fearful after freeway near-miss

BEN HARVY

ROAD Transport Association director Steve Shearer has warned truck drivers are scared to use their brakes on steep descents over fears of "astronomical" penalties that will come into effect on May 1.

Under the new penalties, drivers can lose their licence for six months, lose six demerit

points and face \$1000 fines if they are caught in the wrong gear or speeding.

The warning follows a near miss on the South Eastern Freeway yesterday when a truck driver avoided a pile-up disaster by ploughing into the lower arrester bed.

"What happened today will increasingly happen and inevitably, we will have a serious in-

cident with bad injuries or fatalities," Mr Shearer said.

"We're getting word from all over the country - drivers are fearful of even touching their brakes.

"A safe, responsible descent of the hill still involves some brief use of the primary brake and (the Government) is refusing to clarify whether they will infringe those drivers."

Under the Act, drivers are able to use their brakes but must drive the truck or bus in a gear low enough to limit its speed. Trucks must not exceed 60km/h while descending on the South Eastern Freeway.

During yesterday's incident, the truck's brakes started to smoke just before 8.30am as the driver descended towards the tollgate at the top of Glen

Osmond Rd. A spokesman from the truck company Harris Refrigerated Logistics said the incident "appears to have been the result of driver error" and not a mechanical failure.

The driver - a 26-year-old Adelaide man - was fined for contravening the low-gear sign at the start of the descent. The truck and trailers were derailed. No one was injured.

Super gap fails nearly 1 million Australians

NEARLY one million Australians are missing out on their superannuation entitlements or failing to put away any money for retirement, alarming new statistics have found.

Analysis from financial services firm Mercer examined

new 2016 Australian Taxation Office figures and found almost 400,000 workers eligible for compulsory 9.5 per cent superannuation payments were not paid their entitlements.

In addition, nearly 537,000

self-employed workers neglected to pay themselves any super. The report also found of those 937,000 Australians missing out on super, one in three had no super savings whatsoever and 49 per cent had less than \$6000.

Something fishy about the flu, study finds

FISH and chips could be making you more prone to getting the flu as new research shows a common food additive may hinder influenza vaccines.

Tert-butylhydroquinone or tBHQ additive, which can be found in cooking oils, frozen

meats and fish as well as in processed foods such as chips and crackers, was found to alter the body's immune response to the virus. The study on mice by Michigan State University scientists and was presented at the 2019 Experimental Biology

meeting in Orlando. The tBHQ additive slowed down the initial activation of T cells, reducing their ability to fight off an infection sooner and allowing the virus to run rampant in the mice until the cells fully activated.