



NEWS IN BRIEF

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The Federation of
Parents and Friends
Associations of
Catholic Schools Qld

Volume 28, No. 6
Sept 2009

REPORT PUSHES REFORM OF AUSTRALIA SCHOOLING

A recently released report, **A New Federalism in Australian Education**, prepared by Professor Jack Keating from the University of Melbourne highlights a number of structural weaknesses in Australia's education system and proposes a path towards a cooperative rather than competitive federalist approach to schooling. "At its heart, this report is about tackling some of the root causes of educational inequality. There are enormous social and economic benefits to be gained from a well-implemented reform of our schooling system," Professor Keating says.

Central to this report is the call for a multi-level, federalist approach to funding that prioritises schools with low completion rates and offers fee relief for low-income families. It recommends additional investment in early childhood education; an acceleration of interventionist programs in the middle years of secondary school to curb school leaving; and a strengthening of upper secondary pathways to further education and training that do not rely solely on academic results.

With the move towards a greater federal influence in the future of education and the development of a new federal funding formula post 2012, it is important that parents are aware of these developments and contribute to the discussion which will directly affect the quality of education their children will receive in the future.

The report will assist parents in understanding the rapidly changing nature of education and it presents a way forward. Parents might discuss the implications of such a plan on our Catholic education system with other community members at their meetings.

The full report can be accessed at: http://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/fya_newfederalism_fullreport2.pdf

A summary document is available at: http://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/fya_newfederalism_ataglance.pdf



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AN INVITATION TO ALL

THE PARENTS AND FRIENDS FEDERATION

BIENNIAL STATE CONFERENCE

TOOWOOMBA

30 APRIL – 2 MAY 2010

Issues On The Boil

- A New Federalism in Australian Education—**Professor Keating**
- **Future Federal Government Funding Policy**
- **National Curriculum**
- **Early years' education**
- **National Testing**



THE STATE OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Minister for Youth, Kate Ellis has released the inaugural State of Australia's Young People Report. It highlights the issues that impact on young people and also provides key statistics about the current generation of Young Australians. While the report identifies that young Australians have a positive attitude towards the future overall, it sets off alarm bells in relation to some emerging health and safety issues. The report shows us that:

- One in four young Australians aged 16-24 years old have a mental health disorder with young people, especially girls, highlighting self harm and unhealthy body image.
- More than a quarter of year 8 students report that they know someone who had been cyber-bullied.
- Young people are more likely than others to be affected by particular crimes, such as violence.
- Teenagers aged 15-19 years had the highest hospitalisation rates for acute intoxication from alcohol among all age groups.

"Of course it's not all doom and gloom – we have a remarkable generation of young people who are truly inspired. But what these issues point to is the need for us to ensure the self esteem, self confidence and empowerment of our young people," Ms Ellis said.



COMING EVENTS

Sept 10	Townsville Diocesan P&F Council Meeting
Sept 17	Brisbane Archdiocesan P&F Council Meeting
Oct 17	Mark Mappas Medallion Dinner (Edmond Rice Hall, Ignatius Park College—Cranbrook, Townsville)
Oct 24	Rockhampton Diocesan P&F Council Meeting (Holy Spirit College, Mackay)
Oct 31	Cairns Diocesan P&F Council Meeting

A CHALLENGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

"There is no stronger weapon against inequality and no better path to opportunity than an education that can unlock a child's God-given potential.

But government programs alone won't get our children to the Promised Land. We need a new mind set, a new set of attitudes -- because one of the most durable and destructive legacies of discrimination is the way we've internalized a sense of limitation; how so many in our community have come to expect so little from the world and from themselves.

Yes, if you live in a poor neighbourhood, you will face challenges that somebody in a wealthy suburb does not have to face. But that's not a reason to get bad grades - that's not a reason to cut class - that's not a reason to give up on your education and drop out of school. No one has written your destiny for you. Your destiny is in your hands -- you cannot forget that. That's what we have to teach all of our children. No excuses. No excuses.

Parents, we can't tell our kids to do well in school and then fail to support them when they get home. You can't just contract out parenting. For our kids to excel, we have to accept our responsibility to help them learn. That means putting away the Xbox -- putting our kids to bed at a reasonable hour. It means attending those parent-teacher conferences and reading to our children and helping them with their homework."



President Barack Obama, Speech to the National Association for Advancement of Coloured People, 16 July 2009

A PRAYER FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Father of life and love,
you created us in your image -- woman and man.
We rejoice and thank you for the gift of each other.
Sustain us in our love
and lead us to a deeper understanding of your love.
Jesus, we come before you,
seeking your guidance and direction
in our relationship.
In marriage you call and challenge us
to a permanent, exclusive and sacred friendship.
Be our strength and support, therefore,
as we continue this journey together.
Holy Spirit, help us to strive towards a lasting,
honest commitment united in love.
Give us your strength to carry each other
in times of darkness,
your joy in times of happiness,
and your gift of awe in the uniqueness
and sacredness of each other.
May our love be a reflection and
a sign of your love in the world.



Amen

NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Plans for a national broadband network linking Catholic schools across the country have been announced. This is a first for any school sector in Australia. Under the plan, more than 1,550 or about 90% of Catholic schools, (including 260 in Queensland) and Catholic Education Offices Australia-wide will be connected to a single Telstra network infrastructure.

The \$146 million project, (Catholic Network Australia or CNA) will be installed over the next two years. It will dramatically increase the reach and capacity of broadband connectivity to Catholic schools and provide a diverse range of services for teachers and students. "Broadband has become a critical tool that helps break down the geographical and social barriers and connects students to each other and the rest of the world," Mr Thodey, chief of Telstra said. "Together with CNA, Telstra will provide Catholic schools across Australia with the broadband services necessary to access education resources critical to a first rate contemporary learning environment."

It is envisaged that CNA could eventually provide a single network for all Australian Catholic agencies and parishes. All students and teachers will have an address and password and the capacity to securely share resources and interact across all Catholic schools Australia-wide.

The benefits would mean:

- a reduction in total costs for individual Catholic networks and agencies,
- the opportunity for the Catholic sector to expand its ITC capacity in education,
- the opportunity to share exemplary practice, content and resources in Catholic schools,
- assisting Catholic agencies to respond to the increasing accountability requirements of all governments, and
- assisting Catholic culture through the creation of online learning communities.

AT HOME WITH HOMEWORK!!!

**Is this the reality of about an hour's homework for the 'average' student?
Sound familiar?**

- 5 minutes looking for the assignment.
- 7 minutes calling a friend about the assignment.
- 10 minutes explaining why the teacher is mean and just doesn't understand students.
- 8 minutes in the bathroom.
- 10 minutes getting something to eat.
- 5 minutes checking the TV guide.
- 5 minutes telling parents the teacher never explained the assignment.
- 10 minutes sitting at the kitchen table waiting for Mum or Dad to do the assignment.



EARLY WARNING SIGNS FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Poor performance on group tests
- Difficulty discriminating size, shape, colour
- Difficulty with temporal (time) concepts
- Reversals in writing and reading
- Poor visual- motor coordination
- Difficulty copying accurately from a model
- Slowness in completing work
- Easily confused by instructions
- Difficulty with abstract reasoning and/or problem solving
- Disorganised thinking
- Impulsive behaviour. Lack of reflective thought before action
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Poor peer relationships
- Lags in development milestones (motor, language)

SPELD

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN HAVE MORE LINKS ONLINE AND ARE MORE RISK AWARE

The following articles emphasise the important roles parents play in understanding new technologies and being able to provide key messages and promote appropriate behaviour to their children when dealing with the internet.

Click and Connect – Young Australians' Use of Online Social Media

The report found that 75 per cent of children surveyed claim they know not to give out their address or phone number online and remember key safety messages such as 'people aren't always who they say they are online'.

"Australian children are telling us the internet is part of their everyday lives, and as they approach high school, it's increasingly important to their social lives. Up to 97 per cent of 16 to 17 year olds claim to use at least one social networking service," said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA. "Australian children demonstrate a good general knowledge of online behaviours that we might consider 'risky'—they know what not to do. Up to 78 per cent of parents also report having a 'high' level of knowledge of online risks."



Most young people are using online technologies as a way to connect with their real world friends, with a small proportion—17 per cent of 12 to 17 year olds—using online social networking to build networks of new friends.

Importantly, the report highlights an ongoing need for cyber safety material that resonates with young people, as well an improved flow of cyber safety information to parents.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/lvcuxb>

Online Child Grooming a Threat

Parents should be vigilant in monitoring their children's online activities according to a report 'Online Child Grooming' by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC).

Principal Criminologist, Dr Russell Smith, said parents should educate their children about the dangers of giving out personal information online. A 2007 study of Australian families found about 70 per cent of teenage girls and 50 per cent of boys had a profile on a social networking site and that one in eight had posted videos of themselves online.

"The increase in children using social networking sites and the anonymity they provide has allowed would-be offenders to pose as children in order to attract potential victims," Dr Smith said. "They are also using popular social networking websites to browse the personal profiles of children."

The report suggests that the use of hotlines for the reporting of illegal web content to the appropriate authorities, online reporting facilities and monitoring systems are all important tools in containing online child exploitation.

The online child grooming report is available at www.aic.gov.au

STUDENTS WILL RECEIVE NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

Teachers will no longer be the sole judge of a student's work, following a decision by the National Curriculum Board, now known as the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to introduce year-by-year achievement standards for pupils. For the first time, all teachers in Australian schools will have to use the same achievement benchmarks to measure student progress.

The decision is aimed at overcoming flaws in the current system, in which assessments by teachers can vary widely between classrooms, schools and states and territories.

Achievement standards will be developed for each year level from prep to year 12 for English, maths, science and history. Teachers will also be given annotated samples of student work to show the differences in quality and cut-off points for work judged to be worth an A, B, C and D grading.

The authority acknowledges concerns from teachers that many disadvantaged students could struggle to reach the new standards, but it is adamant it will not set different expectations for different student groups. Instead, it says it is the role of teachers and schools to deal with differences in student development and progress.

"One important lesson learned from past efforts to overcome inequity is that an alternative curriculum for students who are regarded as disadvantaged does not treat them equitably," the board document says. "It is better to set the same high expectations for all students and to provide differentiated levels of support to ensure that all students have a fair chance to achieve those expectations. This is a view put by, for example, many leaders in the indigenous community on behalf of their young people."

ACARA Chairman Barry McGaw says the new standards will clearly show what skills and knowledge a student should aim for at each year level, making it easier for teachers to identify student progress and to help them.

The standards are expected to be introduced into schools with the national curriculum in 2011.



NAPLAN TEST RESULTS

The 2008 National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test results were published on the Queensland Studies Authority website (www.qsa.qld.edu.au) and in The Courier-Mail in August.

There has been some publicity surrounding the test results with the media promoting 'successful' schools. A poll on our website allows you to indicate if the publication of the results affected your perception of your school. The Federation has always sought relevant information on the performance of students and the tests do give a snapshot of student performance but it is a very narrow indicator of the 'success' of a school. Comparing schools purely on test results can be very damaging for a school community.

The Federation agrees with the Executive Director of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Mr Mike Byrne who has stated that "Every school community is unique and it can be damaging to present information comparing schools without recognising a whole range of contextual issues. When taking into account factors such as socio-economics, multi-cultural profile, remote location and so on, some schools with lower average results in these tests may have, by any measure, done a wonderful job. Unfair comparisons of schools can also impact on the morale of a school and its teachers who are working extremely hard, often under challenging circumstances."

The emphasis on testing also has the potential to narrow the school curriculum and can affect what is taught and how it is taught. It is important that parents are aware of developments in the testing and school reporting area and that they contribute to the discussion at the school to determine what is important in Catholic education and that government initiatives are kept in perspective when determining the 'success' of their school.

2009 NAPLAN test results will be released on 14 September

Wise Words

What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge and not knowledge in pursuit of the child.

George Bernard Shaw



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STATE COMMITTEE MEETS IN CAIRNS

The latest State Committee meeting of the Federation was held in Cairns on the weekend of 29-30 August.

Members were joined at the meeting by representatives of the Leadership Team of Diocesan Catholic Education Services, including the Executive Director, Dr Bill Sultmann and a number of parent observers from the Cairns Diocese.

The agenda included discussions on the developments in the national curriculum, reporting, parent engagement, parent satisfaction surveys and the future of funding.

In addition the committee set the financial direction for the Federation by finalising the budget for 2010. The Committee agreed on an increase in the levy of 10cents (1.7%) for next year.

Planning has also commenced for the next State Conference which will be held in Toowoomba on the weekend of April 29 – May 1 2010 with the theme –

Putting the Pieces Together – All as One.

The Federation hopes for a large representation of parents from each of the dioceses at the Conference.

Parenting Idea

Choose a job you normally do for each of your kids and give it to them by the end of the week.

Redundancy is the aim.

Michael Grose

QUEENSLAND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Federation was proud to be one of the sponsors of the recent festival which featured 10,000 student performances from 83 Catholic schools around the state and some from interstate. The standard of the performances was excellent and those students and their conductors who participated deserve great praise for their efforts. Special congratulations also go to the planning committee at Villanova College for the precision with which the festival was presented. Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the festival which has grown from humble beginnings to become a feature of the cultural life of Catholic education in the state and a fitting finale for the activities of Catholic Education Week.

QUEENSLAND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Music Festival

CONGRATULATIONS

○ To Mary MacKillop College, Nundah which has officially changed its school name and governing body name from Corpus Christi College. The name change, announced on the 100th anniversary of the death of Mary MacKillop reflects the college's longstanding connections with the Sisters of St Joseph, who established the school in 1964.

○ To the recipients of the Spirit of Catholic Education Awards presented by the Governor during Catholic Education Week.

Stanley Alberts - Volunteer, Catholic Education Office, Rockhampton

Sr Margaret Andersen - Project Officer, Identity and Mission, Catholic Education Office Toowoomba

Fr Michael John Lowcock - Parish Priest, Good Shepherd Parish, Mt Isa

Narelle Mullins - Principal, Lourdes Hill College, Brisbane

Br 'Rocky' Pallidius Rochford - Support Officer, Shalom College, Bundaberg

Virginia O'Dea - Teacher, St Andrew's College, Cairns

Marlene Warnick - Assistant Principal - Religious Education, San Sisto College, Carina

○ To **Mr Bob McHugh** who has been appointed as Chair of the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA). Bob has had a long career at senior levels in education and presently chairs the QCEC Capital Programs Subcommittee.

○ To **Mr Joe McCorley**, the former Executive Director of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) who has been appointed as Chair of the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT).

CARMEL'S CORNER

P & F MINUTES

I get many questions about P & F minutes and how they should be recorded.

The P & F minutes should not be pages and pages of 'he said, she said'. They should be an accurate record of Attendance and Apologies, Previous Minutes approval, Business Arising from these Minutes, Correspondence – In and Out, Treasurer's report, Principal's Report, and any other reports required, and a record of General Business.

Correspondence should be listed and available for anyone to read anything of interest. In this world of 'junk mail' many schools do not bother to record all the advertising that they receive particularly those who have a levy and do not fund-raise. This is up to each P & F to decide.

All reports should be sent to the Secretary prior to the meeting if possible, or a copy handed to him/her at the meeting. The reports can then become an attachment to the minutes and only acceptance of the report and any decisions that are made from the report need to be recorded.

General Business should be recorded as – 1. What the topic was for discussion and 2. What the decision was. Sometimes brief discussion notes may need to be recorded but every word that everyone says does not. Unless someone specifically asks for something they said to be recorded in the minutes, only points 1 and 2 need to be the record. This cuts down the size of the minutes considerably.

Something that has come to our attention lately is the issue of P & F's who put their minutes up on the school website. These need to be added with caution. Parent's privacy needs to be protected and with media outlets trawling websites for information about test results etc and reporting required by government then something they may see as controversial in your minutes could attract their attention. This could be many things from some disagreement about an issue or could be information about your financial records. You may not see it as controversial but others may not see it the same way. The funds held by P & F should not be recorded on the website either.

I would suggest that if you place your minutes on your school website that it is a summary of the minutes with no person identified and if any parents want a copy of the actual minutes then these could be emailed to them. If parents are named then this could be used as once they are on the website they are public information for anyone who goes to that website.

This is just a caution for all P & F's to think about the information that they provide publicly – not that there should be anything to cover up – just to protect the privacy of all.

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