



Weekly Briefing For Member Schools

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Week Ending: 26 June 2009

[Auditor-General Releases Report on the Administration of General Recurrent Funding for Non-Government Schools](#)

A report has been tabled in Parliament recommending changes to the administration of general recurrent funding for non-government schools in order to reduce the possibility of fraud or error.

[Senate Votes to Refer the Administration of Capital Funding to the Auditor-General](#)

The Auditor-General will conduct an audit of the *Building the Education Revolution* program following requests from the Australian Coalition.

[Minister Gillard Delivers Lecture on Education Policy](#)

Education Minister Julia Gillard has argued that Australian education policy needs to address 'a serious educational equity problem'.

[Media Queries the Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on School Enrolments](#)

The *Herald Sun* has claimed that non-government school enrolments could decrease during the global financial crisis.

[Productivity Commission Recommends Streamlined Reporting to Government](#)

The Productivity Commission has argued that reporting to government by highly regulated industries, such as education, should be simplified to remove duplication and unnecessary regulation.

[New South Wales Legislation to Prevent the Publication of School Performance Information](#)

Legislation introduced into the New South Wales Parliament to permit the publication of school performance information has been overturned.

[Parliamentary News](#)

Forthcoming sitting dates for the Victorian and Australian Parliaments.

[NEiTA Inspirational Teaching Awards](#)

Nominations have been called for the NEiTA Inspirational Teaching Awards.

[Seminars for the week beginning 29 June 2009](#)

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Auditor-General Releases Report on the Administration of General Recurrent Funding for Non-Government Schools

The Age, Dan Harrison, 25/06/09; Courier Mail, Emma Chalmers, 25/06/09

A performance audit of Australian Government funding for non-government schools has recommended that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) improve its administration of non-government school general recurrent funding, to better manage the risk of error. The *Funding for Non-government Schools* report was completed by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) in order to assess the extent to which DEEWR:

- effectively managed the data used to calculate general recurrent grants for non-government schools
- properly approved, paid and acquitted the correct amounts of general recurrent funding
- monitored and reported whether the funding model was meeting its objectives.

The report concluded that DEEWR effectively met the first two points. However, it argued that DEEWR could improve grant administration 'by strengthening its program controls and quality assurance checks designed to manage the risk of errors when executing agreements, making better use of the available data to detect overpayments including fraud, and monitoring and reporting on the SES funding arrangements'. In particular, ANAO identified that DEEWR made limited use of other sources to confirm non-government schools' annual enrolment data. It recommended that DEEWR 'consult with the States, Territories and school system authorities on data sharing arrangements'. The report also noted that DEEWR did not receive information from non-government school systems on how they distributed funding between affiliated schools and recommended the development of a processes to ensure that school systems distributed general recurrent funding to individual schools in line with the SES funding model's stated needs-based principles. Finally, ANAO claimed that DEEWR received little information on the extent to which funding was being used to meet the stated purposes of the SES funding model, such as providing low-income families with greater access to choice, encouraging private investment in education and providing additional funding to the neediest schools. The report recommended that DEEWR 'increase analysis of non-government schools data to assist in measuring and reporting on whether the purposes of the SES funding arrangements and underpinning principles are being met, and to better inform program management and broader policy advice'. DEEWR has indicated that it supported all of ANAO's recommendations. A spokesperson for the Acting Minister for Education, Senator Kim Carr, commented that 2009-2012 funding agreements included additional reporting and transparency requirements and indicated that the Australian Government's 2010 review of the SES funding model would be 'wide-ranging'. Go to www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/2008-09_Audit_Report_45.pdf to access a copy of the report.

Senate Votes to Refer the Administration of Capital Funding to the Auditor-General

The Australian, Siobhain Ryan, 26/06/09

The Senate has voted to formally request that ANAO conduct an audit of the *Building the Education Revolution* program (BER). With the support of the Australian Greens, Liberal Senator Brett Mason and Nationals Senator John Williams secured the Senate's agreement to request the audit. Under the terms of reference proposed by the Coalition, the audit would include an investigation of the management of Australian Government funding by state and territory governments. ANAO indicated that, following requests from the Shadow Minister for Education, The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, it had already commenced inquiries into the administration of the BER. ANAO also indicated that it expected to make a decision as to whether it would proceed with a full performance audit of the BER by mid-July. The Australian Government argued that the quick rollout of the BER was part of a 'comprehensive strategy' to improve productivity and that the Coalition was attempting to prevent 'much-needed capital injections into Australia's school system'.

Minister Gillard Delivers Lecture on Education Policy

Address to the Brookings Institution, The Hon Julia Gillard MP, 19/06/09; The Age, Farrah Tomazin, 22/06/09; Sydney Morning Herald, Farrah Tomazin & Josephine Tovey, 22/06/09

In an address in the United States of America, the Australian Government Minister for Education, The Hon Julia Gillard MP, has argued that previous education policies in Australia have 'created an opaque, fragmented funding system and no clear national priorities for improvement, reform or accountability'. In her speech to the Brookings Institution, Minister Gillard noted that enrolments in non-government schools had increased markedly in recent years and that the Australian Government supported 'the right of parents to choose what kind of school their child attends and the role of Government in providing funding.' However, Minister Gillard claimed that Australia suffered from 'a serious educational equity problem', with too many poor students clustered in a small number of schools with low rates of achievement and low expectations of students. In response to critics of the Australian Government's calls for greater transparency of school reporting, Minister Gillard stated that she found it 'offensive to suggest that this information should be withheld or that parents are too stupid to know what to do with it. Our aim is not to name and shame as some have suggested, but to find out what the higher-achieving schools are doing right and try to replicate that success elsewhere.'

Media Queries the Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on School Enrolments

Herald Sun, Claire Heaney, 22/06/09

The *Herald Sun* has argued that anecdotal evidence suggests that parents are becoming less likely to send their children to non-government schools as the global financial crisis continues. The newspaper argued that 'often the last thing the family wants to do is pull children out of their schools', but argued that parents with children on school waiting lists were more likely to send their children to government schools. A financial planner, Ms Lisa Knight, argued that more parents were looking to send their children to government primary schools and non-government secondary schools, but claimed that this trend per-dated the current economic environment. The Chief Executive of AISV, Ms Michelle Green, noted that the 2009 February School Census had indicated that enrolments in independent schools had increased by two per cent in 2009.

Productivity Commission Recommends Streamlined Reporting to Government

Media Release, Productivity Commission, 26/06/09; Australian Financial Review, Fleur Anderson, 25/06/09

The Productivity Commission has recommended that the Australian Government extend its online financial reporting program to reduce paperwork for businesses in 'highly regulated' sectors such as education. The Commission's draft *Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Social and Economic Infrastructure Services Sector* report has recommended a system that is intended to remove unnecessary and duplicated information through the creation of a common reporting language for government. Under the proposal, the Australian Government's standard business reporting regime would be extended to enable businesses to provide both financial and non-financial information to 13 different state and federal agencies, including the Australian Tax Office, state revenue offices and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission. They would also be able to submit regulatory information to government agencies involved in licensing, accreditation and regulation, including DEEWR.

New South Wales Legislation to Prevent the Publication of School Performance Information

Sydney Morning Herald, Anna Patty, 19/06/09; Sydney Morning Herald, Brian Robins & Andrew Clennell, 26/06/09

A New South Wales Government Bill to remove an existing ban on the publication of school performance information has been defeated by the Coalition and the Greens in the Upper House. The New South Wales Minister for Education, The Hon Verity Firth MP, had argued that the amendment to the *Education Act* was necessary to ensure that New South Wales received funding from the Australian Government under the National Partnership programs. Under the amendment, the New South Wales Government would have to be able to provide benchmark test data to the Australian Government but third parties would have continued to be unable to receive raw test scores through Freedom of Information laws. However, the Coalition and the Greens amended the Bill to make it an offence for newspapers and magazines to publish school performance information, with a penalty of up to \$55,000 for an offence. As responsibility for the internet rests with the Australian Government, information on the performance of New South Wales schools could still be published interstate or online. The Australian Education Union called for all states and territories to follow suit and introduce legislation banning the publication of school league tables.

Parliamentary News

The Victorian Parliament (Assembly and Council) sat from Tuesday 23 June 2009 until Thursday 25 June 2009. Both Houses have risen for the Winter Recess and will resume sitting on Tuesday 28 July 2009. The Australian Parliament (House of Representatives and Senate) also rose on Thursday 25 June 2009 for the Winter Recess. Both Houses will resume in the Spring Session on Tuesday 11 August 2009.

Senate Inquiry Established to Investigate the Treatment of International Students

Media Release, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, 17/06/09

The Australian Greens have established a Senate inquiry into the treatment of international students in Australia. The Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee's inquiry will focus on 'the roles and responsibilities of education providers, migration and education agents, state and federal governments, and relevant departments and embassies, in ensuring the quality and adequacy in information, advice, service delivery and support, with particular reference to student safety, adequate and affordable accommodation, social inclusion, student visa requirements, adequate international student supports and advocacy, employment rights and protections from exploitation and appropriate pathways to permanency'. The inquiry will also consider 'the identification of quality benchmarks and controls for service, advice and support for international students studying at an Australian education institution'. While the inquiry has been driven by recent attacks on university students, it is also expected to have an impact on school-aged international students. The Committee is expected to report back to the Senate by Monday 16 November 2009.

NEiTA Inspirational Teaching Awards

The National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) are designed to honour exemplary teachers in Australian schools and early childhood centres. The awards promote public recognition of the teaching profession and those teachers whose approaches to teaching stimulate student learning. Students, parents and school communities are able to nominate teachers and school leaders to receive awards. Nominations for the awards close on Friday 31 July 2009. For further information on the awards or to access nomination forms, go to www.neita.com.au or contact NEiTA at neita@asg.com.au or on 1800 624 487.

Seminars for the week beginning 29 June 2009

No seminars will take place at AISV during the Term 2 break. AISV's seminar schedule will re-commence in the week starting on Monday 13 July 2009.

Note: The AISV Weekly Briefing is also available on the AISV web site, including back issues. The AISV web site is at <http://www.ais.vic.edu.au>.

To obtain further information on any of the above matters, please contact AISV

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