

Friday 6 September 2019

## Education Updates

### Christian Schools Body Disappointed with Delays to Religious Review

The Australian Association of Christian Schools says that delays to the Australian Law Reform Commission's religious exemptions review could leave schools 'in limbo'. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Faith-Based Schools should Enrol Students of other Faiths – Hindu Council

The Hindu Council has proposed that faith-based schools be required to enrol a 'certain percentage of students ... from other faiths'. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Half a Billion Dollars Directed to Government School Maintenance

The Victorian Government has allocated \$515 million over two years for maintenance at government schools. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Victorian Government Increases Support for Regional Schools

The Victorian Government has announced almost \$83 million in funding for rural and regional government schools, with more than half going to address teacher supply issues. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Hierarchical Structure Leaves Schools Vulnerable to Bad Leadership, says Report

A new report exploring the impact of destructive leadership in schools says the nature of school power structures can allow their leaders to cause 'physiological, psychological, organisational or environmental harm'. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Grants to Encourage Student Science Engagement

The Australian Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, Ms Karen Andrews, has announced that applications for grants of up \$20,000 are open to schools and organisations to 'give our kids science opportunities in Australia and abroad'. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Indigenous STEM Awards

The CSIRO is inviting schools, teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to nominate for the Indigenous STEM Awards. [Click here to read more...](#)

Please visit the Independent Schools Victoria website for seminars for [September 2019](#).

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## Christian Schools Body Disappointed with Delays to Religious Review

The Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) says that delays to the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) [religious exemptions review](#) could leave schools 'in limbo'.

The ALRC was originally going to deliver the report on its inquiry in April next year. The review was extended until December 2020, and its terms of reference narrowed, when the Australian Government released draft anti-discrimination legislation last week. (see [Weekly Briefing 25/2019](#).)

AACS executive officer [Alithea Westerman welcomed](#) the government's work to protect religious freedom, but said the review's delay 'extends the uncertainty for Christian education schools who simply want their ability to be authentic Christian education communities protected'.

The AACS is concerned that 'vague notions of harm and vilification' in the religious discrimination legislation could be used against 'classical Christian teaching in schools'. It has reservations about using 'problematic' exemptions to protect freedom of association, and wants other measures to be considered.

Mrs Westerman said that Independent schools play an important role in upholding diversity and freedom of thought in Australia, particularly for minorities.

She said:

If Independent schools lose their point of difference and are unable to practice and teach their different educational philosophies or faiths, government will be the arbiter of morality and conscience.

- Discrimination Bill on the right path. Jennifer Oriel, *The Australian*, 2 September 2019
- Draft religious rules are incomplete and limited. George Williams, *The Australian*, 3 September 2019

## Faith-Based Schools should Enrol Students of other Faiths – Hindu Council

The Hindu Council of Australia has proposed that faith-based schools be required to enrol a 'certain percentage of students ... from other faiths'.

The [council's submission](#) to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) calls for it to expand the scope of its [religious exemptions review](#) so that it includes the 'religious rights of other faith believers as well as of non-believers'.

It says the review should consider whether faith-based organisations, including schools, should be required to publish their policy related to the enrolment of students and the hiring of employees, contractors, and suppliers of other faiths.

It wants such organisations to explicitly inform those of other faiths that their participation in religious services is optional, that non-participation will not be viewed negatively, and they won't be coerced to change their religion.

The Hindu Council of Australia proposes that faith-based schools and employers be required to admit:

a certain percentage of students, employees [and] teachers of other faiths so that students, while learning about their own religion, do not grow without contact with students and people of other faiths, cultures, orientation and backgrounds.

The submission says that as long as the organisation works within constraints such as these, it should have the 'freedom to profess, teach and practice their faith within the institute'.

'No faith-based institution' it says, should ever be forced to use resources 'in any way to promote, encourage or propagate teachings that are against the teachings and beliefs of that faith'.

Council vice president Surinder Jain told *The Age* that children in religious schools were growing up without meeting people of a different religion.

'That's not good for a harmonious, multicultural society', he said.

- Call to make schools mix religions. Judith Ireland, *The Age*, 5 September 2019

## Half a Billion Dollars Directed to Government School Maintenance

The Victorian Government has allocated \$515 million over two years for maintenance at government schools.

The funding is typically used for painting, landscaping, tree inspections, for upkeep of infrastructure like septic systems and water services, or to replace carpet and windows.

Victorian Minister for Education [James Merlino said](#) the outlay represented the 'largest boost to school maintenance' ever.

'Sometimes it's the little things that can have a really big impact. From fixing leaky taps to a new lick of paint – this investment will help every child, in every state school, right across Victoria,' he said.

- Schools set for \$500m facelift. Adam Carey, *The Age*, 3 September 2019

## Victorian Government Increases Support for Regional Schools

The Victorian Government has announced [almost \\$83 million in funding](#) for rural and regional government schools, with more than half going to address teacher supply issues.

Victorian Education Minister [James Merlino said](#) that the government would set aside \$45 million dollars for grants of up to \$50,000 to encourage the state's 'best and brightest teachers' to move to government schools outside of the city.

The government will spend 37 million to improve outcomes for country students, including:

- more than \$13 million so they can attend VCE revision lectures in Melbourne
- almost \$8 million for teacher professional learning
- more than \$5 million to support clusters school arrangements
- more than \$7 million for outreach and virtual programs and for abolishing enrolment fees for Virtual School Victoria.

The funding is part of the government's response to recommendations of the [Expert Advisory Panel into Rural and Regional Students](#), which was established in June to investigate how the divide in educational outcomes between city and country schools could be addressed (see [Weekly Briefing 18/2019](#)).

Mr Merlino said that he had seen 'first hand' that the divide was one of the 'biggest issues' facing schools. He said that the government was 'getting on with the job of fixing it'.

The president of the Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union, [Ms Meredith Peace, welcomed the announcement](#), saying she hoped it was the 'first of many steps taken to help bridge the divide between our metro and non-metro students and schools'.

- Cash for teachers to move. Ashley Argoon, *Herald Sun*, 6 September 2019
- Teachers offered \$50k to go bush. Adam Carey, *The Age*, 5 September 2019

## Hierarchical Structure Leaves Schools Vulnerable to Bad Leadership, says Report

A new report exploring the impact of destructive leadership in schools says the nature of the school power structures can allow their leaders to cause 'physiological, psychological, organisational or environmental harm'.

The paper, [Destructive leadership in education: a transdisciplinary critical analysis of contemporary literature](#), published in new *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, reviews literature on leadership in Australian schools and how 'top-down negativity' can affect the whole school system.

The authors of the report, Dr George Odhiambo and Dr Rachel Wilson of the Sydney School of Education and Social Work, and Dr Pam Ryan of the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney, say 'bad leadership is bad for everyone'.

They say that three factors permit destructive leadership:

- hierarchical school organisations and prevailing power relations that favour those in authority
- the personality dispositions of some leaders
- the nature of the relationships between leaders and followers, including the susceptibility of some subordinates to the behaviour of the leader.

Destructive leadership contributes to a range of ill effects on the school community, say the authors, and ultimately, 'individuals and schools fail to flourish or serve the best interests of their students'.

## Grants to Encourage Student Science Engagement

The Australian Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, [Ms Karen Andrews, has announced](#) that applications for grants of up to \$20,000 are open to schools and organisations to 'give our kids science opportunities in Australia and abroad'.

Ms Andrews said that the program, now in its fourth year, helps young Australians participate in conferences, competitions and other science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) events.

'We want more young Australians to get the STEM foundation that will allow them to be part of future scientific and technological breakthroughs, and will also set them up for the jobs of the future,' she said.

The program allocates up to \$1.6 million each year via grants of between \$1000 and \$20,000. Applications are capped at \$1500 per student for domestic, and \$5000 per student for overseas competitions and events.

Funding is allocated to eligible applicants on a first-in basis.

For more information, or [to submit an application, visit the sponsorship grants website](#).

## Indigenous STEM Awards

The CSIRO is inviting schools, teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to nominate for the Indigenous STEM Awards.

The awards recognise, reward and promote the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working or studying in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the teachers and mentors who support them.

The seven award categories include prizes for schools, teachers, and for students

Applications are now open until Friday 27 September 2019.

For more information, visit the [Indigenous STEM Awards website](#).