

Friday 20 September 2019

## Education Updates

### **ANZ Report Highlights Pressure on Medium Fee Schools**

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### **Ballarat School Taken to VCAT on Discrimination Complaint**

A Ballarat teacher has taken legal action against her former school, saying that she was forced to resign because she did not support the school's traditional view of marriage. [Click here to read more...](#)

### **Experts Brief Education Council on Mobile Phones in Schools**

Education experts have briefed state and territory education ministers about the impact of student mobile phone use in schools. [Click here to read more...](#)

### **New Resources to Help Parents Engage in Student Learning**

The Australian Minister for Education, Mr Dan Tehan, has launched a series of toolkits to help parents support their child's education. [Click here to read more...](#)

### **Two more Years of Ride2School**

The Victorian Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Mr Martin Pakula, has announced that the government is extending its support for a program encouraging students to regularly ride or walk to school. [Click here to read more...](#)

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## ANZ Report Highlights Pressure on Medium Fee Schools

Demographic changes combined with economic conditions are altering the education landscape, according to a new ANZ Bank report, which highlights pressure on non-government schools charging fees in the medium range of \$10,000 to \$20,000.

The report says that there are 'troubling signs' for these schools, which were experiencing a 'reduction in student numbers, sluggish tuition fee growth and an increased reliance on debt'.

It predicts that overall demand for non-government education will continue to rise in line with population growth, while noting growth for government schools at the expense of Catholic schools, which had experienced a falling share of enrolments since 2010.

The report, based on a sample of 78 non-government schools, says that enrolments in some Independent schools could come under pressure as 'household disposable income and mortgage stress takes its toll'.

The director of client insights and solutions at ANZ Institutional, [Mr Tim Suffield, said](#) that the increase in secondary school fees since 2000, combined with an increase in pressure on disposable incomes brought on by slow wage growth, had led some parents to reassess where they sent their children to school.

'Clearly there are important structural challenges for the non-government schooling sector,' he said.

Independent Schools Victorian Chief Executive, Ms Michelle Green, acknowledged that parents on low or middle incomes 'who make up largest proportion of families in Independent schools' were particularly affected by the slow economy, but said that demographic factors were also involved.

'Schools charging mid-range fees are aware of those pressures when they set fees which form the overwhelming bulk of their income,' she said.

'These schools are not just affected by economic forces. Demographic factors can also play a part. So a mid-range school in a suburb with an ageing population faces the challenge created when there are fewer school-age children. Similar schools in different suburbs don't face the same issues, to the same degree.

'Regardless of their location, all of these schools take into account parents' circumstances when deciding on fees and the programs and facilities they provide.

'Independent schools continue to record strong enrolment growth, with Victoria leading the way, showing that parents have confidence in the education they provide and the choice they offer.

'Independent schools have been Australia's fastest growing school sector over the last decade, with the latest figure of a 2.2 per cent growth in enrolments being the highest since 2008.

'The rate of growth exceeds that of Government and Catholic schools.

'I'm confident that this growth will continue in coming years, with Victoria likely to lead the way.'

– Enrolments at private schools take a wages hit. Adam Carey, *The Age*, 15 September 2019

## Ballarat School Taken to VCAT on Discrimination Complaint

A Ballarat teacher has taken legal action against her former school, saying that she was forced to resign because she did not support the school's traditional view of marriage.

The teacher, [Mrs Rachel Colvin, says](#) that she refused to sign Ballarat Christian College's statement of faith after it was updated to say that 'marriage can only be between a male and a female'.

She says that the school contravened Victorian equal opportunity legislation, alleging that it counselled her and then forced her to resign after she declined to sign the amended statement. She is taking the school to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) with the support of Equality Australia, an advocacy group for LGBTIQ+ people.

Mrs Colvin said that she offered to teach in accordance with the schools' beliefs, but that she could not sign a statement about her own personal beliefs that ran contrary to them.

The *Weekend Australian* reported that the school says it tried to accommodate Mrs Colvin, and that it told her she was free to hold her personal views as long as she taught and supported students in accordance with the school's beliefs, but that Mrs Colvin would not do so.

The Principal of Ballarat Christian College, Mr Ken Nuridin, told the paper that the updated statement of faith only reflected the school's 'long held position' and it should have come as 'no surprise to staff'.

Mr Nuridin said that the school had been working through the issue with the teacher in accordance with its enterprise agreement when she resigned, and that the school had 'heard nothing since ... until receiving the claim earlier this week'.

He said that the school was surprised by the claim given how long it had been since the resignation and that it was 'seeking advice on any exemptions under the Victorian or Commonwealth laws'.

- Gay view cost job. Susie O'Brien, *Herald Sun*, 14 September 2019
- Teacher sues school in faith test case. Geoff Chambers, *Weekend Australian*, 14 September 2019
- Christian teacher says school forced her to quit for supporting marriage equality. Lisa Martin, *The Guardian*, 16 September 2019

## Experts Brief Education Council on Mobile Phones in Schools

Education experts have briefed state and territory education ministers about the impact of student mobile phone use in schools.

Australian Education Minister Dan Tehan invited four academics to the latest gathering of the Education Council to present their research and to offer perspectives on effective mobile phone policies in schools.

He said that Canadian researcher Assistant Professor Louis-Philippe Beland told the council that banning mobile phones was 'equivalent to an additional hour a week in school, or increasing the school year by five days'.

The positive effect was said to be 'even greater for low-achieving students, with a mobile phone ban the equivalent of an additional two hours a week, or 10 school days a year'.

In June, the Victorian Government announced that it would ban mobile phones from the classroom from 2020 (see [Weekly Briefing 19/2019](#)).

[Mr Tehan said ahead of the federal election](#) that the Coalition would pursue such a ban, and he [confirmed the intention after Education Council](#), saying that removing the 'significant distraction' from class time would help students focus on their learning.

He supported Victoria's approach, and said that the Australian Government would work with 'any jurisdiction to limit their use in schools'.

As well as discussing mobile phones in schools, the [Education Council discussed](#) National Assessment Program, Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) online connectivity, how NAPLAN Data is reported (including on My School) and school reform initiatives.

[It also met with 52 young people](#) to discuss their ideas and vision for refreshing the Melbourne Declaration.

The group discussed ways of strengthening student voice, strength-based approaches to learning, how to improve transition through all phases of education, and promoting successful and engaged learners.

- Parents the problem with kids' phones. Robert Bolton, *AFR Weekend*, 14 September 2019
- Phone ban boosts learning. Ashley Argoon, *Herald Sun*, 13 September 2019

## New Resources to Help Parents Engage in Student Learning

The Australian Minister for Education, [Mr Dan Tehan, has launched a series of toolkits](#) to help parents support their child's education.

The online resource, [Gearing Up for Parent Engagement in Student Learning](#), was created by Catholic School Parents Australia, with funding from the Australian Government, and is freely available to parents and educators in all school systems.

Mr Tehan said that parents should be encouraged to actively engage in their child's education and that the toolkits would help them 'navigate some of the tricky junctures in a child's journey through the school years'.

He said the toolkits also provided advice to teachers on 'how to effectively communicate with parents, and work with them to provide a strong support network for students'.

## Two more Years of Ride2School

The Victorian Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, [Mr Martin Pakula, has announced](#) that the government is extending its support for a program encouraging students to regularly ride or walk to school.

More than 900 schools took part in the [Ride2School program](#) in 2019, riding their bikes, skateboards and scooters to school. The Victorian Government is investing \$1.4 million to extend the program to another 200 schools 'allowing them to make submissions for funding to support inspirational ideas that encourage regular active participation by students'.

Mr Pakula said that as well as encouraging a healthy habit, the program promotes the importance of bicycle safety, reminding students to wear helmets and think about other people on road and footpaths.

Riding to school 'goes a long way to boosting energy, health and concentration in the classroom', he said.