

Friday 18 October 2019

Education Updates

Government to waive HELP debt for teachers in very remote schools

The Australian Government has introduced measures into parliament to encourage teachers to work in very remote communities. [Click here to read more...](#)

Student teachers to learn phonics

Australian Minister for Education Dan Tehan has told the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to investigate how the teaching of phonics can be made a part of the national accreditation standards for initial teacher education. [Click here to read more...](#)

ATAR scoring unfair, says Gonski Institute

A survey by the University of New South Wales Sydney's Gonski Institute for Education has found that 'most people' want factors outside of end-of-school exam results to be considered when university entry ranks are calculated. [Click here to read more...](#)

More support for students at risk of disengagement

The Victorian Government has expanded a program that aims to reduce the proportion of years 9 to 12 students leaving school early. [Click here to read more...](#)

Parliamentary Insider

The Parliamentary Education Office is offering schools a free, immersive way to bring Parliament into the classroom via video conferencing. [Click here to read more...](#)

Please visit the Independent Schools Victoria website for seminars for [Term 4, 2019](#).

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Perspectives](#).

Would you like to read the briefing every week? [Sign up here](#).

Government to waive HELP debt for teachers in very remote schools

The Australian Government has introduced measures into parliament to encourage teachers to work in very remote communities.

Changes in the [Education Legislation Amendment \(2019 Measures no. 1\) Bill 2019](#) include waiving the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt of teachers (including early childhood teachers) for up to five years if they work for at least four years in very remote areas. There would also be no indexation on their debt.

[Mr Tehan said](#) that students in very remote communities would benefit from having teachers stay in their schools for longer. He said that waiving their debt would 'prompt new teachers to consider a stint working in the bush, and will also attract remote community members into a teaching career'.

Independent Schools Council of Australia executive director Barry Wallet [welcomed the announcement](#), saying it would help 'improve the outcomes for very remote students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by supporting existing and future teachers to spend more time in very remote schools'.

The author of the [2017 Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education](#), Emeritus Professor John Halsey, said that the government's announcement was 'very encouraging'. He recommended that the government consider extending the scheme to 'include school principals and positions of additional responsibility, such as curriculum coordinators'.

Other measures in the bill relate to increased support for aviation courses, and the use of student data collected by higher education providers.

Student teachers to learn phonics

Australian Minister for Education Dan Tehan has told the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to investigate how the teaching of phonics can be made a part of the national accreditation standards for initial teacher education (ITE).

Mr Tehan said that a group of AITSL experts would advise the government on how to put its election commitments for phonics in ITE into practice. The group will focus on ensuring that graduate teachers knew how to deliver the 'five essential elements of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, comprehension'.

The group will provide the revised accreditation standards to the Education Council ahead of its meeting in December.

Mr Tehan said that the Australian Government will also offer a free, voluntary phonics health check for Year 1 students, 'so parents and teachers can better understand a child's reading level and what support they may need'.

– Phonics checks loom for graduates. Rebecca Urban, *The Australian*, 15 October 2015

ATAR scoring unfair, says Gonski Institute

A survey by the University of New South Wales Sydney's Gonski Institute for Education has found that 'most people' (80 per cent) want factors outside of end-of-school exam results to be considered when university entry ranks are calculated.

More than two thirds (67 per cent) of the 1700 respondents to the survey believe that using the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) for university entry creates unnecessary pressure on Year 12 students.

Almost half feel that the ATAR 'is unfair'.

Institute director, Professor Adrian Piccoli, said that the survey responses reflect the findings of academic research on measuring student aptitude. He said a 'growing body of work' showed that 'one-off exams, which are supposedly meant to measure a student's whole of school experience, often do not accurately measure their skills, potential or overall ability'.

Basing ATAR on Year 12 exam results also increases pressure on schools, he added, because 'school ranking tables' don't necessarily reflect 'the quality of education available at schools but rather how their students performed in various tests'.

Professor Eileen Baldry, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Equity Diversity and Inclusion at the University of New South Wales, said that the inequity associated with ATAR scores and disadvantaged schools 'poses significant problems for universities in offering places to the most talented students across the country if we just use the ATAR results'.

- Don't sweat it: university chief reassures students the ATAR is just a first step. Rebecca Urban, *The Australian*, 14 October 2015

More support for students at risk of disengagement

The Victorian Government [has expanded a program](#) that aims to reduce the proportion of years 9 to 12 students leaving school early.

The [Navigator program](#) supports young people who are not attending school or struggling with attendance by providing them with a case worker who can link them to support services and 'create a path back into education'. It has been gradually rolled out to schools across the state after it was trialled in 2016.

Victorian Education Minister James Merlino said \$43.8 million in funding would see Navigator extended to three new areas in 2020: Wimmera South West, North Eastern Melbourne and Barwon. It will then be extended to the remainder of the state by 2021.

Mr Merlino said Navigator had already helped 'more than 1600 students stay in school'.

Parliamentary Insider

The Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) is offering schools a free, immersive way to bring Parliament into the classroom via video conferencing.

The program gives students the chance to talk to experts and learn how Parliament works. It links to the Australian Civics and Citizenship Curriculum and caters for students from years 5 to 12. The program explores:

- how laws are made through Parliament
- the responsibilities of representatives
- the formation of government
- how government is kept accountable.

For more information, or to book, head to the [PEO website](#).