

Friday 29 November 2019

## Education Updates

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### Education Council to consider merging ACARA and AITSL

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### 50,000 children not at school

There may be more than 50,000 school aged children not taking part in formal education, but how this has happened is a mystery, according to a report from the Melbourne University Graduate School of Education. [Click here to read more...](#)

### Intimidation and abuse of lower secondary teachers a problem in Australia

Australian lower secondary principals report a higher incidence of intimidation or verbal abuse of teachers or staff than principals in other countries, according to a new Australian Council for Educational Research report. [Click here to read more...](#)

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## Independent schools consider sector reform

The Chief Executive of Independent Schools Victoria (ISV), Ms Michelle Green, has written to the association's Member Schools to update them on efforts to 'cement and enhance the voice of Independent schools in national public discussion and decision-making about Australian school education'.

She said ISV, with interstate counterparts, was involved in continuing discussions about the future shape and direction of the national representation of Independent schools, currently conducted by the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA).

These discussions had included a review of the operations, governance and structure of ISCA.

'With our interstate counterparts, particularly those in New South Wales and South Australia, we believe the work of a national body needs to go beyond the essential task of advocating for the interests of Independent schools and the students they teach,' Ms Green said.

'As part of these discussions, we have identified ways in which we can share resources and avoid duplication of effort.

'We also believe there's a need to conduct, commission and share research on what works best to enhance the education of **all** students. As state-based organisations with direct contact with Member Schools, we can draw on the work they do and the results they achieve.

'Over the past year we have closely considered ways of reforming the structure and governance of our national representation.

'As a result of that work the Board of ISV has given 12 months' notice of its intention to leave ISCA. AISNSW has made a similar decision. Other AISs are considering their positions.

'The final shape of a new national body has still to be decided. Whatever the outcome, there will be no reduction in the services we provide you and our other Member Schools. Nor will it lead to increased costs.'

## Education Council to consider merging ACARA and AITSL

Education Ministers are considering whether the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) should be merged, according to a report in *The Age*.

ACARA oversees the development of the Australian Curriculum, delivers the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and administers *My School*. AITSL focuses on initial teacher education, raising teaching standards, and supporting school leaders.

*The Age* report says leaked documents show the Education Council will consider recommendations to merge the organisations at its December meeting in Alice Springs. It says the new organisation would have less autonomy, and that the state and territories would have 'greater control over teacher standards and education reform'.

– NAPLAN authority may face the axe. Adam Carey and Jordan Baker, *The Age*, 28 November 2019

## 50,000 children not at school

There may be more than 50,000 school-aged children not taking part in formal education, but how this has happened is a mystery, according to a report from the Melbourne University Graduate School of Education (MGSE).

The report, [\*Those who disappear\*](#), by MGSE Dean, Dr Jim Watterson, and honorary fellow, Ms Megan O'Connell, says that the children in question are not merely absent from school, or refusing to attend them – they 'simply aren't in one'.

It says that there are children of compulsory school age who have been able to 'detach themselves from formal education and we don't know who they are, where they are, how this has happened and why they remain largely hidden'.

The report compares 2016 Census data with state education department figures and finds that there are '174,932 unaccounted school-aged children'.

The actual number of students not in formal education is 'certainly likely to be lower' than this figure, as some households may not have completed questions related to their child's education. However, the authors say that further analysis by education department staff indicates that there still 'may be upwards of 50,000 unaccounted detached students across the country'.

The report says that action is required at the national level to address the issue. It recommends better data sharing, early intervention and transparent indicators to ensure accountability.

Dr Watterson told *The Age*: 'These kids exist right through the system ... it is time to take serious coordinated action to prevent our most vulnerable young people from falling through the cracks'.

– 50,000 children 'missing school'. Fergus Hunter, *The Age*, 28 November 2019

## Intimidation and abuse of lower secondary teachers a problem in Australia

Australian lower secondary principals report a higher incidence of intimidation or verbal abuse of teachers or staff than principals in other countries, according to a new Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) report.

ACER analysed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) most recent Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and [has released a snapshot report](#) on the working conditions of teachers and principals in Australian lower secondary schools.

The snapshot shows that more than 1 in 10 Australian lower secondary principals (12 per cent) reported that their teachers or staff faced intimidation or verbal abuse on a weekly basis. The average percentage in other OECD countries is 3 per cent.

They also reported a greater rate of intimidation and bullying among students (37 per cent of lower secondary principals say they are told of such incidents on a weekly basis, compared to 14 per cent in other OECD countries).

Other findings in the report include that Australian lower secondary classrooms are more diverse than classrooms in other OECD countries, having 'more students with special needs and migrant backgrounds, more non-native English speakers and refugees, and more disadvantaged students than the OECD average and many high performing countries'.

ACER Deputy CEO (Research), [Dr Sue Thomson, said](#) working with a diverse student population is 'the reality' in many schools.

'Encouragingly', she said, 'Australian teachers are responsive to these challenges and generally feel confident they are able to provide the appropriate leadership in multicultural classes'.

– Australian teachers lack confidence over control of their classrooms. Robert Bolton, *Australian Financial Review*, 29 November 2019