

# EDUCATION REVIEW

ISSUE 2 – MARCH/APRIL 2024



## Best & brightest

**Multi-school organisations**  
Is this the goldilocks  
solution education needs? p26





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**COVER**  
Are multi-school organisations  
the way of the future, p26.

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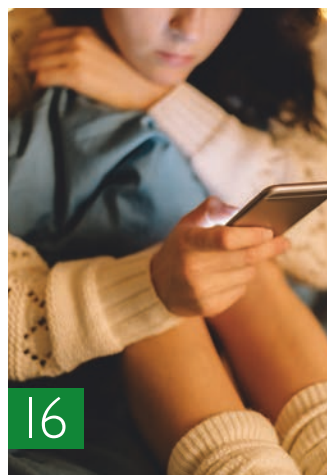
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## Civic pride

### Inquiry into civics and citizenship education

By Erin Morley

**A** parliamentary committee has announced an inquiry into civics education, participation and engagement in Australia.

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters will investigate how effective education about government operations and policymaking currently is, what approaches schools and other institutions take to deliver that education, and what accessibility gaps exist.

The Committee wants to especially hear from people with direct civics education knowledge, including students, teachers, young people, First Nations peoples, people from diverse backgrounds, civic and educational organisations, and people living in regional and remote areas.

Labor member for Jagajaga and Committee chair Kate Thwaites said every Australian needs basic civics and citizenship knowledge, particularly with the rise in social media mis- and disinformation.

“The Committee wants to hear Australians’ experiences of civics education, and what we can do better to support democratic engagement and participation,” she said.

“So many young Australians are passionate about social and political issues, but they may not have access to relevant and reliable information about democratic and electoral processes.”

Some educators have expressed concerns about a lack of civics education in curricula, which mostly appears through political history that is taught as part of the Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) subjects.

University of Sydney education lecturer and HSIE curriculum coordinator Claire Golledge said the NSW HSIE curriculum is so tightly packed, she’s not sure where more civics and citizenship learning could fit.

“[HSIE teachers] would really welcome a focus on voting and electoral education, but at the expense of what other learning?” she asked.

“Curriculum choice is really, really important. It’s not possible to write a curriculum that works in every school in every context.

“And [NSW] already has a really full and prescriptive curriculum,

“So many young Australians are passionate about social and political issues, but they may not have access to relevant and reliable information about democratic and electoral processes

so the answer is not to be more prescriptive.”

Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) December data shows 90.6 per cent of 18-25 year olds are registered to vote, up from 81.3 per cent in March 2016.

Former teacher and chair of education at the University of Sydney Dr Murray Print said the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration calls for active citizens who make “informed decisions based on evidence”, which could be delivered through civics as a curriculum priority in schools.

The inquiry Committee is seeking submissions to its terms of reference until May 24 2024. ■



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Secondary school principal association leaders. Picture: Supplied/ASPA



# United at last

All high school principal's associations unite

By Erin Morley

All state and territory secondary school principal associations are now affiliated with one peak body for the first time in a decade.

The New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) and the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP) will now operate under the Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA).

The unification will strengthen ASPA's position on policy and reform, president Andy Mison said.

"This unification positions ASPA as the undisputed national voice for Australia's more than 2200 government combined and secondary school principals, who look after well over one million students," he said.

"We can better advocate for principals and the communities

they lead across Australia, from securing adequate funding and resources, to ensuring principals feel supported in these demanding and essential roles. Principals now have a stronger advocate in their corner."

The body's new key goals include advocating for all public secondary schools to reach 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), advocating for sustained school infrastructure investment and developing nationally consistent approaches towards principal health and safety efforts.

ASPA is working to influence the education debate around a number of position statements.

From August last year one of the focuses has been Safe and Respectful Learning Environments.

Citing 2021 research that reports one in three principals experienced physical violence, ASPA says it is time for action.

“We can better advocate for principals and the communities they lead across Australia, from securing adequate funding and resources, to ensuring principals feel supported

“ASPA believes that principals should have the authority to limit access to schools for those demonstrating unsafe, threatening, or violent behaviour.”

It is also advocating for a consistent and national approach to the issue. NSWPC and VASSP leaders both said the merge will boost principal support efforts.

“The NSWSPC is proud to join with our interstate colleagues. This will amplify our voice and influence as we advocate for the needs of NSW public school principals and their school communities,” NSWPC president Craig Petersen said.

“It will strengthen support for all the principals dedicated to delivering quality public education.” ■



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Health Minister Mark Butler holds a press conference on the next steps of vaping reform and launches an influencer-led youth vaping campaign with Zahlia and Shyla Short at Parliament House in Canberra. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Martin Ollma

# Rates skyrocketing

National anti-vaping program now in schools

By Eleanor Campbell

**A** new federal vaping prevention program has been rolled out in Australian high schools to curb a worrying rise in vaping among teenagers, after data revealed nearly one in 10 people over the age of 14 used e-cigarettes.

The OurFutures program was developed by researchers at the University of Sydney's Matilda Centre and is now underway in 40 schools across Australia with more than 5000 students participating.

About 250 schools will be granted early access to the program this year until it's made available to all schools in 2025.

Sydney University Professor Emily Stocking said demand for similar anti-vaping programs will increase as nicotine addiction rates among people continue to rise.

"We are seeing young people addicted to nicotine at rates we've not seen for decades," Professor Stocking said.

"Preventing nicotine dependence before it develops is the best approach, because

it impacts brain development and is incredibly difficult to quit."

"Programs like Our Futures are not only backed by rigorously tested evidence, but are developed in partnership with young people, parents, teachers and educators, and give young people a say in their own health decisions."

The program is the first online anti-vaping prevention scheme in Australia and runs across four lessons that

include a 20-minute "illustrated cartoon story", an interactive discussion and a class discussion.

Its rollout come as federal and state governments prepare to fork out more than \$364m in the next few years on programs to reduce vaping and smoking.

Rates of vaping among young people in Australia, however, are skyrocketing.

According to results from the most recent National Drug Strategy survey, rates







Studies have shown that 9 out of 10 vape shops are within walking distance of schools. Picture: Gaye Gerard/NCA NewsWire.

of vaping among people aged 14 and over nearly tripled between 2019 and 2023.

NSW currently has the highest proportion of young people who use vapes and smoke cigarettes.

Health data released in January shows that state wide vaping rates among people aged 16-24 increased to 16 per cent in 2022-23, up from 4 per cent two years prior.

Professor Stocking said young boys are more likely to vape than girls, with rates of e-cigarette use far higher in socio-economically privileged areas due to cigarettes being more common in the regions.

"We also need to look after people who are in rural and regional areas because they have fewer services. We need to look after young people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander," she said.

"We also need to look out for people who identify as LGBTIQ+ as well. These are the young people who have higher risks of vaping."

Health Minister Mark Butler said more than 560,000 illegal vapes have been seized at the border since disposable vapes were outlawed in January.

He flagged laws due to be passed by July that will outlaw the sale and supply of any vape other than for prescription.

“Programs like Our Futures are not only backed by rigorously tested evidence, but are developed in partnership with young people, parents, teachers and educators, and give young people a say in their own health decisions

“We know that this is not just a public health menace, it is substantially interfering with the education and the learning of our youngest Australians,” Mr Butler said on Wednesday. ■



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Seymour College student Lily, left, with Senator Jana Stewart during the AIEF breakfast at Parliament House in late March. Picture: NCA Newswire/Martin Ollman



## High expectations

Australian Indigenous Education Foundation celebrates 15 years of real outcomes

By Sarah Ison

**T**he Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) has encouraged First Nations children to “set high expectations” of themselves for 15 years, driving up year 12 completion and university rates across the country.

Since garnering federal funding under the Rudd government, the foundation has connected more than 1200 students to Australia’s best schools and universities, opening up career pathways and opportunities that AIEF alumni have described as beyond anything they could have envisaged before joining the program.

Of those who are given AIEF scholarships, more than 90 per cent finish year 12. This is compared to a 76 per cent completion rate for Indigenous students in major cities and less than 50 per cent of those in very remote areas.

Lowanna Moran, an AIEF alumna from the class of 2010, said one thing the program had given her was the self-belief to help her go on to be a teacher on her grandfather’s country in Walgett, in northwestern NSW.

“I think if we summarise it, it all comes down to high expectations,”

she said at the AIEF 15-year anniversary breakfast.

“Creating an environment in which students can thrive, where they’re expected to thrive, and where they’re expected to be the best possible version of themselves from a cultural perspective that nurtures their spirit, and as a result of that allows them to be the best version of themselves. High expectations is the foundational most important thing.”

In a pre-recorded address, former Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd remembered getting the program kickstarted in 2008, when AIEF founder Andrew Penfold requested federal funding.

In response, Dr Rudd said he would give the AIEF \$20m if Mr Penfold could match that funding with corporate sector investment.

“Not only did he raise \$20m, he raised a lot more ... so the whole vision-turned-reality of AIEF has been made possible [in] what I think is one of Australia’s most successful public-private partnerships.”

During the first year of the AIEF, only one student was given a scholarship, and Dr Rudd remarked that “from little things, big things grow”.

*The Australian* editor-in-chief Michelle Gunn said the AIEF had been “such a force for good”.

“[It’s] an investment ... in the future young men and women who,

“Creating an environment in which students can thrive, where they’re expected to thrive, and where they’re expected to be the best possible version of themselves from a cultural perspective that nurtures their spirit

in realising their own ambitions and hopes and dreams, will make themselves better, will make their communities a better place ... but also make our nation a better place.”

Education Minister Jason Clare said the program demonstrated “the power of education,” with the AIEF having changed lives of the students and their families. “Because education ricochets through families and ricochets through generations,” he said.

Ms Moran said the power of education was it didn’t “make us all think the same”, and encouraged new students to learn what they could but ensure they made up their own minds about issues. ■

# ‘Widening gap’

Action to tackle adverse Indigenous students Maths education outcomes

By Erin Morley

**E**ducation leaders and maths associations gathered in Adelaide in April to develop a commitment statement and action plan to close the gap in maths education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

The National Summit on Indigenous Students and Mathematics Education was organised by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance

(ATSIMA) and the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers.

“[2023] NAPLAN results demonstrate the shocking, seemingly entrenched, and in some cases widening, gap for Indigenous students in maths,” ATSIMA chair and Quandamooka mathematician Professor Chris Matthews said.

“For example, Year 9 Indigenous students perform, on average, at Year 5 level in numeracy.

“That’s unacceptable. It’s an educational gap that has the potential to impact their entire lives – permanently putting the handbrakes on their career opportunities.”

“It’s the urgent task of education leaders all around Australia to work together

to address this – we simply cannot let education outcomes like this sustain and get worse,” chief executive of AAMT Allan Dougan said.

“The summit will mobilise the mathematics education system to arrest and reverse the gap in maths attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous kids.”

Year 9 numeracy NAPLAN results from 2023 labelled 70 per cent of Indigenous students as either ‘needs additional support’ or ‘developing’, compared to 31.7 per cent of non-Indigenous students.

The mean score for the same age First Nations students was 426 in mathematical literacy, compared to 495 for non-Indigenous students. ■

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Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth.  
Picture: NCA NewsWire/Martin Ollman



# ‘Reform the sector’

Strategy to improve autistic student’s learning outcomes

By Erin Morley and NCA NewsWire

**M**ore attention and resources will be given to students living with autism, who experience poorer education outcomes than the general population, the new draft National Autism Strategy released in early April says

At least 3.2 per cent of school-aged students are autistic, and 77 per cent of autistic five to 20 year olds have experienced difficulty at their place of learning; either a school or other education institution.

The strategy seeks to address major gaps in health, education and social

outcomes between autistic Australians and the general population, with early screening and diagnosis considered key to ensuring appropriate supports are provided from an early age.

According to Social Services minister Amanda Rishworth, the action plan could help reform the education sector, saying that the federal strategy could act as a “whole of life plan for all autistic Australians”.

Approximately eight per cent of autistic people have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 31.2 per cent of non-autistic people, and autistic people are eight times more likely to be unemployed.

A 2023 National Parent Autism Education Survey found one in three families were either refused entry or

“ The draft strategy recommends more autism training for teachers and schools, improving pathways from secondary schooling to further education and work, and investing in more supports for autistic students

discouraged from enrolling their autistic child in a school because of a lack of

“accommodations,” such as sensory equipment, fidget toys or preferential seating, available.

Half of those families wanted to enter the public school system, where all children, by law, have the right to attend.

The draft strategy recommends more autism training for teachers and schools, improving pathways from secondary schooling to further education and work, and investing in more supports for autistic students, such as low-sensory spaces.

Efforts towards diagnosing autism in children earlier, including making autism assessments more accessible, would help school-aged students manage their symptoms in school settings, the report also said.

Boosting health, social and employment supports for Australians diagnosed with the condition are also being considered under the draft strategy.

New reports say autism prevalence rates in Australia may be as high as one in 40 people, significantly higher than the previous estimate of one in 70, meaning as many as 675,000 Australians are potentially on the autism spectrum.

Autism advocacy group Aspect said one in 40 was now a more realistic estimate for Australia given the latest prevalence data in developed countries.

“The increased prevalence rate does not necessarily indicate a rise in autism, but rather increased awareness and an enhancement in health professionals’ ability to recognise and diagnose,” Aspect chief executive Jacqui Borland told *The Australian*.

Students living with autism experience more discrimination and bullying in schools, and the strategy report found numerous attempts to help autistic students in Australia have failed.

High learning needs also pose barriers to learning directly from set curriculums,

requiring a high level of support from teachers and schools, that aren’t often in a situation to cater for those high learning needs.

Chief executive of Autism Awareness Australia Nicole Rogerson said it welcomes the plan, but rejects the idea that the work stops here.

“I think the strategy has done a great job at recognising all of the areas that people with autism find life difficult, and it’s done a very good job of calling out the need for state and federal governments to work together, because not all of their systems live in one place,” she told the ABC.

“The NDIS is federal, education systems are state. Often times, autism and autism families just get lost in that mix. We don’t get more coverage, we get less.”

The consultation period for the draft strategy, where submissions can be made to provide feedback to the report’s findings and suggestions, ends on May 31. ■

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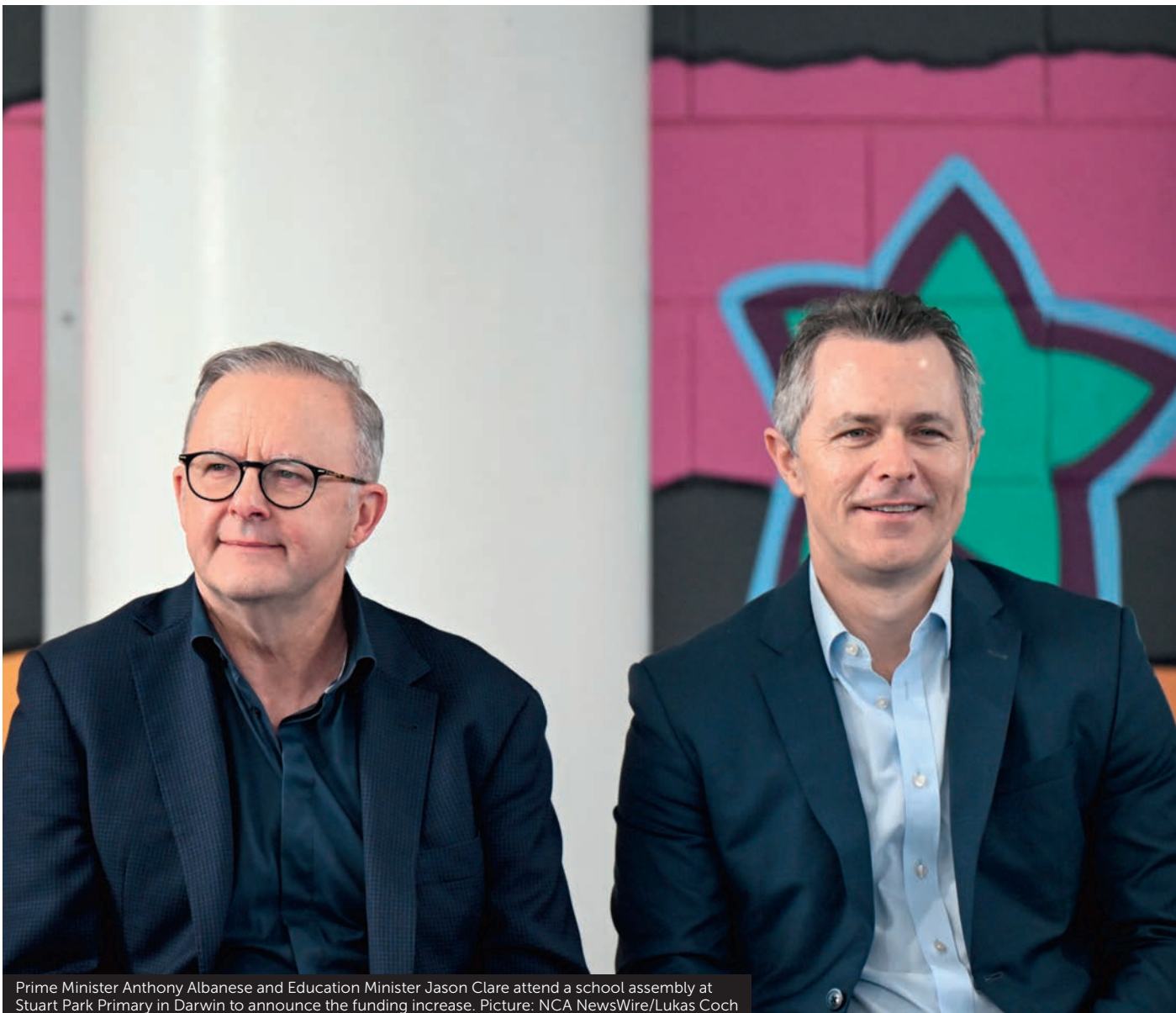
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Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Education Minister Jason Clare attend a school assembly at Stuart Park Primary in Darwin to announce the funding increase. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Lukas Coch

# ‘Landmark investment’

Governments to fully fund NT schools with \$1bn

By Erin Morley and NCA NewsWire

**E**very Northern Territory public school will be fully resourced by 2029 after the federal and Northern Territory governments committed to a \$1bn funding injection in March.

Having signed a statement of intent, the federal government will invest at least \$737.7m from 2025-2029 into the Territory’s public school system, increasing its funding share to 40 per cent.

The NT government will boost its own funding share to 60 per cent and deliver at least \$350m in the same period.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) found NT public schools were underfunded by \$7978 per student in 2023.

NT public schools are underfunded by about 20 per cent, and student disadvantage is the worst in the country.

The AEU also said the funding gap would worsen to more than \$10,000 by 2028, and advocated for 40 per cent federal resourcing.

The new agreement will see NT public schools funded to the Gonski-based School Resourcing Standard (SRS) for the first time.

The federal government committed to increasing its share of public school funding in all regions

from 20 per cent to 22.5 per cent in January – a \$3bn per year investment – but states also have to increase their funding to meet the federal government at 100 per cent of the SRS.

Western Australia was first to agree to a deal, matching Education Minister Jason Clare’s \$777.4m investment in January, to fund its schools with \$1.6bn.

Other states said they are too strapped for cash, and the federal government should instead up their contribution again.

Upon signing the statement of intent, NT Education Minister Mark Monaghan said the funding will improve how NT students learn at school.

“This landmark investment by the Territory and federal government will

make an immediate difference in our schools ranging from salaries to class sizes and technology, and under this agreement our most disadvantaged schools will receive more funding first," he said.

Mr Clare said NT public schools previously would not have been fully funded "until the middle of the century", adding that the combined commitment fast-tracked that time frame by more than 20 years.

The AEU is advocating for the federal government to increase its share to 25 per cent, but said the Territory would need a 40 per cent push to catch up to the other states.

"This funding is long overdue and will change lives in the NT. The bulk of the funding must be delivered well before 2029 because we know that teachers and students need resources now," AEU president Correna Haythorpe said.

"The Albanese Government's commitment to provide 40 per cent of the SRS funding for the NT is a just recognition of its superior revenue raising capacity and its responsibility to ensure every child across the nation gets the support they need to succeed.

"The Prime Minister must also ensure that the bilateral agreement signed this year removes the loophole in the current agreement that allows the NT to artificially inflate its SRS share by four per cent by including non-school costs such as capital depreciation."

The extra funding must be directed towards recommendations made by an expert panel at the end of last year, which includes improving the quality of teaching, reducing disruptive classroom behaviour, retaining teachers and increasing funding transparency.

Experts on the panel said no education reform can be achieved until

“The Albanese Government’s commitment to provide 40 per cent of the SRS funding for the NT is a just recognition of its superior revenue raising capacity and its responsibility to ensure every child across the nation gets the support they need to succeed

schools are funded to 100 per cent of the SRS, an estimated national \$6.6bn gap. ■

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# Fair days

## Tertiary sector review calls for paid teacher work placement

By Erin Morley

**T**he biggest tertiary education sector review in 15 years has recommended that compulsory work placement for university students should be paid, as well as an overhaul of the HECS-HELP system.

Unpaid placements are now recognised as a source of stress for student teachers, causing financial strain and forcing many to drop out of university or lose their permanent paid jobs, the Universities Accord Final Report said.

In NSW, students must complete up to 16 weeks of in-class, supervised teaching placement in schools to become an accredited initial teacher.

The review said they received “strong feedback” about the burdens this causes.

“To ensure ‘placement poverty’ does not deter tertiary participation and successful completion, the Review recommends that the Australian Government work with higher education providers and employers to introduce payment for unpaid placements, including government financial support for placements in the areas of nursing, care and teaching,” the final report said.

“Mandatory placements can involve onerous hours and can financially disadvantage students who are unable to participate in paid work while on placement or need to relocate to undertake their placement.

The Independent Education Union Queensland and Northern Territory Branch secretary Terry Burke said not addressing this issue could be detrimental in a time of teacher shortage.

“Practicums consist of many many hours of commitment and take students away from the part-time jobs required to support themselves,” he said.

“No one should have to fall into poverty because of mandatory university requirements.

“Unpaid practicums are also an equity issue that excludes lower-income students from the profession.”

Education ministers have also green-lit a National Student Ombudsman – another of the University Accord’s recommendations – which will be established next year.

The ombudsman would have the power to offer tuition refunds to students who report sexual assault or harassment on campus, an issue rife throughout universities, or to students who complain about substandard degrees.

“Mandatory placements can involve onerous hours and can financially disadvantage students who are unable to participate in paid work while on placement or need to relocate to undertake their placement

The review also recommends reforms to student loans, such as easing repayments during periods of high-inflation, and reducing the amount of initial repayments when ex-students’ salaries first hit the loan repayment threshold.

Nor should students paying off their university fees have their home loan eligibility tarnished by HECS debts, according to the report.

Existing HECS-HELP repayments are due to increase in June.

The government has not yet committed to undertaking a HECS overhaul. ■





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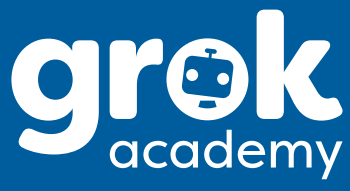
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- Unscrambling a secret message (7-8)
- Indoor Scavenger Hunt (7-8, 9-10)
- Spaceship Rescue (7-8, 9-10)
- Cellular Automata (7-8, 9-10)
- Card Switches (7-8, 9-10)
- Hamiltonian and Eulerian Paths and Circuits (7-8, 9-10)
- Conversion Stores (7-8, 9-10, 11, 12)
- TV Torment (7-8, 9-10, 11, 12)
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# Harm minimising

We teach school kids about safe sex. We need to teach safe sexting, too

By Giselle Natassia Woodley and Leila Green

**S**exting involves taking self-made naked or partially naked sexual photos, videos or explicit texts and sending them online or via a mobile phone. They are more commonly referred to as “nudes” or “dick pics” by young people.

A 2021 survey of almost 7,000 Australian teenagers (aged 14 to 18) found sexting was “ordinary practice” for young people. Of those surveyed, 86% reported they had received sexts and 70% said they had sent them.

Our new research explores Australian teens’ experiences with sexting and sext education. We conducted 49 interviews with 30 young Australians

(aged 11 to 17), with 19 repeat interviews a year later.

Our findings show how current messages to simply avoid sexting do not work for young people. While the risks should be acknowledged, education should also include how to be respectful and safe with sexting.

## WHAT ARE THE LAWS AROUND SEXTING?

In most states and territories in Australia, it is legal to have sex when you are 16, but you need to be 18 to sext.

This is because the creation of sexual images of people who are minors is seen as creating child sexual exploitation materials. This is illegal under Commonwealth laws.

This makes sexting between young people under 18, consenting or otherwise, both legally and ethically complex.

States have diverse practices regarding

“ Instead of “don’t do it”, teens may be more receptive to discussions about consent and mutual respect for one another’s bodies as they would (and should) in real life

underage sexting (and police and prosecutors have some discretion). But if you are in possession of a naked image of someone under 18 or send a naked image of someone under 18, you are breaking the law. It is even illegal to own a naked photo of yourself under 18, even if that image is never sent to anyone.

Researchers have argued this legal approach to sexting can end up punishing



those it is supposed to protect. It also adds to the shaming and fear around sexting for young people.

#### OUR RESEARCH

Most young people in our study had their first experience of sexting between ten and 13-years-old. In many cases, this was before their first kiss.

But young people in our study said education about sexting in school tends to be based around risks, often in response to a particular incident and is mostly ignored by students. As Max\* (12), told us, "it was just basically saying [...] 'don't send them'". Lauren (14) said:

"They more veer on the safety side of things [...] why nudes are bad [...]."

She argued this didn't work.

"They [teens] know the warnings, but it just sort of goes in one ear and out the other. I don't think kids listen to that."

Rightly or wrongly, teens in our study also saw relationships as a safe space for sexting. As Warren (17) noted:

"If I was in a relationship, it's a bit different 'cause I trust them, they trust me."

This "don't do it" messaging is akin to abstinence-only sex education, which is widely acknowledged to be ineffective and fails to protect young people from pregnancy and STIs. In contrast, comprehensive sexuality education has been proven to delay first sexual experiences and increase contraceptive use. This shows offering young people access to important sexual information can protect them.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO BE 'BE PREPARED'

Teens in our study acknowledged sexting had a "dark side".

For many, their first sext was an unsolicited image known as "cyberflashing". Many knew of peers who had their own images leaked by other students without their consent, even though none said this had happened to them. This sharing and leaking of private images has previously been known as "revenge porn" and forms part of an array of behaviours known as Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence, which is illegal.

Teens wished they had been taught about sexting before encountering it so they could "be prepared". Secondary school students said sexting education should begin in upper primary school with age-appropriate discussions continuing into high school, where, as Tiffany (15) told us, sexting "happens regularly, daily".

Lauren said education around how to be respectful and consider issues like consent in online safety was also important:

"I think it would be really useful, some people just don't know, if you send something to someone that it's obviously 'private' [...] you just want to share it with that one person."

#### THE UK IS CHANGING ITS APPROACH

Pretending sexting won't or shouldn't happen because it is illegal is like pretending no one under 16 has sex, no young teenagers drink alcohol and no one takes illicit drugs. We don't pretend these behaviours don't exist: we educate for harm minimisation around them.

Recent guidance to schools in the United Kingdom around sexting reduces the

emphasis on legal issues, while attempting to minimise shaming of young people who sext. This approach emphasises young people's rights and responsibilities to make informed choices over their own bodies and sexual selves.

Indeed, online sex is sex, forming part of a repertoire of sexual behaviours. Offering non-judgmental information acknowledges sexuality as a legitimate part of human development.

#### WHAT CAN PARENTS AND TEACHERS DO?

Parents and teachers can offer balanced information that identifies potential dangers but also acknowledges the reality of young people's behaviours.

Instead of "don't do it", teens may be more receptive to discussions about consent and mutual respect for one another's bodies as they would (and should) in real life.

If things do "go wrong" there are several services available.

The eSafety Commission acknowledges it is important young people know they can always say no to a request to send nudes, and to avoid sharing intimate images and videos without consent. This is both breach of trust and against the law. It also has advice for when nudes have been shared, if someone is trying to blackmail you over a naked image ("sextortion") and provides a way to report image-based sexual abuse.

You can also make a report to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation and US-based site Take It Down

The federal government's parenting website, the Raising Children Network also offers balanced step-by-step guides if your child is asked to send a nude, receives one or has one shared without their consent.

Above all, maintaining an open dialogue and a shame-free stance will allow young people to feel safe to discuss anything with the adults in their lives. It also helps if teens know parents will help in a crisis, rather than punish them.

\*Names have been changed.

*Giselle Natassia Woodley is a Researcher and Phd Candidate at Edith Cowan University and Lelia Green is Professor of Communications at Edith Cowan University*  
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## ‘Pervasive influence’

New research shows Andrew Tate’s effect on school boys is harming teachers

By Erin Morley

*Content warning: This article refers to sexual assault, sexual harassment, sex trafficking and human trafficking.*

**A** new piece of research has found Romanian-based self-proclaimed misogynist ‘manfluencer’ Andrew Tate promoted a culture of domination and violence among boys in Australian schools.

The content creator, who has millions of views and followers online, promotes

a hyper-masculine and performative anti-feminist ideology targeted at teenage boys, which led him to be banned from social media app TikTok.

Andrew Tate, along with his brother and two Romanian women, were indicted in June last on allegations of human trafficking, rape, and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women; all of which they have all denied.

The content creator has previously said women are men’s property, belong in the home, and should accept men wanting to have multiple wives or sexual partners.

He feeds into fears and beliefs of boys and young men who feel that

all masculinity has been labelled toxic, labelling himself ‘the king of toxic masculinity’.

He was banned from Twitter (now X) in 2017 for tweeting that rape victims “bear some responsibility” for “putting themselves in that position”. His account has since been reinstated.

Monash University researchers found that his influence in education settings has been widely documented in the UK, but there hasn’t been much research on teachers’ experiences and observations.

They interviewed 30 women teachers in both private and public primary and high schools, and found they experienced a significant increase in sexual harassment,

sexism, and misogyny from boys, along with an “ominous presence” of Andrew Tate.

**TATE’S CONSPIRACY MATRIX: THE NEED TO ‘RECLAIM’ MASCULINITY**

Lead author of the research Dr Stephanie Wescott said Andrew Tate promotes a “conspiracy-like matrix” that tells boys they are disempowered by contemporary feminist movements, such as #metoo, and that they need to reclaim their masculinity.

This has led to a change in some boys’ behaviour in classrooms, including “overt displays of male supremacy” and sexism towards girl students and women teachers.

“Feminism has become mainstream in recent years. Girls have been lucky enough to receive those messages early on,” she said.

“But what we really do need to try and get across is that feminism is not the enemy of men, and [that message] actually harms them.”

Andrew Tate promotes his hyper-masculine misogynist model of masculinity to young boys and men with his monetary success, expensive cars, and access to women.

The study found Andrew Tate rose to popularity among school boys after Covid-19 lockdowns, raising concerns about the social and mental health effects of isolation on young people.

The interviewed teachers noticed at first, that Andrew Tate was brought up in their classrooms in a neutral, non-combative way, but his ideals were soon used as a catalyst to “challenge” the women.

Study participants said their boy students accused them of being sexist, and positioned women as oppressors in a “power structure” that has diminished the male standing.

Dr Wescott said Andrew Tate’s ideas allow his followers to joke and laugh about his actions, even if they are aware they have adverse effects on women.

“[Students] make joking references about Andrew Tate to try and get a reaction from the girls or some female staff,” a teacher from NSW said.

“They know exactly the type of polarising figure he is, but they feel safe enough to put him into the classroom as a joke.”

“They didn’t really say any specifics, just how much they loved him. And they know in a way that he was bad, but

it was a funny thing to like him,” said a former teacher from Queensland, who resigned after sustained sexual harassment from boys.

Dr Wescott said Tate has also convinced many of his followers that the criminal charges against him are a conspiracy, and that he is a victim of the judicial system.

**WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS DO?**

Co-author Professor Steven Roberts said women need to feel like they can share their experiences in schools – and be heard – to address the effects Andrew Tate has had.

“The study suggests that current school-level responses, often one-off sessions or punitive talks, may not be sufficient to address the distress experienced by teachers,” said Professor Roberts.

“Instead, our findings call for broader and more comprehensive school-level responses to tackle the pervasive influence of ‘manfluencers’ on boys’ behaviour, including open conversations, ongoing dialogue, and proportionate measures.”

Dr Wescott said schools need a holistic, no-tolerance policy to tackle the effects Andrew Tate has had on students, because even if he loses relevance on social media, another personality will replace him.

“We also need to look long term, because Andrew Tate is just one figure, and [social media] isn’t going away. So we need to implement a real long-term strategy,” she said.

“We also need to look long term, because Andrew Tate is just one figure, and [social media] isn’t going away. So we need to implement a real long-term strategy

“What are the stereotypes of boys and girls, men and women? How can we exist differently in the world?

She added that parents needed to be educated about what their boys were seeing online, and how to monitor it.

The research lead also said boys should be made aware Andrew Tate is only using them to make money.

His social media content directs viewers to his website, which offers a paid program to boys and men, teaching how to achieve ‘financial autonomy’ outside ‘The Matrix’.

“He’s a joke to many boys. He’s certainly not got a broad, mass appeal, we’re talking about a minority of boys,” she said.

“[They should] understand how they’re being manipulated by him.”

Education about social media algorithms that explain why young boys might be shown his type of content could help.

“We also need to build critical digital literacy skills to [explore] how we understand the world.” ■



Andrew Tate promoted a hyper-masculine lifestyle to an audience of mainly school-aged boys. Picture: Twitter



## First period

Menstrual education in the curriculum too late, experts say

By Erin Morley

**M**ore than 12 per cent of girls will get their menstrual period between ages 8-11, but the sex education curriculum does not discuss periods until students are aged 10, or sometimes 12.

The average age of first menstruation has been declining for decades in Western countries, and now sits at 12.5 years old, with 'early menarche' (early onset menstruation) considered below 11.

Health psychologist researcher and associate professor at Flinders University Ivanka Prichard said slow curriculum change can have adverse social effects on menstruating students.

"The education system has been slow to adapt to the earlier onset of periods,

with a growing number of children now starting their period before being introduced to the subject at school," Dr Prichard said.

"Early years primary students are often deemed too young to learn about periods or explain their own needs.

"We know that the school environment is central in a child's social and emotional development during puberty, and they need to be well-prepared ahead of starting their period to ensure it doesn't negatively impact their lives."

A Finders University study Dr Prichard co-authored interviewed 15 current primary school principals, teachers, counsellors, and school support officers to gauge what period support students are getting outside curriculum minutes.

Most participants were surprised their students could start menstruating in years four or five but knew that (of their students

that were menstruating) the topic was embarrassing and taboo.

A 2021 survey found that of 659 Australian students aged 10-18, 29 per cent were worried about being teased at school for having their period.

A 2022 survey found only 16 per cent of university students felt confident in managing their periods on campus.

Dr Prichard said the status quo isn't likely to change until conversations about periods happen outside the set curriculum time.

"There is evidence that staff perspectives and school practices can reinforce the idea that periods and early menarche is problematic and taboo," she said.

"We've identified a problem with 'gatekeeping of knowledge', where period education has been confined to a particular time, place and year in the curriculum, and restricted to a particular group of students." ■

Crows on Country instructor Reilly O'Brien with a student from the APY Lands. Picture: Supplied/Adelaide Crows Foundation



# Taught by sport

## Program uses footy to get kids into STEM

By Erin Morley

**S**cience, technology, engineering and maths all make football possible, according to a program teaching remote students the importance of STEM.

The Adelaide Crows Foundation's Crows on Country program uses Aussie kids' love of AFL to cultivate an appreciation and understanding of the STEM concepts underlying the sport.

The initiative gets students to participate in a hands-on way, such as measuring the angle between a point and a goal post, to drive school attendance and learning engagement for remote students.

"[We're] focused on improving education outcomes for students disadvantaged by rural and remote isolation barriers," Adelaide Crows Foundation chair Kate Thiele said.

"The strength of the program is it combines learning with something many children have a passion for, and having our players attend as role models and connect with the students certainly drives overall engagement."

Crows on Country is an extension of the foundation's STEMfooty program, a free 10-week program that engaged 3,000 year 7 students in 2023.

Students who live in regional and remote areas are likely to fall behind in STEM studies due to a range of factors.

Australia's Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (NPY) region is 350,000 square kilometres in Central Australia that includes southern parts of the Northern Territory, South Australia's APY Lands and Western Australia's Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

The NPY region is considered very remote and is sparsely populated, with just 5000 people spanning its 26 communities.

Anangu Communities Foundation is a partner of the Crows on Country program. The Anangu are Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara people living in Australia's Western Desert, in and around Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia administers and funds the operational costs of the foundation. Chief executive of Voyages Matt Cameron-Smith said he is keen to see the social participation outcomes of the Crow's education program in the area.

"We look forward to working alongside Anangu to co-design and deliver a program that will help young people in the APY Lands translate their love of footy into a passion for science and maths, opening up future career pathways and ultimately helping to empower a growing Indigenous workforce," he said.

“The strength of the program is it combines learning with something many children have a passion for, and having our players attend as role models and connect with the students certainly drives overall engagement”



Ms Thiele said the program will also create "economic opportunities for Anangu educators who will be employed to develop bilingual resources."

"This is not just about making visits to schools in the region, a key focus throughout the pilot phase has been to engage local teachers so they can sustain the program within their school curriculum for the long-term," she said. ■



# In the driver's seat

Students are becoming less emotionally resilient – we need a different approach

By Dr Jane Foster

**D**espite our efforts to foster social and emotional intelligence and build resilience through specialised programs, the decline of our students' emotional resilience persists.

We live in a world where adversity is inevitable, yet there's an underlying expectation that we, as educators, should pave a seamless, joyful path for every individual.

However, this does not reflect reality, and is ultimately unachievable.

Along with schools, society needs to shoulder some of the responsibility of teaching children how to be resilient.

The increasing lack of emotional resilience in students is leading to strained relationships, poor academic performance, and mental health concerns such as increased stress and anxiety. This is also affecting their decision-making abilities and social growth.

It is common for students to blame others or consider themselves as victims in difficult situations, which





can lead to conflict and further mental health complications.

In relationships, misunderstandings often arise from failing to communicate emotions, passing judgment onto another, or attributing blame during arguments. Healthy communication is essential if we are to foster strong personal and interpersonal relationships.

Educating students on managing their emotions and taking accountability for their actions is important to avoid such issues. We certainly don't need another program; another quick fix. We need long-term cultural change.

### THE NEED TO BE HAPPY

For some reason, we have created an expectation that to be successful, you need to be on a smooth, happy emotional road. This puts enormous pressure on students, teachers and parents, as they attempt to attain the unattainable.

Social success does not mean always feeling happy and rarely facing challenges.

Social media can exacerbate this notion, and some individuals now feel that they're failing when life takes them down a rough road.

To maintain the expectation of a happy and smooth life, we feel the need to be picked up off the rough, challenging road and placed onto smooth, easy-going pavement. But, it's the rough roads that increase driving skills and build resilience.

Unfortunately, when a person is not left on the challenging road long enough to build resilience, when they do face challenges, they crash. This is happening earlier and earlier, and not just to children.

Instead of pretending to be happy, students should be able to express themselves more honestly, as all emotional roads have a purpose: rough roads build resilience, and smooth roads build health.

We need to be able to paint them a realistic picture of the world, while at the same time giving them the tools to take responsibility.

### HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO STOP BLAMING AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY?

Some students blame others for their problems and do not take responsibility for their emotions. This pervasive "blame game" mentality can involve those students looking to others to fix their problems, rather than taking responsibility for their feelings and circumstances. This often manifests as being "entitled". If things are going wrong or are difficult, they expect others to fix it.

Just like driving a car, the symbolic steering wheel represents responsibility and emotional control. You can choose your path, even when others around you are on rough roads.

Acknowledging that everyone has ultimate control over their steering wheel requires a change of mindset and vocabulary. Using language such

“ Instead of pretending to be happy, students should be able to express themselves more honestly, as all emotional roads have a purpose: rough roads build resilience, and smooth roads build health

as "It's their fault I am angry" or "They made me angry", gives control of the emotional steering wheel to the other person, or circumstance.

This leaves them on a rough road with no means of control. They become vulnerable victims.

To regain control, they retaliate: you said this to me, so I'm going to say this to you; you hit me, so I'm going to hit you. They may also retaliate within: "I'm hopeless", or "I'm useless".

Instead of saying, "You make me angry", children can say "I am choosing to be angry", thus retaining control of your steering wheel. It may sound small, but the consequences can be profound.

Approaching emotional resilience through a linguistic lens is only one way to initiate cultural change. It is crucial to educate students and parents that life has ups and downs and that mastering the ability to take control in any situation can be liberating.

When students learn to express their emotions without judgment, interact with others with greater empathy and understanding, and take responsibility for their response to people and circumstances, they can navigate life's challenges more realistically and effectively. ■

*Dr Jane Foster has been a teacher for over 40 years, both in Australia and abroad. After witnessing students and teachers struggle to manage their emotions and take responsibility for the way they feel, she began her doctoral research on emotional resilience. Dr Foster teaches people how to shift their emotional management strategy from blaming others, to taking responsibility.*



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Prue Car and Chris Minns are winding back the Coalition's local school's policy. Picture: NCA Newswire/Gaye Gerard

# Teaching first

Deputy and assistant principals to get back into classrooms as policy is unwound

By NCA Newswire

**M**ore than 4000 NSW teachers who left the classroom to take administrative roles such as assistant and deputy principal will have to return to the classroom.

In one of the Minns government's most significant school overhauls, the Coalition's Local Schools, Local Decisions policy will be unwound as part of a broader plan to rein in costs and plug critical classroom teacher shortages.

The non-teaching tasks schools have been performing will also be audited to determine which ones can be scrapped or reduced to free up more teaching hours, while recruitment of teachers to non-teaching executive roles will be paused.

The Department of Education will also re-inherit a greater share of the administrative burden that schools have been forced to carry.

Introduced in 2012, the policy led to billions of dollars being shifted from the Department of Education to schools, which were given greater autonomy to make their own decisions.

However, a review by the Minns government has found it instead led to an explosion of non-teaching executive roles as teachers were pulled out of the classroom to perform a growing list of new, administrative tasks.

As schools became "mini-departments", the number of executive staff grew as they tackled support learning, HR, finance and other administrative duties outside of the classroom.

In the more than 10 years up to 2023, the government analysis shows the number of executive teachers – principals, deputy principals, assistant principals and head teachers – soared by more than 4000 to a total of 15,000, an almost 40 per cent increase.

Deputy and assistant principal positions grew the most over that time, rising by 85 per cent and 62 per cent respectively. As these positions grew, the number of classroom teachers

“Just how often executive teachers will have to teach is yet to be determined, but Education Minister Prue Car said the focus will be to support principals while encouraging the best teachers back into the classroom

flatlined and education outcomes went backwards.

The latest teacher vacancy figures show there remains a shortage of about 1800 staff – down from the 3000 or so at the height of the teaching crisis.

While some of the executive positions included some teaching hours, a government source said it varied from a day or two in front of a class to none.

About 77 per cent of public primary school deputy principals did not teach timetabled classes, with 40 per cent of high school deputies also having no teaching allocation.

Another 42 per cent of high school deputies only taught between half a day to a day every week.

The Minns government does not blame principals, with one source declaring they were left to their own devices with little direction and a growing burden of tasks.

Just how often executive teachers will have to teach is yet to be determined, but Education Minister Prue Car said the focus will be to support principals while encouraging the best teachers back into the classroom.

"The former government encouraged schools to use their funds to pay teachers to get out of the classroom at the same time as the state was heading into a teacher shortage crisis and educational outcomes were falling," she said.

"It just doesn't add up.

"Our focus is to get costs under control, teachers back in the classroom, lift standards and for head office to support our principals to carry on being the best educational leaders in their communities." ■



# ‘Reduce the burden’

Should schools be put into networks to share what works?

By Erin Morley

**A** new report says current school-improvement models aren't capable of tackling the immense challenges our education system is currently facing; including increasing teacher recruitment and retention, and improving student learning.

A "goldilocks" solution – stemming not from a single, isolated school, nor from a big government department – is

needed, according to the Grattan Institute's new research, *Spreading success: Why Australia should trial multi-school organisations*.

A multi-school organisation (MSO) is a network of from 10 to 100 schools that align their behaviour policies, curricula and other operational strategies so they can share with each other what works, and what doesn't.

The report says the Department of Education should set up MSO trials in each state and territory, and large Catholic dioceses should do the same.

Director of the Institute's education program Dr Jordana Hunter

told *Education Review* that MSO communities can reduce the burden on individual school principals, and give educators the time and resources to cater for complex, individual student needs.

"We often hear from teachers they're really struggling to get all the resources that they need, and [to] have those strong networks with other professionals to support their practise," she said.

"This can have really big implications for students. We know that, unfortunately, we've still got one in three Australian students who



are not where they need to be in terms of their foundational reading and numeracy.

"In addition to that, they're not necessarily getting those rich, well-rounded educational experiences we want, particularly in disadvantaged areas."

### INCREASED SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

Dr Hunter said when schools fall short, it is unclear who should bear responsibility, and who should take charge of turning things around.

"We are relying on superhero principals to improve schools one by one, which is an improvement model that just puts an incredibly heavy burden on principals to be those superheroes," she said.

"If those hero principals move on to a different school, it can really mean that



Director of the Grattan Institute education program, Dr Jordana Hunter. Picture: Supplied

that school, unfortunately, can be set back quite a bit."

The report says governments have underestimated how much support principals and teachers need, and won't find answers in bulky policies that are hard to implement effectively.

"Some [schools] are big, some are small, some are in highly affluent areas, some servicing really quite disadvantaged areas, and perhaps in some remote locations," Dr Hunter said.

"So the needs of those schools vary significantly. And it can be quite hard for government departments, I think, to come up with really practical tailored advice for all of those schools simultaneously.

"But, by keeping the groupings a bit smaller in multi-school organisations, you get the benefits of that increased capacity without having your executive leaders too removed from the chalkface."

A new survey found one in two principals plan to quit by the end of the year due to enormous workloads and worsening student behaviour.

The research lead said principals are always "putting out spot fires," and don't have time to fix major issues their school and staff are struggling with.

'Sharing the load' with other leaders could help alleviate principal pressure, Dr Hunter said.

Schools the Institute studied in New York City and England held events where

“Because these multi-school organisations have the capacity to make sure teachers had the tools of the trade and had their core needs met, there was more opportunity for teachers to delve into aspects of their professional identity and things they wanted to develop deeper expertise in

students could mingle and teachers could connect.

"[They had] things like sporting carnivals and art shows, a lot of volunteer work where they collaborate together on volunteer work," she said.

"Teachers as well had opportunities to work in really powerful professional networks across schools.

"English or geography teachers, for example, would be able to meet up periodically, often online, sometimes face-to-face, and really work through the shared curriculum resources."

### ADDRESSING STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

Teachers with more time to engage with students led to happier learners, the report found, who had more opportunity to join other school's enrichment programs, take low-enrolment number electives at other schools.

Importantly, students learned quickly what acceptable behaviour looked like, modelled by other schools.

"Particularly in England, we were able to study three multi-school organisations that had between 17 and 97 schools in different geographic parts of England," she said.

"One of the things they did really well was have a really strong and clear policy around student engagement and behaviour in the classroom, on the broader campus, and in the broader school environment.

"It's not just about having a good policy written on paper, they were >

able to work with the principals and the teachers to help them really embed that policy and bring that policy to life in a really consistent and coherent way.”

A community that clearly shows students what appropriate behaviour is can give teachers more time to improve their craft and focus on professional development, increasing the satisfaction element of working.

“We have a lot of students in our schools who’ve got quite complex additional learning needs or maybe some complex health or psychological needs,” Dr Hunter said.

“It can be very hard for schools, particularly our smaller schools – keep in mind around 30 per cent of Australian primary schools have 10 or less teachers – to really meet those specialist needs of students.”

MSOs can also offer teachers more career progression – a reason given why men especially don’t enter teaching careers – which would, in turn, attract more high achievers to the teaching profession.

Connecting with other schools can open up more opportunities and pay progression than a single school can offer.

“Because these multi-school organisations have the capacity to make sure teachers had the tools of the trade and had their core needs met, there was more opportunity for teachers to delve into aspects of their professional identity and things they wanted to develop deeper expertise in,” Dr Hunter said.

### HOW MSOS COULD BECOME REALITY

Dr Hunter said the Grattan Institute recommends a trial of four MSO groups each in NSW and Victoria, which should each start with a “beacon school” that already has better-than-average behaviour and learning outcomes.

“[That school should] document how it is running and what makes it work really well, right down to its curriculum and lesson materials, its approach to engaging students and behavioural policy, and its approach to professional development,” she said.

Dr Hunter said although the principal of a beacon school could

initiate it by themselves, an MSO does ultimately need to be set up and monitored by government, to avoid extra work falling on one particular principal or leader.

“It’s important to distinguish multi-school organisations from the more informal peer-to-peer networks at schools,” she said.

“There’s a lot of principals who do come together with other like-minded principals, [with] common problems, and they find those options for collaboration really valuable. But that is quite different.

“We need to be a genuine multi-school organisation, and that will mean that there will need to be a decision by government or diocese to trial the approach, just to establish those formal responsibilities, and the ability to share resources between schools.

“Government education departments have a key policy and governance responsibility, and they should be doing that to the schools that they’re running already, and that hasn’t changed.

“If anything, there might be opportunities to strengthen [existing] accountability frameworks.”

Some schools in England that are part of successful MSOs send an established principal to new schools that join its community, so the leaders can stand “shoulder to shoulder” and effectively embed new policies and strategies together.

### HOW COULD MSOS FAIL?

Education departments would also need to monitor MSOs throughout their lifespan, so they stay aligned and connected.

“It’s really important in the community services sector and in schooling currently, to have really good monitoring oversight and accountability frameworks in place to make sure that the folks doing work are doing work for the right reasons, and that if there are negative outcomes, they’re picked up early,” she said.

In some overseas examples, MSOs have failed because they faced it alone and the policies they implemented were ineffective from the get-go.

“It’s possible as well to have a multi-school organisation that

comes together around a model of schooling that’s not effective, but they’re actually doing something that’s not based in research that actually produces poor outcomes for students, and they actually model [it] across multiple schools,” she said.

“And just like in any other public institution, there’s the odd case of where there’s been financial mismanagement or public resources have been used for services that are not in keeping with the policy intent.”

Dr Hunter said schools really have to commit to communicating and collaborating if they want their MSO to work out.

“There are some multi-school organisations that are really multi-school organisations in name only,” she said.

“There are big collections of schools, big families of schools, but they haven’t really sought to use their capacity to align around an effective model.

“In those instances, they’re really operating like an individual school still, but just inside this government structure.

“If that’s the case, you’re not likely to get the benefits of increased capacity and collaboration.”

Dr Hunter said of the MSO groups they studied, groups of 20 to 40 schools were extremely effective, but some communities had up to 100 schools.

The report says an MSO would start out with a few schools, and work their way up to 10 over a decade.

After that, growth is mostly dependent on regional and administrative factors.

“We don’t really know yet what the upper limit is. It will depend on how the multi-school organisation structures its head office [executive leader, regional leaders, etc.],” she said.

“The challenge of getting too big is that you start to have to have quite a bureaucratic head office.

“It might start looking like a government department with all of the challenges that come with having just really too many schools to really know them all really well.”

The researcher said the Institute will continue pitching the idea to government, and it has received a fair amount of interest in return.

Dr Hunter encouraged any principal who would like to be a part of an MSO to also raise the idea to government. ■



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