



This week's stories from the media

- Gender stereotypes not smart
- SAASSO truancy survey
- \$367,000 for new education spin doctor
- Lawyers: new child protection bill fatally flawed
- \$13.2m to create new department
- Homework is a failure: expert
- SA childcare workers strike

**SAASSO Truancy Survey**

The Weatherill Government has announced it is making the most 'significant changes to education in 40 years'.

The changes relate to:

- introducing on the spot fines for truancy
- harsher financial penalties for truancy
- banning people who trespass on schools.

The Weatherill Government is, apparently, also considering giving principals the power to hire and fire teachers.

SAASSO is asking what you think of tougher fines for parents and if principals should hire and fire their teachers.



[Take the survey](#)

**Gender Stereotypes Not Smart**

**Girls stop believing they are as smart as boys soon after starting school, and South Australian parents are demanding local research to find out why.**

A US study has found five-year-old girls view their own gender positively, but are more likely to believe boys are "really, really smart" by the age of seven.

That is despite girls thinking they get better grades than boys.

The SA Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO) is urging the State Government to support a local university to research the problem.

"It's well established that gender stereotypes about girls' intellectual abilities exist and that they stop girls and young women from pursuing studies and careers in maths and sciences," director David Knuckey said.

"But this new (American) study reveals that these stereotypes may actually be instilled in girls at the age of five and six. This blow to their confidence at such a young age effectively rules out any equal opportunity for girls."

Mr Knuckey said local research was needed firstly to confirm that similar "disturbing" gender stereotypes existed in SA, then to go further and "investigate how and why these gender stereotypes are being inflicted on girls".

"It doesn't make much sense targeting programs at encouraging girls into STEM at the secondary and university levels, if the damage is being done at the primary level," he said.

SA Education Department executive director for learning improvement Susan Cameron said "unconscious gender bias" inevitably existed in schools, like the rest of society, so all students were taught critical thinking skills needed to tackle stereotypes.

[More](#)



***“...This blow to their confidence at such a young age effectively rules out any equal opportunity for girls....”***

### **\$367,000 For New Education Spin Doctor**

**A salary of up to \$367,000 for a new head of communications for the Education Department has been labelled an “obscene” waste of money by the Opposition.**

The advertisement states the new Executive Director of Strategic Policy and External Relations would “assume leadership for both internal and external communications” for DECD.

Opposition education spokesman John Gardner said the salary costs came “on top of the existing \$4 million budget for the Education Department’s existing communications department”.

“I’ve no doubt this new spin doctor — who will get paid more than the Minister - has been hired to reduce political damage stemming from the Government’s failed education policies,” Mr Gardner said.

However, Education Minister Susan Close said Mr Gardner’s comments were “insulting and wrong”.

[More](#)

### **Lawyers: New Child Protection Bill Fatally Flawed**

**A new child protection Bill before state Parliament is so flawed that “even radical surgery cannot save it” and the State Government must start again, the Law Society says.**

Law Society of SA president Tony Rossi said concerns over the Government’s proposed Bill were “too fundamental, too serious, too widespread” and “cannot be salvaged by amendment”.

Mr Rossi was giving evidence to a parliamentary committee examining the proposed legislation. He told the committee it was rare for the Law Society to so completely oppose a piece of legislation.

“We feel so concerned with particular clauses of the Bill that we don’t believe it can be salvaged by amendment,” Mr Rossi said.

“It would be a worse outcome for this Bill to be passed than to allow the current (Children’s Protection) Act to continue.”

[More](#)

### **\$13.2m To Create New Department**

**Creating a stand-alone Child Protection Department will cost \$13.2 million over the first four years of its operation.**

Department chiefs have revealed the budgeted cost of restructuring and rebranding the department is \$2.1 million this financial year alone.

A written response to questions put in a parliamentary committee shows the department was allocated \$200,000 for rebranding and \$31,000 of this was spent on “high visibility” signage.

Opposition treasury spokesman Rob Lucas described the cost to reverse that merger as a “massive waste of taxpayers’ money”.

[Full Story](#)

### **Homework Is A Failure: Expert**

**Schools should ditch homework and focus on teaching more efficiently in class - that is the shock advice from a visiting education consultant.**

US educator Matt Miller said he was “horrified” by the mountains of homework dished out to students, which could do more harm than good by burning students out.

He said it was often ineffective because students copied each other - or had under-pressure parents complete it.

The SA Government supports homework, saying it reinforces learning and developing skills.

[More](#)

### **SA Childcare Workers Strike**

**More than 50 childcare workers across four Adelaide centres have today walked off their jobs in what could signal the beginning of more industrial action in a targeted campaign for better wages.**

It is part of an Australia-wide protest fighting against gender pay imbalance.

Hillbank Centre’s, Rebecca Stiles, said early childhood educators were significantly underpaid.

“There is a stigma that childcare workers are babysitters, but we are all highly qualified,” she said.

The staff walked off the job at 3:20pm, the time that women effectively start working for free as a result of the gender pay imbalance.

[Read more](#)