In brief

**Australia’s greenest teacher**

Sandi Burt of Bees Creek Primary School south of Darwin is the national winner of the 2011 Green Teacher Awards. Burt won for her unique recycling project. Finalists were: Raquel Spratt from Blakehurst High School in Sydney’s south; Jan Hare from Epping Views Primary School in Melbourne’s north; Tracey Sheppard from Queensland Independent College on Queensland’s Gold Coast; and Melita Harmer from Ellenbrook Secondary College on the fringe of Perth’s northern suburbs. The Green Teacher Awards are held by Clean Up Australia with sponsorship support from Sanyo Oceania.

**NAPLAN**

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across the nation sat the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests in May. According to Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Chairman Professor Barry McGaw, NAPLAN testing is a vital tool to understand how Australian students are performing. ‘Systematic improvement is best supported by careful measurement. NAPLAN provides that measurement and a perspective broader than that available within an individual school,’ Professor McGaw said. NAPLAN is not a test students can prepare for, because it is not a test of content, McGaw added, because it tests skills in literacy and numeracy that are developed over time through the school curriculum.

2010 Year 5 numeracy sample question

Prime Minister Julia Gillard returned to education policy, her happy hunting ground, to announce ‘pay bonuses for around 25,000 of our best teachers,’ days before her Treasurer Wayne Swan in May delivered his fourth Commonwealth Budget. The aim would appear to be to shift attention away from the two big issues facing the Commonwealth government – the carbon tax and the deficit.

What does the Budget mean for the education sector?

On the upside, the Budget includes $425 million over the next four years for ‘pay bonuses for around 25,000 of our best teachers,’ to fund bonus payments for the top 10 per cent of teachers up to 10 per cent of their salary as a one-off bonus based on their performance. (See inset, right.)

The Budget also includes $558 million to deliver tailored, quality training places through the National Workforce Development Fund and ‘ambitious’ reform of vocational education and training, with $1.75 billion over five years, from 2012-13, on offer to the states and territories through national partnerships.

In adult education, the Budget provides $143 million to expand the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program to assist an additional 30,000 job seekers gain the foundation skills necessary to participate in training and employment.

On the downside, the Budget reduces funding to the Digital Education Revolution (DER) by $132.5 million over four years to $20 million per year. It’s understood that savings will be redirected to establishing a digital strategy for teachers.

According to Budget papers, the Commonwealth government will still be able to fund its DER program to ensure a one-to-one ratio of computers to students in Years 9 to 12 by the end of this year.

The Budget also postpones the rollout of the Commonwealth government trades training centres program to save $102.8 million over the next four years, and axes the $80 million Vocational Education Broad-
band Network due to duplication with the National Broadband Network.

What about the carbon tax? ‘As we continue to work to build the necessary domestic and international consensus for carbon markets, we will roll out the most substantial renewable energy plan this country has seen – consistent with our decision to increase the renewable energy target to 20 per cent by 2020,’ the Treasurer said in his Budget speech. That’s code for ‘wait and see.’ Economic analysts predict what will effectively be a second Budget later this year that will address the impact of the Commonwealth government’s carbon tax.

And then there’s the deficit.

The underlying Budget deficit for 2011-12 is projected at $22.6 billion, but, added the Treasurer, ‘Our strategy will see us return to surplus in three years, three years ahead of schedule,’ in 2012-13 on the basis of reduced government spending and increased taxation receipts through expected economic growth. Karen Maley, writing in the *Business Spectator*, pondered why, since the economy is operating close to trend growth rate, we’re not already in surplus.

Speaking on ABC Radio in May, the Treasurer was asked to name a date when a Labor Commonwealth government last brought down a Budget with a surplus.

‘We’d have to go back to the 1980s, I should think,’ the Treasurer answered, then picked up a glass of water, which shattered into fragments when he put it down. Whether it was half full or half empty remains unknown.

Students in Years 10 to 12 are on their way to Mars – at least, they’re planning and executing a simulated robotic mission to Mars through the Pathways to Space program.

Pathways to Space is connecting the students with astrobiologists and robotics engineers in Australia and overseas, using facilities in the Thinkspace digital studios of Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. The program requires students to consider science and engineering factors critical to the success of their Mars mission. And then there’s the deficit.

The underlying Budget deficit for 2011-12 is projected at $22.6 billion, but, added the Treasurer, ‘Our strategy will see us return to surplus in three years, three years ahead of schedule,’ in 2012-13 on the basis of reduced government spending and increased taxation receipts through expected economic growth. Karen Maley, writing in the *Business Spectator*, pondered why, since the economy is operating close to trend growth rate, we’re not already in surplus.

Speaking on ABC Radio in May, the Treasurer was asked to name a date when a Labor Commonwealth government last brought down a Budget with a surplus.

‘We’d have to go back to the 1980s, I should think,’ the Treasurer answered, then picked up a glass of water, which shattered into fragments when he put it down. Whether it was half full or half empty remains unknown.

Students in Years 10 to 12 are on their way to Mars – at least, they’re planning and executing a simulated robotic mission to Mars through the Pathways to Space program.

Pathways to Space is connecting the students with astrobiologists and robotics engineers in Australia and overseas, using facilities in the Thinkspace digital studios of Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. The program requires students to consider science and engineering factors critical to the success of their Mars mission. And then there’s the deficit.

The underlying Budget deficit for 2011-12 is projected at $22.6 billion, but, added the Treasurer, ‘Our strategy will see us return to surplus in three years, three years ahead of schedule,’ in 2012-13 on the basis of reduced government spending and increased taxation receipts through expected economic growth. Karen Maley, writing in the *Business Spectator*, pondered why, since the economy is operating close to trend growth rate, we’re not already in surplus.

Speaking on ABC Radio in May, the Treasurer was asked to name a date when a Labor Commonwealth government last brought down a Budget with a surplus.

‘We’d have to go back to the 1980s, I should think,’ the Treasurer answered, then picked up a glass of water, which shattered into fragments when he put it down. Whether it was half full or half empty remains unknown.

Students in Years 10 to 12 are on their way to Mars – at least, they’re planning and executing a simulated robotic mission to Mars through the Pathways to Space program.

Pathways to Space is connecting the students with astrobiologists and robotics engineers in Australia and overseas, using facilities in the Thinkspace digital studios of Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. The program requires students to consider science and engineering factors critical to the success of their Mars mission. And then there’s the deficit.

The underlying Budget deficit for 2011-12 is projected at $22.6 billion, but, added the Treasurer, ‘Our strategy will see us return to surplus in three years, three years ahead of schedule,’ in 2012-13 on the basis of reduced government spending and increased taxation receipts through expected economic growth. Karen Maley, writing in the *Business Spectator*, pondered why, since the economy is operating close to trend growth rate, we’re not already in surplus.

Speaking on ABC Radio in May, the Treasurer was asked to name a date when a Labor Commonwealth government last brought down a Budget with a surplus.

‘We’d have to go back to the 1980s, I should think,’ the Treasurer answered, then picked up a glass of water, which shattered into fragments when he put it down. Whether it was half full or half empty remains unknown.

Students in Years 10 to 12 are on their way to Mars – at least, they’re planning and executing a simulated robotic mission to Mars through the Pathways to Space program.

Pathways to Space is connecting the students with astrobiologists and robotics engineers in Australia and overseas, using facilities in the Thinkspace digital studios of Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. The program requires students to consider science and engineering factors critical to the success of their Mars mission. And then there’s the deficit.

The underlying Budget deficit for 2011-12 is projected at $22.6 billion, but, added the Treasurer, ‘Our strategy will see us return to surplus in three years, three years ahead of schedule,’ in 2012-13 on the basis of reduced government spending and increased taxation receipts through expected economic growth. Karen Maley, writing in the *Business Spectator*, pondered why, since the economy is operating close to trend growth rate, we’re not already in surplus.

Speaking on ABC Radio in May, the Treasurer was asked to name a date when a Labor Commonwealth government last brought down a Budget with a surplus.

‘We’d have to go back to the 1980s, I should think,’ the Treasurer answered, then picked up a glass of water, which shattered into fragments when he put it down. Whether it was half full or half empty remains unknown.

Students in Years 10 to 12 are on their way to Mars – at least, they’re planning and executing a simulated robotic mission to Mars through the Pathways to Space program.

Pathways to Space is connecting the students with astrobiologists and robotics engineers in Australia and overseas, using facilities in the Thinkspace digital studios of Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. The program requires students to consider science and engineering factors critical to the success of their Mars mission. And then there’s the deficit.

The underlying Budget deficit for 2011-12 is projected at $22.6 billion, but, added the Treasurer, ‘Our strategy will see us return to surplus in three years, three years ahead of schedule,’ in 2012-13 on the basis of reduced government spending and increased taxation receipts through expected economic growth. Karen Maley, writing in the *Business Spectator*, pondered why, since the economy is operating close to trend growth rate, we’re not already in surplus.

Speaking on ABC Radio in May, the Treasurer was asked to name a date when a Labor Commonwealth government last brought down a Budget with a surplus.

‘We’d have to go back to the 1980s, I should think,’ the Treasurer answered, then picked up a glass of water, which shattered into fragments when he put it down. Whether it was half full or half empty remains unknown.