



# Grapevine

## NO GO FOR BER INQUIRY

Commonwealth Shadow Minister for Education Christopher Pyne introduced a private member's bill in late October to try to force a judicial inquiry into alleged robbing, price gouging, collusion, skimming and waste in the Commonwealth government's \$16.2 billion Building the Education Revolution (BER) Primary Schools for the 21st Century program. 'This is the only inquiry that can summon witnesses and subpoena documents, and I think Australians do want to know whether they received value for money for their \$16.2 billion and, if they didn't, who is responsible,' Pyne said. '(The independents) have indicated they support transparency and accountability. Passing this bill will create a crucial mechanism to forensically examine all the evidence on the BER and get the full picture of what went wrong.' Parliamentary reforms pioneered by the independents, Tony Windsor, Rob Oakeshott and Andrew Wilkie, meant Pyne's private member's bill could actually be debated and a vote would be cast, but Windsor told *ABC News's* Alexandra Kirk he wouldn't be voting for it. The Greens also ruled out support for a judicial inquiry. Commonwealth Minister for Tertiary Education Chris Evans, whose responsibilities include the BER, said a judicial inquiry was unnecessary. 'Given the existing level of scrutiny and the ongoing work of the (BER) Implementation Taskforce (headed by Brad Orgill), a further inquiry would be a gross waste of taxpayers' money,' he said. Pyne did the numbers and decided it wasn't even worth attending the House of Representatives chamber to bring on the vote.

## EVERY THING CAME NOT QUITE FINISHED FROM HER PEN

'The style of her familiar correspondence was in all respects the same as that of her novels,' wrote Henry Austen in his 1818 Preface to *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* by his sister Jane Austen. 'Every thing came finished from her pen,' he added. Not quite, says Professor Kathryn Sutherland, from the Faculty of English at

the University of Oxford. Sutherland, who has been studying Austen's manuscripts as part of a three-year project to collect and digitise her correspondence and manuscripts, says that her work owes its finish to the pen of her editor, William Gifford, who worked for Austen's publisher John Murray. 'Gifford was a classical scholar known for being quite a pedant. He took Austen's English and turned it into something different,' Sutherland told the London *Telegraph's* Anita Singh. He also fixed her spelling. According to Sutherland, Austen didn't understand the 'i before e' rule: in her handwritten manuscripts, 'freindly' hosts 'recieve' guests. Sutherland says Austen was no star at paragraphing or punctuation, either. The manuscripts are searchable in time, which means that you can follow the order in which Austen wrote and see when she went back to score out and change words. Austen's newly collected and digitised correspondence and manuscripts – but not including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* or *Emma* – are available from the London British Library at [www.janeausten.ac.uk](http://www.janeausten.ac.uk)

## UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE... MERGE

Despite declining enrolments, Adelaide's Annesley College will remain open. The independent girls' school had approached the Anglican-affiliated Pulteney Grammar School to discuss a possible merger. The principals and board chairs of Prince Alfred College, Scotch College, Seymour College and the Westminster School, all Uniting Church schools, met with the Uniting Church of South Australia in October to discuss options for Annesley College. Westminster Principal Steve Bousfield, writing to parents and the community in October, confirmed that, 'As a leadership group, we are committed to the ongoing care and education of Annesley College students and their families, together with all other Uniting Church students.' In a later email to Westminster staff, Bousfield wrote, 'As a group, we believe that an amalgamation

of Annesley with Pulteney, as initially promoted by the council of Annesley, would have negative ramifications for our school.' The head of the Uniting Church of SA, Rev Rod Dyson, advised Annesley parents and the community in late October that the proposed merger with Pulteney Grammar School was off and that there would be no merger with a Uniting Church school. The Uniting Church of SA guaranteed to underwrite the servicing of any loans required by Annesley to fund its normal operations for a period of two years, he said. As Rev Dyson told *ABC News*, 'Obviously we can't write a blank cheque to the college, but what we are offering is up to a million dollars support for next year.' That's one generous Christmas present.

## VRROOM, VRROOM

For teachers who haven't yet discovered the National Archives of Australia's Virtual Reading Room, or VRROOM, Christmas has come early. Have a look at the site – <http://vrroom.naa.gov.au> – to find loads of curriculum resources addressing Australian history, civics and citizenship, English, science, and information and communication technology. VRROOM is useful for lesson planning but it's also a great site for students to use for research, searching for records and identifying appropriate sources. It also helps them to describe, sort and save records into groups. Lots of the content on the site has been co-created by the Le@rning Federation and the National Archives of Australia. Merry Christmas.

## THE GIFT OF SIGHT

Still on Christmas, check out the Fred Hollows Foundation Gift of Sight cards for a \$25 Christmas gift that lasts a lifetime – by giving the gift of sight. There's still time to order your cards for Christmas. Cards can be personalised and delivered directly on your behalf. The website is [www.hollows.org.au](http://www.hollows.org.au)

*The Grapevine is written by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher.*