



In brief

Snapshot

A new statistical report released by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Young People in Education and Training*, shows that, of the 1.1 million or 76 per cent of all 15- to 19-year-old students enrolled in education and training in 2009: 51 per cent attended school; 12 per cent undertook higher education; six per cent studied at a vocational education & training (VET) provider, studying a vocational course other than an apprenticeship or traineeship; five per cent undertook a trade apprenticeship or traineeship; and two per cent undertook a non-trade apprenticeship or traineeship.

The cost of schooling

Future schooling costs estimated by the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG), based on a survey of the parents of more than 8,000 children nationally from pre-school to secondary school in metropolitan and regional areas, suggests that metropolitan schooling costs more. Estimated total schooling costs in metropolitan areas for parents of children born in 2011 are up to \$80,000 if they choose a government school, \$217,000 for Catholic schooling and up to \$415,000 for private schooling. The estimated total schooling costs in regional areas are up to \$68,000 for a government school, \$165,000 for Catholic schooling and up to \$303,000 for private schooling. ASG's General Manager Development Frida Kordovoulos said the survey, one of the largest of its kind, provides rich and robust data. 'The new schooling cost estimates show parents of children attending school in regional areas reap significant benefits in terms of costs when compared to those in metropolitan areas,' she said. 'Parents are being unrealistic if they believe that education is free today. There is a total cost associated with schooling, which parents may overlook because they pay...in small, incremental amounts.'

Floods and funding famine

THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT'S FLOOD RECOVERY PROGRAM HAS AN EDUCATIONAL COST, AS STEVE HOLDEN EXPLAINS.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard in late January announced the new flood levy to fund a \$5.6 billion flood recovery program for Queensland, but also that the Commonwealth government would scrap the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), potentially saving \$88 million over four years to help fund flood recovery. The ALTC's funding would have run out by year's end, but last-minute negotiations by the Australian Greens and independent Andrew Wilkie in February appear to have saved the ALTC. Wilkie threatened to withhold his support for the Commonwealth government's \$1.8 billion flood levy unless it reversed its decision.

Responding to the PM's announcement in January, ALTC Chief Executive Dr Carol Nicoll said the funding of the ALTC had been evidence of the Commonwealth government's commitment to enhancing the quality of learning and teaching in higher education through means other than regulation. 'Obvi-

ously we are deeply disappointed that the government's stated commitment to improving the student learning experience for Australian students is not matched by continuing funding,' she said. 'Without the ALTC, I am deeply concerned that important work in this area, that is central to the mission of every Australian higher education institution, will go unrecognised and unrewarded.'

A range of higher education programs from the ALTC address school education through support for pre-service teacher education. Programs included pre-service teacher education partnerships to create an effective practicum model for rural and regional pre-service teachers, innovative assessment using a 3D virtual world with pre-service teachers, evidence-based practice in pre-service teacher preparation for mathematics teaching and assessing professional teaching standards in the practicum using digital technologies with pre-service teachers.

Flood recovery

Educators raced to ready hundreds of flood-affected schools for the new school year, while school parents and community associations provided school uniforms and stationery for flood-affected students. The Queensland Department of Education and Training and school staff had 10 days to clean up after schools were inundated in January. Apart from Milpera High School and Rocklea and Milton State Schools in Brisbane, all flood-affected schools were ready for the new school year. Nine schools in Victoria's north-east were closed at the beginning of the school year after floods in early February.

The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provided

State Schools' Relief funds to flood-affected students in Queensland and Victoria, while the Queensland Teachers' Union provided flood-affected members with relief payments from its natural disaster fund.

The Queensland Association of State School Principals, the Association of Special Education Administrators in Queensland, the Queensland Secondary Principals Association and the Australian Primary Principals' Association held a SchoolAid Floods Relief Appeal Day in February.

Donate to the Queensland Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, 1800 219 028
Donate to Hannah's Foundation appeal, www.hannahsfoundation.org.au



Professional standards

NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS GET THE GO-AHEAD, BUT MORE WORK IS REQUIRED. **STEVE HOLDEN** REPORTS.

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) last month finally adopted the national professional standards for graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teachers, developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) after an extensive consultation and validation process. The standards were endorsed by MCEECDYA in late December 2010.

MCEECDYA Chair and Victorian Education Minister Martin Dixon said he supported nationally consistent standards, but noted that future ongoing work is required, noting that MCEECDYA looked forward to a collaborative approach as jurisdictions, systems and sectors proceeded to implement the standards.

AITSL Chair Anthony Mackay acknowledged there was still work to do with jurisdictions, systems and sectors around the phasing in and application of the standards. 'Throughout 2011 AITSL will lead these discussions and work with teachers and school leaders, systems and sectors to develop support materials that will further elaborate on and exemplify the standards,' he said.

Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA) Chair Susan Halliday welcomed MCEECDYA's adoption of new national standards, noting that states and territories have existing standards which have comprehensively contributed to the development of the new national standards. Describing MCEECDYA's adoption of new national standards as the 'beginning of an historic process,' Halliday agreed that 'much work remains to be done.' 'ATRA looks forward to contributing to the key work to be undertaken this year, including the development of evidence guides and exemplars,' she said.

ATRA also supports the new graduate standards forming the foundation of a new

national accreditation system for teacher education programs. Halliday noted that ATRA has strongly advocated for a national accreditation system for teacher education programs for many years.

The adoption of new national standards was generally supported. Australian Secondary Principals' Association President Sheree Vertigan described them as 'a crucial platform for building teacher quality in all secondary schools across Australia.' Catholic Secondary Principals Australia President Daryl Hanly said 'these validated standards will be integral in informing the provision of quality pre-service and in-service programs.'

Somewhat against the trend to enthusiastic support, New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSWIT) Chief Executive Patrick Lee acknowledged that, while the national standards mirror those already established in NSW, the evidence required of teachers to demonstrate their achievement was still up for negotiation. He said the NSWIT would advise the NSW Minister for Education not to adopt the national standards until it was certain they were of the same quality and rigour as the existing NSW professional teaching standards.

According to the NSWIT website, 'The progressive introduction of the standards in NSW will not require major changes. The national framework resembles closely the existing NSW standards framework. The similarity between the national professional standards for teachers and the NSW professional teaching standards is a particularly important outcome for teachers in NSW.'

With so much in-principle support, the interested reader may wonder whether anyone has mentioned performance-based pay. After all, the aim is to recognise and reward good teachers.

Wake-up call

Research by the Cancer Council and the Heart Foundation, released last month, reveals an excessive prevalence of overweight and obesity among students, inadequate rates of physical activity, insufficient fruit and vegetable intake and a high proportion of students making food choices based on advertising. Of particular concern is the finding that the excessive prevalence of overweight and obesity is highest among students of low socioeconomic status (SES). The results should ring alarm bells among educators, health professionals and parents.

The Cancer Council and the Heart Foundation study of 12,000 students in Years 8 to 11 across 237 schools provides the first truly national sample for a physical activity survey of young Australians since 1985.

Key findings include that:

- one in four students are overweight or obese, with a significantly higher rate in low-SES areas
- 85 per cent of students do not engage in sufficient activity to provide a health benefit
- 76 per cent do not meet the daily recommended intake of four servings of vegetables daily, while 59 per cent do not meet the daily recommended intake of three servings of fruit
- one third drink four or more cups of soft drink, cordial or sports drink a week, and
- 51 per cent tried a new food or drink product they had seen advertised in the past month.

Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Professor Ian Olver said the findings confirmed what health experts had been saying for years, that poor nutrition and inadequate exercise were contributing to an unprecedented number of overweight and obese adolescents and a 'chronic disease time bomb.' 'If ever there was a wake-up call for Australians, this is it,' he said.