

EDITORIAL

Australia has a new Commonwealth Minister for Schools, Early Childhood and Youth, Peter Garrett. The newly titled portfolio splits school education and higher education. Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced on 11 September that Chris Evans would be her Minister for Jobs, Skills and Workplace Relations. By 14 September, he'd become Minister for Jobs, Skills, Workplace Relations and Tertiary Education. Garrett and Evans will be assisted by Jacinta Collins as Parliamentary Secretary for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Garrett inherits responsibility for the as-yet unfinished \$16.2 billion Building the Education Revolution program. If education policy has in the past been formed in cabinet, we can now expect the independent members of parliament (MPs) – Rob Oakeshott, Tony Windsor and Andrew Wilkie – to have some influence. Oakeshott, in his maiden speech in 2008, spoke of ‘the critical need for improvements to general standards of education throughout (his) region’ and ‘lifting retention rates within the region.’ Windsor told ABC Radio AM’s Tony Eastley his support for the Gillard minority government ‘puts country Australia in a very, very important position.’ Wilkie – a former Green – has vowed to ‘approach every policy on its merits.’ Speaking of the Greens, Green MP Adam Bandt’s support for the Gillard minority government is critical, and of course the Greens will hold the balance of power in the Senate from July 2011. The Greens want equitable Commonwealth funding for public and private schools, smaller class sizes, more funding for professional development, no performance-based pay and free university education. Peter Garrett and Chris Evans, not to mention the PM, will have their work cut out. **1**

FAST FACTS

- Top ranking Australian university in 2010, measured in terms of research quality and citation counts, graduate employability and teaching quality: Australian National University at 20th, down three places from 17th last year.
- Second ranked: University of Sydney at 37th, down from equal 36th last year.
- Third ranked: University of Melbourne at 38th, down from equal 36th last year.
- Fourth: University of Queensland at 43rd, down from 41st last year.
- Fifth: University of New South Wales at 46, up from equal 47th last year.
- Sixth: Monash University at 61st, down from 45th last year.
- Seventh: University of Western Australia at 89th, down from 84th last year.
- Eighth: University of Adelaide at 103rd, down from 81st last year.
- Top 10: Cambridge; Harvard; Yale; University College London; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Oxford; Imperial College London; Chicago; California Institute of Technology; Princeton.

Source: *Quacquarelli Symonds 2010 World University Rankings*

QUICK QUIZ

1. Did *Brontosaurus* hang out in swamps because it was too weak to carry its own weight since it couldn’t chew enough food to fuel itself?
2. Who won this year’s Aurecon Bridge Building Competition?
3. What weight did the winning bridge carry?
4. Can you use a school building fund to pay for running expenses?
5. Can you offer a scholarship or bursary to people other than Australian citizens or permanent residents?
6. Can you offer a scholarship or bursary only to students at a particular school?
7. Can you offer a scholarship or bursary to a group of students?
8. Who is the chair of the Commonwealth review of funding for schools?
9. What did Jessica Nairn, principal of Dickson College, discover in a store-room?
10. Are there any bids yet for Bonga Bonga Small Good School’s unfired dinosaur figures made by the Year 3s in 1951?

Answers: 1. no, it ate heaps of food, but didn’t have to chew it because it had a gizzard, like a bird; 2. St Pius X High School in Adamstown, Newcastle, NSW; 3. 100.6 kilograms; 4. no, a school building fund may be used solely for acquiring, constructing or maintaining school or college buildings; 5. no; 6. no; 7. yes; 8. David Gonski; 9. a ‘treasure trove’ of ‘extremely valuable’ Aboriginal bark paintings; 10. no.

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