Inspired creatives celebrated

The ATOM Awards of the Australian Teachers of Media were announced in October. Winner in the best primary video production category was Fire: Friend or foe by Year 3-4H of Lara Primary School, west of Melbourne. Best primary animation went to Jason’s Journey by Ellie Johnston of Methodist Ladies’ College, Melbourne.

Best middle school video production went to Wind Girl by Alex Litchfield, Raphael Fitzpatrick, Matilda Barlow, Elise Dare, Reuben Culliton, Thomas Brownlow and Sean O’Keeffe of Lithgow High School, New South Wales. Best middle school animation went to Hindsight by Alistair Welsh of Immanuel Lutheran College, Queensland.


Winner of the 2010 teacher’s award was Sue Hope of Immanuel Lutheran College, Queensland.

In the brave new world of federal politics, the floor of the House of Representatives has become a very interesting place. Parliamentary reforms pioneered by cross-bench independents Tony Windsor, Bob Katter and Rob Oakeshott include dedicated time to debate and vote on private members’ or backbenchers’ bills.

There have been only 59 private members’ bills between 1901 and 1987, jumping to 279 following parliamentary reforms in 1988. Until now, however, a mere 15 private members’ bills had been passed into law.

Commonwealth Shadow Minister for Education Christopher Pyne appeared to be keen to make that 16 with a private member’s bill for a judicial inquiry into alleged rorting, 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.

The bill stalled, however, when Pyne failed to attend the House of Representatives chamber to move a vote. ‘It became quite apparent to me (on the morning of the vote)..., having spent the week negotiating with the independents, that the bill on the judicial inquiry would not be successful, which is disappointing,’ he said. Independents Andrew Wilkie, Windsor and Katter, and the Greens’ Adam Bandt had advised Pyne they would not be supporting the bill. Oakeshott had raised concerns with Pyne that a judicial inquiry might undermine the work of the BER Implementation Taskforce headed by Brad Orgill.

Meanwhile, a motion was passed by Opposition Whip Nola Marino calling for a change to Youth Allowance eligibility requirements so that inner regional students would qualify for the independent Youth Allowance rate by earning $20,000 in a gap year, in line with remote students.

Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, and Leader of the House, Anthony Albanese welcomed the first votes on private members’ business under the new parliamentary procedures. He could hardly condemn them, given that the Labor minority government depends on the independent cross-benchers who pushed for them. Keep in mind, too, those same independents have so far given no indication that they want to make life difficult for the government.

The simple fact, as Oakeshott put it in September, is that, ‘The floor of the house should matter.’ Now, it does.

Democracy in action

IN THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF THE 43RD PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA, THE LABOR MINORITY GOVERNMENT DOESN’T ALWAYS WIN, BUT IT’S HARDLY TEMPESTUOUS, REPORTS STEVE HOLDEN.

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Full steam ahead

AUSTRALIA’S EDUCATION MINISTERS WANT TO PUSH ON WITH THEIR NATIONAL EDUCATION REFORMS, BUT NOT EVERYONE IS HAPPY. STEVE HOLDEN REPORTS.

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) met in Canberra in October to discuss finalisation of the Kindergarten to Year 10 (K-10) national curriculum and to discuss ‘enhancements’ being made to the My School website by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

According to MCEECDYA’s communique, ‘Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to achieve substantial implementation of the K-10 Australian Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history by the end of 2013, subject to there being a three-year implementation period to commence from when the K-10 Australian Curriculum (content, standards and support materials) becomes available.’

The distinction between implementation and substantial implementation was drawn a month earlier by ACARA Chair Professor Barry McGaw in a statement in September. ‘Once ministers endorse the curriculum in December, it will be available for implementation from 2011 by those jurisdictions and schools wanting to commence implementation in 2011. Ministers have previously agreed that the nature and timing of implementation is a matter for individual jurisdictions and schools as long as there is substantial implementation in all schools by the end of 2013 – over a three-year implementation period that commences when the content, standards and support materials becomes available.’

The Australian Curriculum Coalition, representing education’s 13 national peak professional and industrial bodies, wrote to Commonwealth Minister for Schools, Early Childhood and Youth Peter Garrett in October to express ‘concerns about the process of development, work to date, conceptual framework and structural issues of the first drafts, assessment and reporting issues and finally, implementation issues.’

The Australian Curriculum Coalition urged MCEECDYA to:
- extend the implementation timeline
- increase the involvement of teachers and professional associations
- make public the consultation submissions to ACARA and ACARA’s response, including changes to the curriculum
- develop greater conceptual coherence and consistency; reduce the volume of material to avoid curriculum overcrowding
- clarify assessment and achievement standards; clarify ACARA’s role and the role of states and territories in the rollout process, and
- fund and otherwise support professional learning.

The big question for MCEECDYA on My School was whether revision of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) would include a measure of school resources.

According to MCEECDYA’s communique, the Ministers agreed to ‘enhancements’ to the My School website. Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, Garrett indicated that meant My School would provide ‘a richer data set,’ including ‘additional financial information and additional information in relation to socioeconomic status.’

Does that mean My School will report ‘additional financial information’ about schools’ assets? According to Garrett, no. The ICSEA will include ‘recurrent expenditure,’ he said, but made no reference to assets.

MCEECDYA also received a progress report on the implementation of the national quality agenda to ensure high-quality and consistent early-childhood education and care across Australia. Victorian legislation to enable implementation of the national quality agenda for early-childhood education and care was passed in October. All other states and territories are expected to introduce legislation over the next 12 months.