



Grapevine

MY SCHOOL AND FUNDING

The *Australian* and Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, both News Corporation dailies, came out firing at funding policies that suggest, according to data from the revamped My School website, that government schools teaching disadvantaged students receive less government funding than some more affluent non-government schools. Justine Ferrari in the *Australian* published figures in a table titled 'Failing the fairness test' that showed wide discrepancies in government funding per student to schools with the same My School Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). In some cases, non-government schools with a high ICSEA appear to receive more government funding per student than government schools with a low ICSEA. According to Australian Education Union Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos, 'The funding system is clearly broken and needs to be fixed.' 'How is it that we have reached the point where private schools serving wealthier families receive thousands more in government funding per student than public schools serving low-income communities?' Gavrielatos asked. National Catholic Education Commission deputy chairman Brian Croke explained to Ferrari that the varying figures for schools in government and Catholic school systems reflected costs, rather than income, mostly to do with teachers' salaries. Teachers in schools with students from high socioeconomic backgrounds typically have more experience and are on higher salaries than those in schools with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, who typically have less experience and are on lower salaries. Maralyn Parker, in the *Daily Tele*, wrote, 'Private school authorities and lobbyists have been telling us for so long that private schools get half the total government funding per child given to public schools that most of us believed them.' Government schools receive an average total of \$10,600 per student, Catholic schools receive \$7,700 and independent schools receive \$6,200, Parker noted. According to New South Wales Inde-

pendent Education Union General Secretary Dick Shearman, though, 'My School data explodes the myth of elite private schools and poor public schools. It shows the distribution of resources is far more complex.' 'Pymble Public School receives more funding than Sacred Heart in the same suburb, and in Five Dock, both public primary schools receive more government funding than All Hallows Primary School,' Shearman said. David Gonski, who chairs the Commonwealth government's Review of Funding for Schooling, steered clear of any mention of My School or funding disparities in the review panel's third communiqué released on 8 March, after the My School website went live.

SCHOOL FUNDRAISING AND ALCOHOL DON'T MIX

The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) in March wrote an open letter to every school principal across Australia 'to formally seek...assistance and cooperation in not permitting the use, sale or promotion of alcohol products in school fundraising activities.' Chairman Dr John Herron said the ANCD was not asking schools to stop adults from drinking socially at school functions, but to stop holding wine-tasting events on school premises, conducting raffles with prizes of alcohol or selling alcohol products labelled with the school name. The alcohol industry countered with the argument that the call for such a ban prevented adults of legal drinking age from acting as positive role models for young people. The ANCD letter was also posted on the Australian Secondary Principals Association (ASPA) website. ASPA President Sheree Vertigan explained in her March newsletter to members that she circulated the letter to remind principals 'that school fundraising and alcohol don't mix.'

HIYBBPRQAG: AN INUIT WORD MEANING 'COPY GOOGLE'?

Search giant Google has accused its Microsoft rival, Bing, of copying Google search results. Last May, Google noticed that

Bing seemed to returning the same sites that Google would list. A Google search for the misspelling *torsoraphy* would show results for the correct spelling – *tarsor-rhaphy* – with a *Wikipedia* entry on the medical procedure at the top; a Bing search for *torsoraphy* would show results for *tarsorrhaphy* – with the same *Wikipedia* entry – despite not correcting the search misspelling. According to Google's Amit Singhal, 'This was very strange. How could they return our first result to their users without the correct spelling? Had they known the correct spelling, they could have returned several more relevant results for the corrected query.' In late December, Google set up a sting, creating searches that manually and by no particular logic linked nonsense words like 'hiybbprqag' to a specific page of search results. *Hiybbprqag* at Google returned the top search *The Wiltern seating chart and tickets to The Wiltern (Formerly... Two weeks into January hiybbprqag* at Bing returned the top search *The Wiltern seating chart and tickets to The Wiltern (Formerly... By the time I wrote this item, a search of hiybbprqag* at Google returned a list topped by *Hiybbprqag: Did Google catch Bing cheating?* with a *Christian Science Monitor* story explaining 'Hiybbprqag is the (nonsense) word that proves Bing is cheating, according to Google.' Microsoft rejected Google's allegation. According to ComScore figures on the United States search-engine market for December, Google's share rose to 66.6 per cent in December from 66.2 per cent in November and Microsoft's share grew to 12 per cent from 11.8 per cent, while Yahoo's share dropped from 16.4 per cent to 16 per cent. Danny Sullivan, writing on the alleged cheating in *searchengineland*, jokes that Bing stands for 'Bing Is Now Google.' Whatever the truth of the matter, and it's not entirely clear whether Bing is cheating, one thing is certain: Bing matters to Google.

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