

## CONASTA 59 to feature top shelf speakers

Venue for this year's CONASTA, the annual conference of the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) is the University of Technology Sydney, Ultimo. The five-day event, from Sunday 4th – Thursday 8th July, will be hosted by the Science Teachers Association of New South Wales. Registration commences at 3.30 pm on Sunday and there's a welcome function at 6.00 pm.

The conference opening ceremony is on Monday at 08.55 am, followed by the first keynote speaker, Tanya Munro. Her topic is *Science at the Boundaries*.

Registration online is available through the conference website at [www.conasta.edu.au](http://www.conasta.edu.au). Early bird registration prior to 30th April for ASTA members is \$500.00 (full fee \$600.00) and \$700.00 for non-members (full fee \$800.00). The members' single day registration fee is \$220.00 and \$280.00 for non-members. Reduced fees are available for students and lab technicians.



### Keynote speakers

**Assoc Prof Kathy Belov**  
Faculty of Veterinary Sciences, University of Sydney  
*Devil vs tumour: Can we prevent the extinction of the Tasmanian devil?*

**Assoc Prof Larry Bencze**  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)  
University of Toronto  
*Student's Inquiry-based Actions for Personal, Social & Environmental Wellbeing*

**Dr Brian Doyle**  
Director, CSIRO Australia Telescope National Facility

**Barry Bruce**  
CSIRO Hobart  
*De-mystifying white sharks and – research on the behaviour and movements*

**Dr Karl Kruszelnicki**  
ABC Radio and Television Personality and Julius Sumner Miller Fellow at the University of Sydney  
*Never Mind The BULLocks, Here's the Science*

**Prof Tanya Munro**  
University of Adelaide  
*Science at the boundaries*

**Josie West CONASTA facilitator**  
tel 02 6282 9377  
email [conasta@asta.edu.au](mailto:conasta@asta.edu.au)  
[www.conasta.edu.au](http://www.conasta.edu.au)

## Dorothea Mackellar 2010 poetry competition

Online entries for the Dorothea Mackellar poetry competition open on 1st March. This year's theme is I hear music.

The annual poetry awards aim to capture the imagination of students, inspiring them to express their thoughts creatively through poetry; while celebrating the legendary work of Dorothea Mackellar, author of the famous poem My Country. It is a unique national event, giving students a voice and an opportunity to strive for excellence in literature.

There are nine categories this year:

Lower Primary K-3

Upper Primary Years 4-6 (Year 7 in Qld, WA and SA)

Learning Assistance and Special Education Primary

Junior Secondary (Years 7-9)

Senior Secondary (Years 10-12)

2013 Centenary of Canberra Award (for high



school students only)  
Community Relations Commission (NSW Award)

### Schools' Award

A National Presentation Ceremony will be held in Gunnedah, NSW on Friday 3rd September 2010. Travel and accommodation (from the nearest capital city) to attend the presentation is included for the individual category winners and one accompanying adult.

A representative from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations will present other category runners-up with their prizes at a school assembly.

Each of the winners and runners-up will receive a cash prize, a unique handcrafted trophy, and a selection of books.

[www.dorothea.com.au](http://www.dorothea.com.au)

## website for young people affected by emergency

**A**fter the Emergency is a new website that provides trauma and recovery advice to young people affected by emergency.

An initiative of the Red Cross, it was developed in consultation with teenagers affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires and uses the expertise of adolescent mental health experts, schools, government and community-based agencies.

The website includes real stories from people affected by emergency and offers digital downloads, teaching resources and learning materials to young people and their

communities affected by emergencies.

Young people and teachers wanting to access information to prepare for before and after an emergency can also order an After the Emergency MP3 player through the website.

The MP3 players have been uploaded with important emergency information including a 40-minute radio show, music from well-known Australian artists, trauma-recovery tips, wellbeing advice and messages from people who have experienced disaster.

[www.redcross.org.au/aftertheemergency](http://www.redcross.org.au/aftertheemergency)



## Powerful Brainstorm shows engage students



Now in its 27th year, Brainstorm Productions performs entertaining stories about real children in real situations who overcome adversity, to more than 400,000 students each year.

The repertoire of 11 shows, researched by school counsellor Paul Johnson, are based on

the principles of Mind Matters, National Safe Schools Framework, the Pastoral Care/Student Welfare, Personal Development and Health curriculums in each state.

Inspiration for storylines come from dialogue with students, teachers and the young

actors who perform over 2000 shows annually. Original music gives the performances an edgy, contemporary feel.

- ◆ Being Brave gives children strategies to deal with their emotions through good communication, persistence and positive self-talk.
- ◆ Sticks & Stones has been seen by over 1.5 million students and is the recipient of an Australian Violence Prevention Award from the Department of Criminology.
- ◆ Wired (Years 10–12) gives senior students insights into the physiology and causes of stress and depression associated with the pressure of exams, relationships and everyday life.
- ◆ Cheap Thrills is a fast paced one-man show about safe partying and drug and alcohol abuse.

“Made me think about my choices, informed us about the dangers of drugs and making a wrong choice. The consequences sorta hit you in the face! Reality check!” Students – Flagstone State Community College.

Brainstorm will be the opening entertainment at the National Coalition Against Bullying Conference in Melbourne at the Hilton on Park on Friday 9th–Saturday 10th April.

Brainstorm Productions is not funded or sponsored and charges \$4.50 per primary student and \$5.00 per secondary student, plus gst and performs in school halls and gyms.

tel 1800 676 224

Email [info@brainstormproductions.com.au](mailto:info@brainstormproductions.com.au)

[www.brainstormproductions.com.au](http://www.brainstormproductions.com.au)

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## Australian Geographic launches new range



Australian Geographic will introduce a new range of books, magazines and interactive lessons this year. The Little Kids series is designed for Kindergarten through Year 2. The Explorer series has been developed for Years 3 to 6. The program includes Out Australia, a storybook series by children's author Phil Kettle.

Supplementary teaching aids, including

DVDs, maps and posters, are also available.

To view a sample of any of the Australian Geographic Education range, or to organise a demonstration of the interactive whiteboard lessons, contact Lioncrest.

tel 1800 249 727

email [info@lioncrest.com.au](mailto:info@lioncrest.com.au)

## Grade 4 student wins The Great Race

Projit Banerjee a Grade 4 student at Camberwell Grammar in Melbourne is the grand champion of the primary section of The Great Race, an online competition with entrants from throughout New Zealand and Australia. Competing against students from Grades 5 and 6, he was so enthused that he gave up time in his holidays to compete in the grand final.

Over 1700 students competed in each of the primary and secondary levels.

The Great Race is a contemporary online competition for primary and secondary school students based on history, geography and current world events. Tasmania-based Giant Classroom launched the competition in 2004.

The knockout competition presents students with 10 questions each week that are based on a topical international issue. Each heat runs for four weeks each term. Students submit their answers online and can check their results and rankings against other schools in a friendly real-time environment.

The leading five students from each state of Australia and New Zealand after each heat are invited to compete in the grand final which involves answering 30 questions live online within a restricted timeframe.

Projit Banerjee was able to get more correct answers in the allocated timeframe (83%), than any other student. Camberwell Grammar also had two other students in the final, Tony Zhang and Jack Heyes.

The first heat for the 2010 Great Race knockout competition commences on 1st March.

Contact Darren Gavin

tel 03 6231 2885

email [Darren@giantclassroom.com.au](mailto:Darren@giantclassroom.com.au)



# DOROTHEA MACKELLAR POETRY AWARDS 2010

This year's theme

i hear music

Entries open  
March 2010

Visit the website  
[www.dorothea.com.au](http://www.dorothea.com.au)  
for very easy to follow  
information on school  
registration and student  
entry.



PO Box 113, GUNNEDAH NSW 2380  
Telephone: 02 6742 1200 Fax: 02 6742 1435  
Email: [dorotheamackellar@bigpond.com](mailto:dorotheamackellar@bigpond.com)

## Eureka Skydeck offers Sun and Stars package

There have been long debates by Melbournians about which view of the city is more awe-inspiring – by sun kissed day or glimmering night. Which view truly captures the heart and soul of the city?

While previously visitors have had to choose between one view or the other, the introduction of Eureka Skydeck's new Sun and Stars Package means that school groups can get the best of both worlds.

Skydeck Educator Abbey Dusink says "It's a fantastic opportunity for students to experience Melbourne's most spectacular views by day and night." School groups now have the opportunity to come in between 10 am–5 pm during the day, and then return between 5 pm–9.30 pm to see Melbourne light up at night.

Eureka Skydeck's Education Program *Education with Altitude* is also making it easier for teachers to plan their school city experiences by offering 9.00 am sessions and lunch packages.

[www.eurekaskydeck.com.au](http://www.eurekaskydeck.com.au)



## National Walk Safely to School Day

Now in its eleventh year, the Walk Safely to School Day initiative will be celebrated on Friday 7th May 2010. The event promotes the message: Active Kids are Healthy Kids. It encourages parents, carers and their children to build regular walking to and from school into their daily routine; children need a minimum of 60 minutes exercise per day.

It also encourages parents to drive less and walk more, aiming to decrease dangerous vehicle congestion around schools and reduce carbon emissions from idling cars.

Independent research has shown that an impressive 92% of primary schools throughout Australia participated in 2009.

**Kel Hawthorn 0433 533 588**

**Email [kel@kelhawthornpr.com.au](mailto:kel@kelhawthornpr.com.au)**

**[www.walk.com.au](http://www.walk.com.au)**

## Epson interactive ultra-short throw projector

Epson has introduced the world's first interactive ultra-short throw projector. The Epson 450Wi is an intelligent, flexible presentation and learning tool that turns any smooth, hard surface into a functional communication tablet.

Because no special display surface is needed the Epson 450Wi has few constraints on image size and provides one of the largest interactive touch-screens available – a 16:10 widescreen image between 55 inches and 96 inches diagonal in native WXGA format – allowing highly detailed presentations to be seen clearly by everyone in the room.

Its ultra-short throw configuration maximises room use and minimises eye glare and overshadowing of the wall by delivering an 80 inch diagonal 16:10 image with the Epson 450Wi positioned just 24 cm from and slightly above the display surface.

A digital infra-red pen complements the conventional computer keyboard and mouse to



allow full interactivity with the display, with users able to launch network stored multimedia files, access online resources, run programs, and capture hand-written annotations on the Epson 450Wi's display.

Any software program using mouse and keyboard

controls can be operated using the Epson 450Wi's infrared pen including teaching software, CAD programs, digital media creators and players, graphics programs and web browsers.

**[www.epson.com.au](http://www.epson.com.au)**

## Bad grammar marked down

University of Queensland emeritus professor Rodney Huddleston has written to schools directly because the English Teachers Association of Queensland has refused to correct 65 errors he claims to have found in the Association's teaching guide on grammar.

In the letter, Professor Huddleston says Grammar at the Coalface, "contains an exceptionally large number of errors – over 60 in 15 1/2 pages of relevant text – many of them very serious and basic."

"It would be an educational disaster if

teachers were to base their classes systematically and comprehensively on the Coalface Grammar," he says. "If students gave Coalface answers in tests and examinations, they would be marked wrong and generally regarded as lacking basic knowledge of grammar."

## Science decline linked to increased subject choice

Despite the current decline in the proportion of senior high-school students taking science subjects, there has been no corresponding decline in students' enjoyment of science, their appreciation of its importance to society, or their interest in science careers.

This is one of the most unexpected findings in a recent report *Choosing science: understanding the declines in senior high school science enrolments*. The report is based on a major study, commissioned by the National Centre of Science, ICT and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR) at the University of New England, that involved around 590 teachers and 3,800 students throughout the country.

Supported by the Australian Science Teachers Association, the study found that the steady proportional declines in physics, chemistry and biology enrolments over the past two decades

were unlikely to be due to declining student interest in science. Rather, it concluded that the declines were part of a wider phenomenon that had seen similar falls in many established subjects – including economics, geography, history, and advanced mathematics. One of the factors most likely to be influencing this trend, the report concludes, is students' response to the increasing number of subject options available.

Dr Terry Lyons, Associate Director of SiMERR, and the report's co-author, Dr Frances Quinn, found that many students could not picture themselves as scientists, and did not have much idea about the wide range of science careers available – a finding that Dr Lyons said had "all sorts of implications for educators".

In addressing this finding, the report recommends "that Federal, State and Territory education authorities, professional teacher associations and science organisations work

together to develop adequately funded, sustainable and coordinated strategies to improve links between school science and scientists in university and industry settings".

With the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) due to release its new draft science curriculum in February, the study's confirmation that school science has failed to engage a sufficiently wide range of students is of particular significance.

The report recommends "that ACARA, Federal, State and Territory education authorities and other relevant stakeholders ensure the new National Science Curriculum reflects teachers' and students' recommendations for increasing enrolments by making school science learning experiences more interesting, practical and personally relevant".

The report can be downloaded from [www.une.edu.au/simerr](http://www.une.edu.au/simerr).

## 21st March is Harmony Day



Harmony Day celebrates the cohesive nature of Australian society and promotes the benefits of our cultural diversity.

'Everyone belongs' is the continuing

message which reflects community participation, respect and a sense of belonging for all Australians.

This year's theme is Express Yourself, an opportunity for your school to explore the diversity

in your community and how everyone benefits.

Order free promotional materials at [www.harmony.gov.au](http://www.harmony.gov.au)

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School of Education



## Learning difficulties seminars



Dr Martha S Burns, an American researcher in the application of applied neuroscience to learning



difficulties, will reveal the latest insights on how the brain can be rewired to optimise cognitive abilities and learning, at seminars in Sydney and Melbourne. She is a recognised expert in the field and its application to learning and attentional

disorders, including dyslexia, autism, auditory processing disorders, ADHD and language disorders.

Using the latest scientific research, the seminars will provide educators, health professionals and parents with practical strategies for language, reading and learning intervention.

At the Melbourne seminar, educator and author, Brian Brennan, will explain why education is on the brink of a transformation as a result of the neuroscience research and the increasing power of technology.

At the Sydney seminar, educational consultant, Mark Brandtman, will speak on how to understand ADHD and the implications of a better understanding on learning in the classroom.

The Sydney seminar is on 8th March at the Mercure Sydney. The Melbourne seminar is on 10th March at the Mercure Melbourne. The registration fee is \$99.00 for the Sydney and Melbourne seminars, or \$149.00 in Melbourne for the seminar and workshop.

tel 02 8467 4812

email [register@fastforword.com.au](mailto:register@fastforword.com.au)

[www.fastforword.com.au/seminar2010](http://www.fastforword.com.au/seminar2010)

## Cyberbullying conference

Covert and cyber bullying in schools – together with cybersafety and student wellbeing – will be the focus of the 4th Biennial National Centre Against Bullying (NCAB) conference at the Hilton on the Park in Melbourne from 8th–10th April.

With the theme *Navigating the Maze: cybersafety and wellbeing for schools*, the three-day conference will seek to highlight the need for a national, uniform approach to cybersafety in schools and student wellbeing across Australia. It will help to provide strategies for schools to put in place to respond to complex situations.

Through workshops and a two-day program of speakers, the conference will focus on why cybersafety matters to students and families; approaches to address and manage cyber risks in the school community; where schools stand in relation to cybersafety and the law; and what strategies are working in schools, including the identification of ways to improve student wellbeing through technologies that will enhance the learning process.

[www.ncab.org.au](http://www.ncab.org.au)

## Coming soon: national standards for teachers

The National Professional Standards for Teachers are the first step in a planned uniform system of teacher accreditation and registration, which will also provide national accreditation and standards for teacher education courses in universities.

The standards are organised into three areas: professional knowledge (what is taught); professional practice (how it is taught); and professional engagement (involvement in the school and ongoing education).

The seven standards detail the extent of skills and knowledge for each of the four teaching levels. The standards stipulate teachers must know their students and how they learn, and know the content and how to teach it. They must plan for and implement effective teaching and learning; create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments; assess and provide feedback; and report on student learning.

They must also engage in professional learning and reflection; and contribute to the school and professional community.

The standards have been approved by the newly established Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, which comprises representatives of the federal, state and territory governments, private schools, teachers and principal groups.

[www.aitsl.edu.au/aitsl/go](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/aitsl/go)



## 2010 GLOBAL LANGUAGE CONVENTION



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### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

**Professor Joseph Lo Bianco** AM, FACE, FAHA  
Chair of Language and Literacy Education, University of Melbourne and  
Honorary Professor in Language Education, University of Hong Kong

**Mr Patrick Dodson**  
Australia's "Father of Reconciliation" and 2008 Sydney Peace Prize winner

**Dr John Bradley**  
Senior Lecturer and Deputy Director for Australian Indigenous Studies,  
Monash University, Australia

**Professor Ato Quayson**  
Professor of English and Director of the Centre for Diaspora  
and Transnational Studies, University of Toronto, Canada

**Professor Alastair Pennycook**  
Professor Language Studies, University of Technology, Sydney

**Dr Nicholas Tate**  
Director General, International School of Geneva



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## Making NAPLAN work for students

The Grattan Institute is urging the federal government to boost its national school performance plan with a new element which would help meet teacher concerns about unfair league tables.

"We need a stronger focus on individual student progress in literacy and numeracy within schools rather than measuring in a way which encourages unfair comparisons between schools," Dr Ben Jensen, the Institute's Program Director of School Education said, on the release of Grattan Institute's report *Measuring What Matters: Student Progress*.

This "value-added" model provides much more accurate and useful measures and removes the bias in the current model against schools serving lower socio-economic areas.

"Grattan's report makes NAPLAN work for students and recommends that school performance is calculated with value added measures that assess student progress in NAPLAN."

Value-added measures of school performance use a model that is fashioned to the individual student that gives a more accurate picture of a school's contribution to his or her progress.

School value-added performance scores measure their contribution to student progress, comparing the progress made by each student at each initial level of performance, and calculating the contribution the school makes to that progress (controlling for student background).

Dr Jensen said the My School website was a step in the right direction but falls short in providing targeted practical guidance to teachers to improve student performance.

"The desire by all, particularly parents, for transparency on school performance needs to be based on accurate data," he said.

"Our focus should be on the students. In this debate we don't hear enough about improving student progress; about how measuring school performance will improve instruction and learning. Our approach empowers school principals and teachers as they have the greatest impact on student learning."

**Dr Ben Jensen**  
tel (03) 9035 8117  
email [ben.jensen@grattan.edu.au](mailto:ben.jensen@grattan.edu.au)  
[www.grattan.edu.au/publications/](http://www.grattan.edu.au/publications/)

## QuickSmart recognised in Closing the Gap report



QuickSmart, an intervention program that helps school students improve their basic skills in mathematics, has been named as a "key achievement" in the Prime Minister's *Closing the Gap* report.

The report, published this month, includes the QuickSmart program in a list of eight "key achievements" that have contributed to improved levels of literacy and numeracy among Indigenous students. One of the stated national targets in *Closing the Gap* is to "halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement for Indigenous children by 2018".

Developed at the National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR), which is based at the University of New England, the QuickSmart program is currently operating in more than 200 schools around Australia – a number set to double by the end of this year.

Many Indigenous students are among the students who have benefited from QuickSmart intervention over the past decade. "The parents of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory report that they're really keen to go to school on QuickSmart days," said Professor John Pegg, the Director of SiMERR and co-developer – with Associate Professor Lorraine Graham – of the QuickSmart program. "In one year, the Indigenous students are experiencing up to three or more years' growth – the same rate of growth as non-Indigenous students."

The QuickSmart literacy program, which parallels the numeracy program, is in increasing demand from schools that have successfully implemented QuickSmart numeracy. During 2010, schools from Western Sydney, rural Victoria and the New England region will join schools in the Northern Territory already implementing this program.

**Prof John Pegg**  
tel 0428 489 303  
**Assoc Prof Lorraine Graham**  
tel 0423 493 369

### Notices and announcements

Education Today welcomes education news and announcements for the daily news service and magazine.  
Send to [minnis@minnsicomm.com.au](mailto:minnis@minnsicomm.com.au)

## More funds for outback tutors



More isolated families will receive support this year to educate their children, following a \$50,000 philanthropic boost by the Rural Education Program (REP) to Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education (VISE).

The funds are specifically for travel expenses for VISE volunteers offering relief tutoring for children on stations and in isolated areas.

REP chairman Tim Fairfax said REP was responding to an urgent need for more trained tutors in the outback. "Many outback families are too embarrassed to ask for VISE volunteers because they can't afford to pay the volunteers' fuel expenses which in some cases can be as much as \$1500."

Since it was established in 1989, VISE has matched thousands of tutors with families living on stations or in isolated pockets of the country. The tutors, who are mostly retired teachers, offer educational trouble shooting services and/or relief tutoring, usually six weeks at a time while living with families.

**Contact**  
**Mike Stock VISE CEO**  
tel 0412 634 312

## Stop talking 123 567 478

If every child starts school with a unique number that will track his or her progress during 12 years of primary and secondary education, how long will it be before "Julia Gillard, sit down and stop talking" becomes "123 567 478 sit down and stop talking"?

And will nicknames become nicknumbers? In place of 'Julesy', perhaps 'Onesy'? It's not as strange as it seems, the Chinese have been calling family members by their birth order since the beginning of time. My wife is always addressed as Luk Mui (sixth sister) by her extended family.

**Bill Minnis**  
Editor