



Hats off to Andrew Bragg, the man who beat the Big Super bullies

# QUIRE



## SHORTENING THE ODDS

Brad Norington reports on Labor's comeback wannabe



## LESSONS IN FUNDING SPLURGE An average 15-year-old today is a year behind in An average 15-year-old today is a year behind in their learning compared with an average 15-year-old in the year 2000 ... the decline in school standards despite the real per capita funding increase is one of Australia's great policy failures of the past two decades. \$65.58bn The educational science is as settled as it can possibly be on this. The divide in the education community is between those who follow the 2007-08 educational science and those who embrace sociology instead. 2018-19 CIS education analyst Glenn Fahev We had about 50,000 students Australia-wide in 2019 who started secondary school with bare-minimum reading skills if any at all. nifer Buckingham, MultiLit director We know what works. We are talking here about explicit instruction, the teacher being responsible for the learning of students. FALLING GRADES Australian students' PISA scores Science Reading

Declining education standards are national crisis that's harming our children's future and our economy

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PAUL KELLY

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In the list of policy failures over the past 20 years, the fall in school education performance must rank at or near the top – yet the re-sponse has brought contradictory voices and a denial of political responsibility to confront this dis-service to young Australians and our economic future.

The insidensate lowed of policies.

service to young Australians and our economic familier. The insidequate level of school performance and Australia's steady decline both in absolute and relative terms has never hit the national political radue. It has never been presented as national recisis, it is widely detailed at state level—where reprosuibility less for schools—yet there is no agreed, credible polity response being implemented as each shale goes its own way withnessed is not shale goes its own way withnessed is con-

The issue is elemental. School-children have not been properly instructed in reading, maths, ed-nec and the humanities. This should be seen for the institutional feature that it represents. Yet this should be seen for the institutional feature that it represents. Yet this maintstream media debate. Interviewed by Inquirer, I asked new federal Education Minister Alain Tudge whether he felt the Australian public was even aware of the extent of the crisis.

"Probably not — and when I point it out to people the yare bypically shocked, as they should be, in a point it out to people the yare bypically shocked, as they should be, in any speechs people are shocked to find we have dedined in our school shandards even against ourselves by about a year's worth of learning over two decades. That is, an average I syear-old in they year. All in they war 2000."

The public interest of students, promote, business and community is being sacrificed. Witness Aus-

Maths

tralia's 20-year battle over how to teach primary school students to teach primary school students to read Readings its he foundation of education. Without reading, a composition of the stronged over reading is the ultimate cample of subjects being taught with little or no basis in the science of learning. Tudege makes the alarming point: "I don't think there is accontensus as tool think there is accontensus as tool think there is accontensus as tool the source of this problem among is division about school curriculum. flawed teacher training at universities, irresolution from state colucation ministers and because of the federation, antanional government with limited impact on classroom practice.

Central to Australia's problem is accounted in most Australia was actually implementing it. But they made of control to control to ensure it is learnt and onlinearies. "The problem is a generation. Many economists and politicians fooded themselves into thinking. Australia was actually implementing it. But they made of control to control to ensure it is learnt and enhancements. "The problem is accounted to ensure it is learnt and enhancement." We think there are a control to control to ensure it is learnt and enhancement. We taken the transverse and enhancement. The supposed here are a control to ensure it is learnt and enhancement. We taken the supposed here are a control to ensure it is learnt and enhancement. We taken the supposed here are a control to ensure it is learnt and enhancement. We take the surface and the surface and

unless the states share this as a genuine-commitment. Standards, howe fallers significantly over the past 20 years despite the massive mersaes in school funding. A kid today has 60 per cent more resources allocated to them than they did 20 years ago. Funding for schools has increased by 35 per cent in real per capital terms over the past decode. The resultily, and the properties of the past decode, who was the past decode, and the properties of the past decode, and the properties of the past decode with the past decode and the policy have presided over classroom methods that have done more to damage disadvantaged students and handicap them for a lifetime than virtually any other public policy in this country. Yet there is no accountability.

"The decline in school standards despite the real poly capital in educational theory is that we've had an approach essentially based on child-centred inquiry and so called child-skilling which has been hostite to a knowledge-rich, explicit instruction method. This has been the trium method This has been the trium control to the past of the past work of the past o

qualified to answer is Jennifer statistics and the section of strategy and statistics and the section of strategy and statistics and statistics and section of strategy and statistics and section of strategy and statistics and statistics are statistics and stati

teach pervades all subjects and now erupting in maths. The o problem seems almost unbeling Continued on Pag

## In this land of the Delta Blues, Covid zero is no longer king

How we live with corona is a painful discussion that the nation must have

GREG SHERIDAN



Australia is in a desperatenational race against the Delta strain of Covid-19. There is no guarantee that NSW will be able to succeed in parting the Delta gaine back in the bottle. The outbreak in our not populous state is now.

Australia must simulaneously plot a path to opening up and living with some version of Covid-19. But keep the virus away until we are adequately vaccinated. Every part of our national fife is up for grabs.

The national strategy is to keep the virus out, get vaccinates a contract the contract was a contract to keep the virus out, get vaccinates. Every part of our national fife is up for grabs.

The mational strategy is to keep the virus out, get vaccinates of contract to keep the virus out, get vaccinates a contract the contract of the virus out, get vaccinates a contract the contract of the virus out, get vaccinates of contract the contract of the virus out, get vaccinates of covid files. But he deather than the vaccination of the contract of the virus out, get vaccinates of covid files. But he deather was a contract of the virus out, get vaccinates of the virus out, get a contract of the virus out, get vaccinated on the virus of the virus out, get vaccinated on the virus of the virus out, get vaccinated on the virus of the virus of the virus of the virus out, get vaccinated on the virus of the virus

But if it's more contagious, is it at least less deadly? Professor Raina MacIntyre, the head of Biosecurity Program at the Kirby

Institute, tells Inquirer: "Delta is more serious. Studies from Canda and the UK suggest it's twice as likely to put you in hoopital, it's the control of th

compared with those countries we think most culturally similar Continued on Page 14

## **INQUIRER**

## Reopening a great world of wonders



With about 14 million people in lockdown, the country's two big-gest cities in conditions of captivity that seem to stretch as far as we can

that seem to stretch as far aswe can imagine, now might be agood time to pronder what kind of education we want to give the young—what is can be taught, and how a want to give the young—what is can be taught, and how A lot of the time what we want is success and security; that's why some people and an advantage of the control of the c

might want them to be great barr-isters or surgeons, or that almost unimaginable thing, a beneficent captain of industry. But we worry that they might not know Citizen Kane or 8½, let alone Hamlet and

sanie or 8s, ict alone trained and witherever history governs our constitution. The state of the

Once upon a time ... there was a tremendous belief in the splendour and moral depth of

great art
him, from the Rolling Stones
through Janis Joplin to David
Bowie and beyond, is still an accessible thing to the young. They
know why Tambourine Man is
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We want more then success for the young we love, we want win-dom. Think of that greatest of all Australian school stories The Get-ting of Wisdom. The epigruph is from Proverbs and its biblical toughness echoes down the ages. Wisdom is the principal thing therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting getunderstanding." Henry Handel Richartsion's novel — which Bruce Beresford

filmed—is an enactment of that in-junction: its difficulty and its inexi-tability. Once upon a time – let's say atime culminating in the 1960s and 70s—there was a tremendous belief in the splendour and moral depth of great art. It existed side-by-side with the belief that Dylan, and that in a long song such as Deso-lation Row he had recapitulation pop art the fulfilities of the caval-cade of cultural fragments that were treated with such sublimity and agony in the most celebrated

pop art the fullilities of the caval-cade of cultural fragments that were treated with such sublimity and agony in the most eelebrated ofmodernist poems, TS Eliot's The Waste Land.

That coexisted with the com-monary sense that great and earlies are the superation of the survey of the drams of the ages. We want Gen Z to get this. We want them to cop the literary canon. It's important hat it be kept alive, however tedi-ous literature departments and high school literature yillabuses can seem.

Poet Christopher Logue was very funny when he would ask un-answerably. What it the opposite of an autocidact, my dear? That allies with Wide saying nuthing and the survey of the survey of the wind on, if you like may somehow be acquired but not by rote. Still, it's important that greatificary works should be there and that children know where the nountains are, whether they feel

vision. If you like may somenow be anguired but not by rote.

Solid, it's important that great life-but has been appared but not by rote. The solid is a solid proper of the control of th

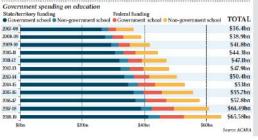
The millennials can sonetimes be bord, sometimes be tribiled by Dostoyevsky and Dickens, but when they hit a figure like David Foster Wallace in Brief Interviews with Hideous Menand Infinite Jest they know they are in a world of wonder initimately identifiable from their own experience and ferams. How does this tally with knoactes such as the students at make Art wanting to rename the theatre that bears the name of Ceorge Bernard Shaw, the creator Eliza Doolittle and St Joan and Major Barbara? It doesn't but it doesn't matter. A bit of visione, a bit of folly. They were due and history tells you that the people who find the islom of their souls in at are going towin.



We probably like the idea of our kids making plenty of money, and at the same time we may worry that they may not know their Shakespeare, or Jane Auslen, or Bach or Mozart



Up/down Average achievement is above/below and significantly different from the base year
 No change Average achievement is close to or not statistically different from the base year



## SCHOOL FOR THOUGHT

2001: Prime minister John Howard introduces SES funding model for non-government sector, leading to increased funds for some independent and Catholic schools

2005: National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy by Ken Rowe recommending teachers provide systematic, direct and explicit phonics instruction to develop foundational reading proficiency

2007: Kevin Rudd announces digital education revolution for schools as part of election pledge

2008: Melbourne Declaration of Education Goals released, promoting the development of a "world class" national

2009: Australian Curriculum approved by education ministers

2010: Rudd government's Building The Education Revolution program to inject \$16bn into school infrastructure

2011: Gonski review released calling for needs-based school funding

2013: New Australian Education Bill passes; Labor prime minister Julia Gillard promises reforms to take Australian schools "to the top five in the world by 2025"

2014: Independent review of the Australian Curriculum by Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wiltshire

2015: Release of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group report into tea education courses

Malcolm Turnbull unvei Gonski 2.0 funding plan to address overfunding and underfunding of schools and committing to providing 20 per cent of the share of funding for government schools and 80 per cent for non-government schools

excellence released

2018: Prime Minister Scott Morrison strikes new funding deal with independent and Catholic school sectors

2018: SA becomes the first state to implement a system-wide phonics screening check for year I students

2020: Ministers agree to the new Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration of education goals

2020: Funding for non-government schools shifts from SES model to Direct Measure of Income

2020: \$50m Australian Education Research Organisation established (Gonski 2.0 recommendation)

2020: Education ministers commission ACARA to undertake a review of the national school curriculum

2020: NSW announced mandatory phonics checks to be introduced

2021: Education Minister Alan Tudge announces follow-up review of initial teacher education

## Lessons in failure need to be learnt

Continued from Page 12
able and will be denied—the politicism don't understand whe has
gone wrang, won't confront it,
and won't even debate it.

Backingham describes the
philosophical conflict. The reading debate is one part of the much
larger debate is about explicit
teacher directed instruction versus child-centred inquipy or distractic interaction implies
you are teaching something concreek You have defined what you
want the child to know. Explicit
hand with a content-driven curcuriculum. This is the link between
pedagogy and curviculum.

"The other approach is a philousply that we should be falling
children up with facts, that they
learn better discovering things for
themselves and they will discover
things more readily if they see
them as relevant for their own
lives. This is a romatic notion of
each of the phonic battle was
woon. Buckinshon and "Noe"

them as relevant for their own lives. This is a romatic notion of education.

Asked if the phonics battle was won, Buckinghams said: Not catricly, yet? If depends on what state you live in Incredibly, resistance remains attorage in some accurate and a state possible in the said of the said of

But this hasn't happened with schools' decline. The normal democratic "fix-it" mechanism

has broken down. No political leader has accepted responsibility or is held responsibility or is held responsibility. Education analyst from the Centre for Independent Studies. Glenn Fabry told Inquirer: "If we followed the science on education our student outcomes wouldn't be in free fall. The educational science is a settled as it can possibly be on this. The divide in the education commandly is between cost on commandly is between cost of the control of the contro lower in maths, three years lower in science and one and a half years lower in reading.

lower in maths, these years lower in science and one and sally sears lower in reading.

Our own performance is resourced by the search of the

They will be on board."

Chief executive of the NSW
Education Standards Authority

Paul Martin backed Tudge's goal.

"I think it's feasible in a country that is as rich and 'first world' as Australia." Martin said. "But we to the said of the sai

The fall in our (standard of education) rankings correlates with the introduction of inquiry learning

a knowledge-rich curriculum to all students in the class. I am of the strong belief that knowledge is the key to creativity. In recent times, I've had conversations with our principals who have shared their own journey, telling me that part of their professional identity had been child-based inquiry learning. They related to me their own transformation and how they had had been child-based inquiry learning. They related to me their own transformation and how they had knowledge-rich teaching was essential for the development of young people.

Asked about the nationwide transition that Australian needed. Fox said-"It's monumental. What we are acking from teachers is incredibly challenging. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of teachers' Australias wide, and you are asking them to change. That's incredibly ambitions."

That's incredibly ambitious.

He warns of the traps: "It is so easy to focus on other things in education – its purpose, notions

rink is putting vague notions of the control of the

standards must become a serious political issue. Educationalists, universities and state bureaucratis bear much of the blame. Yet this critissuffers from the absence of a dramatic shock, Failure on border protection was apparent in boat arrivals, failure in energy policy was upparent in sexulating priese, failure in aged acre was obvious from appalling conditions in boats. But seates, decline to the control of the problem. The believe that teacher educational faculties are largely responsible for the decline, be said "This goes back to the responsibility of universities in terms of the people they accept into teacher training courses but, more importantly, bow they are trained. There is too much dogma at the expense of established evidence-based practices."

As feederal minister, Tudge must work where he has leverage.

must work where he has leverage. His critical initiative has been to set up an inquiry into teacher edu-cation, a chronic problem for 20

Hower institution and co author Hower institution and co author Hower institution and co author Hower institutions, and Professer John Sweller from the University of NSW, originator of cognitive load theory. Interviewed by Inquirer, Sweller said there are two sorts of knowledge young children 'naturally' pick up their parents' language but there is no "naturally pick up their parents' language but there is no "naturally pick up their parents' language but there is no "naturally pick up their parents' language but there is no "naturally processed to learn how to contain the control of their parents' language but there is no "naturally processed to learn how to contain the company of their parents' language in "understood in their parents' language in "understood in the parents' language in "understood in their parents' language consumed all the political encogy, Nothing des was left. "We now have one agreed universal funding system," Tudge said. "That means the funding statist." That means the funding said. "That means the funding said." That means the funding said. "That means the funding said."

"We now have one agreed uni-versal funding system," Tudge said. That means the funding wars are over. We can focus on what really matters—what occurs in the classroom and lifting our school standards." This has been said before. Will this time be any different?

Paul Kelly is a director of the Australian educational charity Primary Focus.