

27 July 2011

## MEANINGFUL CHANGE REQUIRED TO AVOID EDUCATIONAL CRISIS

Recent changes to Australia's education system won't go far enough to lift the performance of students and avoid a national education crisis according to a keynote speaker scheduled to address the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Independent Schools Queensland conference in Cairns this week.

Significant changes of the past 12 months include the introduction of a National Curriculum and the decision in Queensland to move Year Seven to high school but Grattan Institute Program Director Ben Jensen said politicians failed to fully appreciate the true scope of reform required.

"The latest results from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Program for International Student Assessment<sup>1</sup> shows a dramatic decline in Australian student performance over the past decade," Mr Jensen said.

"It's clear there's a need for serious reform yet we continue to spend money on doing more of the same."

Mr Jensen said of major concern was the way Australia's education system dealt with underperforming students.

"Australian children who fail are made to repeat but the desired outcome is rarely achieved," he said.

"High-performing countries such as those in China, Korea and Japan improve their education system by taking a proactive approach and targeting low performing students from a very young age. Resources are dedicated to helping them and programs are designed specifically to help them improve.

"This is just one area where significant improvements could be made. If we don't start taking better care of students who are struggling, we are in danger of falling further behind and finding ourselves in a situation that will be difficult to pull ourselves out of.

"In addition, if governments continue throwing money at the problem and results don't improve, eventually they will be tempted to cut back and slash costs considerably across the education sector."

Mr Jensen said Australian teachers would also benefit from a greater number of professional learning opportunities.

"Compared to other high performing countries in our region, we don't invest nearly enough in evaluating and developing teachers and helping them to do their job well."

Independent Schools Queensland Executive Director David Robertson said this week's conference provided an important opportunity to reflect on the changes being made and showcase the many innovative programs and initiatives independent schools have in place.

"It is a privilege to have so many experts gathered in one place to provide some necessary and important insight into the future of education in Queensland and the rest of Australia," Mr Robertson said.

"The program content is provoking and I know all participants, whether a teacher or an expert, will walk away feeling informed and inspired."

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<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA Results 2009: What Students Know and Can Do, Volume V) - [http://www.oecd.org/document/61/0,3746,en\\_32252351\\_32235731\\_46567613\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1.00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/61/0,3746,en_32252351_32235731_46567613_1_1_1_1.00.html)

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The conference will run from Wednesday 27 July to Friday 29 July and this year's theme is *Conversations*, focusing on leadership, culture and values, and teaching and learning.

Please visit <http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/Page.aspx?element=314&category=1#> for the full program of events.

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