

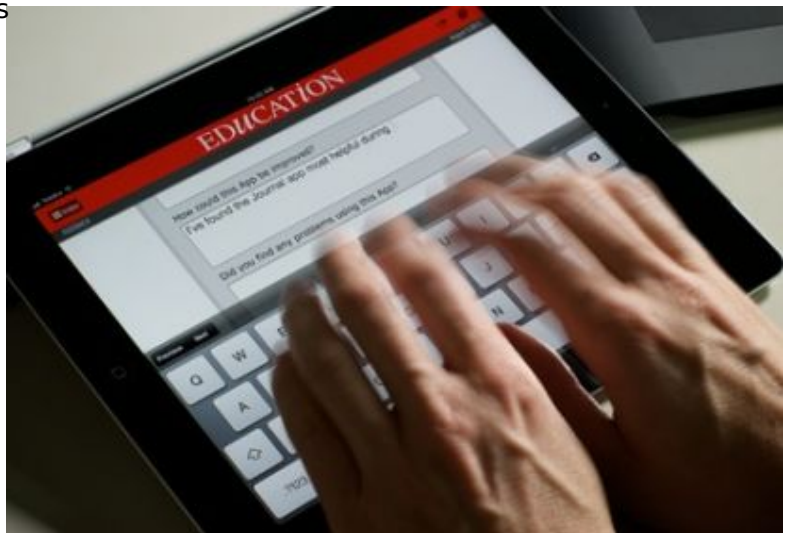
Letters

March 02, 2018

Spoiled by choice

If ever there was a rallying call for fundamental change in the way we educate our young people it is provided by Dr Jacobs' opinion piece in the Sydney Morning Herald on 21 January. The specious chimera of choice has driven our system's policies for too long. Public-assisted choice for those who can actually make a choice already has warped our delivery to the extent that there is a fundamental unfairness that must be addressed if we are to have an education system to be proud of. As soon as any form of selectivity is introduced whether it be based on income, geography, religion, ideology or anything else, true education crumbles. We have educational leaders such as Dr Sahlberg available to us why not grasp the opportunities for progress and make some real changes?

Gus Plater
Life Member



Question of quality

Simon Birmingham's latest thought bubble (Sydney Morning Herald, 10 February) is just one amongst a cavalcade of contradictory ideas. He claims that the LNP government is increasing funding, when it's cut \$2.18 billion. He insists he is improving teacher quality, yet he believes that taking people from trades or industry and giving them a mere six weeks training will create quality teachers. He wants to enable portability between the states, yet instead of lifting the standards required by all states to the high NSW NESA level, he considers introducing a lower, less demanding standard to enable that portability. It is time that this minister be heard no longer. His ideas oppose quality education delivery and lower teacher standards, something this country cannot allow.

Mark Berg
Retired

Workers strike out

The failure of workers to win real pay rises is linked to a decline in industrial action, including strikes. Analysis by the Australia Institute Centre for Future Work shows a 97 per cent decline in industrial action from the 1970s to now. Wage growth is linked to the frequency of work stoppages. In 2017, the number of industrial disputes across Australia was near post-war era low. The report's author, Jim Stanford, said industrial action has become "almost extinct in Australia and this had weakened the bargaining power of workers".

This failure to win real pay rises has contributed to Sydney's inner and middle-ring neighbourhoods being

depleted of essential service workers including teachers, nurses and police. High rents and house prices are forcing key workers to commute several hours to work. This research was conducted by the University of Sydney Urban Housing Lab for the Teachers Mutual Bank, Firefighters Mutual Bank and Police Bank.

So where is the wealth going?

Australia's 33 billionaires increased their wealth by more than \$38 billion dollars last year — or more than \$1 billion each. That is more than \$3 million each per day!

Credit Suisse data showed the wealth of the bottom half of Australians declined in the same period alongside stagnating wage growth. We have returned to a period where families forgo meals to afford mortgage or rent repayments. The ongoing failure of our union movement to address wages has resulted in declining union memberships across all sectors. ACTU secretary Sally McManus made encouraging comments about the need to break “unjust” industrial laws, however, Opposition Leader Bill Shorten swiftly distanced himself from her comments. The ALP hijacked the Your Rights at Work campaign. Australian workers literally cannot afford to repeat this mistake with the “Change the Rules” campaign.

John Gauci
Taverners Hill Infants School

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