

**Policy Environment Scan
September 2008**

Source	Topic	Content
Adelaide Thinkers in Residence, South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet	<i>Final Report, Investing in the Early Years: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do</i> (Dr Fraser Mustard)	In this report, Dr Fraser Mustard focuses his attention on the importance of investing in early childhood development to encourage a healthier, fitter population, and promote opportunities for South Australian children to achieve their potential. Dr Mustard has provided us with strategic advice on the future of this field and was helped the State design, develop and deliver programs for the benefit of children and parents. (http://www.thinkers.sa.gov.au/fmustard.html)
The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Centre for Community Child Health	<i>Literacy in Early Childhood</i> , Policy Brief (No. 13 of 2008)	This Policy Brief emphasises the need to include an often overlooked and yet critical stage in a child's journey toward literacy: the years prior to school entry (birth to five years of age). This Brief also highlights the important role of early childhood professionals, services and communities in supporting families to provide the conditions and experiences necessary for all children to develop a sound literacy foundation prior to school entry. (http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/resources.cfm?doc_id=10885)
Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs	<i>National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians</i>	Australian Education Ministers in collaboration with the Catholic and independent school sectors are developing a new National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians that will set the direction for Australian schooling over the next 10 years. Education Ministers are inviting public feedback on the proposed draft Declaration from interested individuals and organisations. A copy of the draft Declaration (which is 13 pages) can be found at http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/draft_declaration.25003.html .
Commonwealth Attorney-General Media Release	<i>Rudd Government provides new services for children after separation</i>	Attorney-General Robert McClelland today announced that the Rudd Government will provide \$17 million over the next three years to help fund eighteen new services, which will support children dealing with the breakdown of their parents' relationship. These services are part of the Supporting Children after Separation Program, which provides help and support to children whose parents decide they can no longer live together. "This important program will help children throughout this traumatic time to understand and manage the changes in their family relationships, both during and after the separation of their parents," Mr McClelland said, and "the new services will be placed in areas of need across Australia and will support children through a range of counselling and group activities." "I would like to congratulate the organisations selected to operate these valuable services, which will not only benefit children and their families but also the wider community." The organisations invited to begin funding negotiations were recommended through the 2008 Supporting Children after Separation Program selection process. The successful organisations in Queensland include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lifeline Community Care Qld in Brisbane ▪ Lifeline Community Care Qld in Bundaberg ▪ Lifeline Community Care Qld in Caboolture ▪ Relationships Australia Qld in Cairns ▪ Lifeline Community Care Qld in Ipswich

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child and Family Support Centre in Toowoomba ▪ Centacare Brisbane Catholic Family and Community Services at the Gold Coast. <p>Services are expected to open by the end of November 2008.</p>
Department of Health and Ageing via Australian Policy Online	<i>Improving maternity services in Australia: a discussion paper from the Australian Government</i>	<p>This Discussion Paper canvasses a wide range of issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ whether midwives should be supported to play a greater role in birth and in postnatal care ▪ opportunities for women to access a range of birth care options, including in public and private hospitals and at home ▪ shortages of maternity professionals, especially in rural and remote areas ▪ the complex set of challenges facing the maternity workforce ▪ transport for women in remote areas to access maternity services <p>the high rate of caesarean sections in Australia compared to other countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ access to antenatal and postnatal services across the community, and ▪ rising levels of postnatal depression. <p>http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=230352</p>
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations via Australian Policy Online	<i>Achievement in reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy 2008 National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy</i>	<p>This year, for the first time, all Australian school students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 undertook the same assessment in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and numeracy. The results in this report show that more than 90 per cent of students in Australia are performing at or above the national minimum standard in each of the key areas and around 80 per cent of students achieved above the minimum standard.</p> <p>Queensland is rated second last of all Australian states and territories in literacy and numeracy performance.</p> <p>http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=230320</p>
Australian Policy Online	<i>Achieving outcomes for children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,</i> (Margaret Sims and others & Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth)	<p>This paper reports on research (both primary research and a literature review), undertaken with the aim of demonstrating strategies for successful inclusion into Australian society of children and families from culturally and linguistically different (CaLD) backgrounds. The authors recognise that CaLD children and families are commonly disadvantaged through being part of a minority group in Australia, their experiences prior to migration (for example refugee trauma), the different values and practices they may encounter here, the difficulty of learning a new language, the problems they face having qualifications and experience ratified, and the varying forms of racism they may experience. A number of innovative and highly successful programmes operate in different areas of Australia that are very successful in supporting CaLD families.</p> <p>http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=230097</p>
Australian Policy Online	<i>Improving outcomes for children living in families with parental substance misuse:</i>	<p>This paper provides an overview of the research literature on the outcomes of children raised in families with multiple problems including parental substance misuse. The authors argue that until we have accurate mechanisms for estimating the extent of the problem and policies that include a focus on children and families within the drug and alcohol field, organisational change will be difficult to achieve. Importantly, the</p>

	<p><i>What do we know and what should we do</i> (Sharon Dawe, Paul Harnett and Sally Frye / Australian Institute of Family Studies)</p>	<p>field can develop "evidence-informed" treatments but until this becomes core business in drug and alcohol services little is likely to change for the many children living in families with parental substance misuse. The paper:</p> <p>reviews the multiple risk and protective factors impacting on child outcomes in families with parental substance misuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ considers the extent of the problem and data available on the numbers of children affected ▪ examines the place of children and families in national, state and territory policy ▪ reviews the treatment literature to determine whether there is sufficient information for services to develop an "evidence-informed" approach to treatment. <p>http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=229760</p>
<p>Get the Picture, Screen Australia via Australian Policy Online</p>	<p><i>Children's use of computers and the Internet at home</i></p>	<p>For children, playing games and school-related or educational purposes are the most common uses for a computer at home. This publication compares computer use for children between 2003 and 2006. In its 2006 survey, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found around 80 per cent of people aged 14 years or under took part in these activities. Half the children surveyed used a computer at home for Internet-based activities, in which school-related or educational activities also dominated. A growing proportion accessed the Internet daily, with usage up from 14 per cent in 2003 to 25 per cent in 2006. However, it was most common for children to access the Internet 2–6 days a week.</p> <p>http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=229476</p>
<p>Parliament of Australia, Senate Inquiries</p>	<p>Inquiry into Protecting Children from Junk Food Advertising (Broadcasting Amendment) Bill 2008</p>	<p>On 4 September 2008 the Senate, on the recommendation of the Selection of Bills Committee, referred Senator Bob Brown's, Protecting Children from Junk Food Advertising (Broadcasting Amendment) Bill 2008 to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by 25 November 2008. Reasons provided for referral of the Bill and principal issues for consideration are that the issue of junk food advertising to children is a growing concern to the Australian community, particularly parents and health advocacy groups. The recent decision by the Australian Communications and Media Authority not to include restrictions on this type of advertising despite the dramatic increase in childhood obesity in Australia highlights the need for a legislative response.</p> <p>http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/protecting_children_junk_food_advert/index.htm</p>
<p>Queensland Government 'Get Involved' Website</p>	<p><i>Junk food advertising on children's television</i>, Queensland Health and Queensland Premier Discussion Paper</p>	<p>In Australia, television advertising is regulated by the Federal Government under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (Cth). This Act requires the Australian Communications and Media Authority to determine standards for programs for children. It also permits advertisers to formulate and regulate their own guidelines for ads. Unfortunately, since self regulation was reviewed in 2004, the proportion of junk food and drink ads appearing in peak viewing times for children has increased. It is up to parents to make complaints about what they think is inappropriate for children to watch. Parents have said they want more control over junk foods ads. In a recent survey, 89 percent of parents supported stronger restrictions on television food advertising, and 86 per cent supported a ban on junk food advertising during children's programs. The</p>

		<p>Queensland Government can legislate to ban or restrict junk food and drink advertising during peak viewing times for children and wants to consider, with the community, whether it should ban or regulate junk food and drink advertising during peak viewing times for children.</p> <p>http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/consultqld/index.cfm?go=consultonline.viewIssue&activityID=178</p>
<p>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website</p>	<p><i>Making progress: the health, development and wellbeing of Australia's children and young people</i> (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare)</p>	<p>Ensuring that children get the best possible start in life is a key priority for the Australian Government. This report delivers the latest and most reliable information on how, as a nation, we are faring according to key statistical indicators of child and youth health, development and wellbeing. The report covers children and young people aged 0-19 years, and includes indicators for the entire 0-19 year age range as well as indicators for three different stages of development: 1) infancy and early childhood; 2) school age childhood; and 3) adolescence. Information is presented on important issues such as mental health, disability, risk factors for chronic disease, mortality, education, homelessness, crime, jobless families and family economic situation. Particular attention is given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth, and to how Australia compares internationally. This is an essential resource for policy makers, researchers, practitioners and anyone interested in the progress of Australia's children and youth.</p> <p>http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10653</p>