

Program weighs on schoolchildren

EDITORIAL

By JESSICA WILSON

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy is said to be a beneficial way of tracing how well Australian schools are performing in literacy, but the use of NAPLAN testing is beginning to be questioned.

Australian students are having excessive pressure put on them in order to heighten academic excellence.

But has anyone thought to ask the children how they feel?

Education professionals are finding reasons against the program's testing. Paul Marshall, principal at Emmaus Christian School in Canberra, has had enough. He has told the parents of his students that "the decision to allow your child to sit the NAPLAN tests rests with you".

He questions the usefulness of the program and how it can help the curriculum.

One of the objections is the amount of time wasted in order to mark the tests (six months). He said that by the time the tests are marked and can be assessed, they "do not benefit the teachers or the students".

If a professional of the academic field finds reasons to detest

the program, why isn't the government listening?

Due to the heavy hours studying for NAPLAN, students experience a deal of discomfort. Australian students are highly stressed about the large work load given in class, even when the education system has said that it shouldn't be a test to stress about.

"The whole exercise was a basket case – kids vomiting from stress, organised absenteeism, teachers teaching the test, thereby crowding other valid educational activities," wrote Katharine Murphy recently.

This testing is meant to be helping Australia's people to become more educated. But how is the program helping the state of literacy if students aren't able to perform at their best?

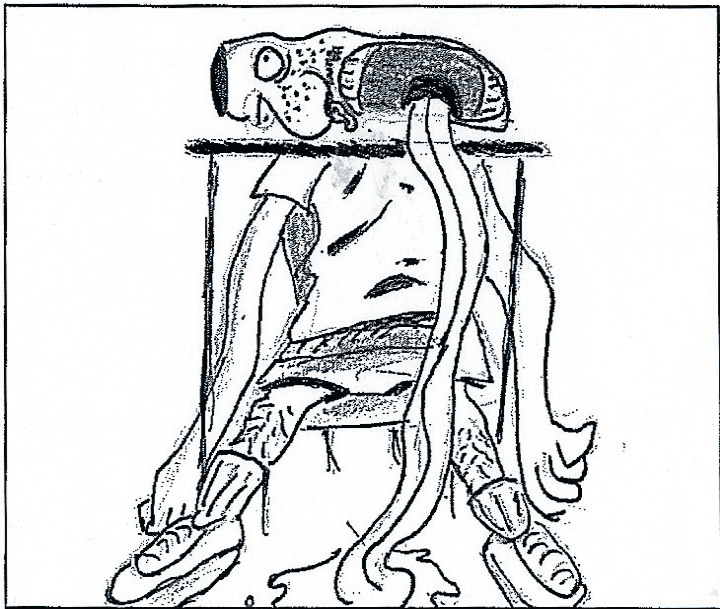
Parents and students involved in the testing have had enough. NAPLAN testing only had 0.3 per cent of students withdraw from testing in 2008. But this number had risen to 1.9 per cent in 2012.

Parents are no longer under the misapprehension that the testing is expected.

They are taking action on how they want their children to be assessed.

Since NAPLAN's introduction in 2008, literacy skills haven't shown any major improvement.

If this is the best way to improve the state of education, we may have to rethink our approach.



Cartoon: Dylan O'Neill



EDGE AHEAD: A Wadalba student argues her point.

Picture: Sarah Stratford

School takes clean sweep

By AVNI KUMAR and MADISON LIDDLE

ON August 26, year 7 and 8 students from Wadalba Community School and Northlakes High School competed in the third round of the Premiers Debating Challenge.

Both teams turned up to the debate at Wadalba Community School ready to win. The topic the red team received was that 'We should re-elect the federal government'.

First speakers from both teams did an excellent job of further introducing the topic, although they both misinterpreted it. The next two speakers continued to argue brilliant points.

It came down to the final two

speakers, both eager to bring home the gold for their school. Each speaker spoke for close to two minutes, constantly rebutting and arguing well-thought-out points.

In the second debate between Wadalba blue team and Northlakes, the topic was 'That Public Transport Should be Free'.

The first speaker from the affirmative team stated that bus passes should be free for homeless people.

Again, Wadalba was the negative, arguing against the topic. The topic was better understood by both teams, resulting in a more engaging debate.

The adjudicator, Sue Hudson, announced Wadalba had won both debates, the results of which were very close.

Debate over media a battle of arguments

By SARAH STRATFORD

AS winners of their respective zones, Wadalba Community School and Kincumber High School came together to compete in the quarter finals of the Premiers Debating Challenge. The teams, made up of year 9 and 10 students, debated the topic "Payment for stories by media outlets should be banned". Wadalba Community School was the negative team and Kincumber High was the affirmative. The debate began with both of

the first speakers defining exactly what the topic meant to them. The second speakers for both teams spoke brilliantly but Wadalba made a few flaws which Kincumber were pleased to rebut. The third speakers for both teams summarised their cases, ending an intriguing debate.

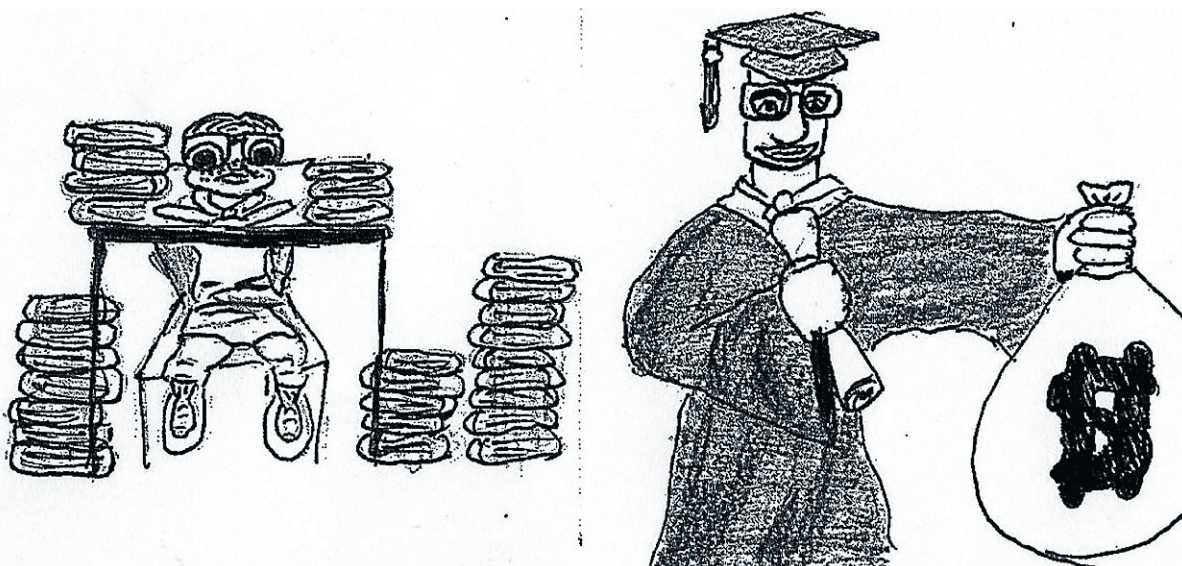
The tension in the room was high, but the announcement from the adjudicator that Kincumber had a clearer, winning idea on the topic than did Wadalba was not a surprise.



PREPARED: Year 9 and 10 Wadalba students ready for their debate.

Picture: Sarah Stratford

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