



## Senator Claire Moore

Labor Senator for Queensland

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Claire and Prof Greg Hill, Vice-Chancellor & President of the University of the Sunshine Coast, at the celebration for the successful bid by USC for a \$37m Engineering Learning Hub from the Government's Education Investment Fund.

### Weekly Update – 11 January 2013

The **Weekly Update** provides links, media announcements, and current information.

**GOVERNMENT FORMALLY ESTABLISHES ROYAL COMMISSION-** At noon today [11 Jan 2013], the Prime Minister and the Attorney General announced that the Governor General had appointed a six member Royal Commission into ***Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse***.

The Royal Commission will inquire into how institutions with a responsibility for children have managed and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse and related matters. It will investigate where systems have failed to protect children, and make recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions.

The Commissioners can look at any private, public or non-government organisation that is, or was in the past, involved with children, including government agencies, schools, sporting clubs, orphanages, foster care, and religious organisations. This includes where they consider an organisation caring for a child is responsible for the abuse or for not responding appropriately, regardless of where or when the abuse took place.

The Commission will not specifically examine child sexual abuse outside organisations, such as in the family. However, any recommendations made by the Commissioners are likely to improve the response to child sexual abuse wherever it happens.

**The Royal Commission will be led by Justice Peter McClellan AM.** Given the scope, scale and seriousness of this Royal Commission, the Governor-General was asked to appoint a further five Commissioners to support the inquiry: **Bob Atkinson**, the former Queensland Police Commissioner; **Justice Jennifer Coate** a member of the Family Court of Australia; **Robert Fitzgerald** a serving Commissioner in the Productivity Commission; **Professor Helen Milroy**, a consultant psychiatrist and is currently Winthrop Professor and Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health at the University of Western Australia; **Andrew Murray**, former Senator for Western Australia, experienced as a legislator and member of Senate inquiries into children's experiences in institutional care. All Commissioners have been **appointed for a period of three years**.

**An interim report will be prepared by no later than 30 June 2014** so that governments and organisations can start taking action on early findings and recommendations. In this interim report, the Commissioners will also identify when their final report will be completed. The final reporting date has been set initially at the end of 2015, but this will be subject to advice from Commissioners in their interim report.

The Government has received input from organisations representing survivors of child abuse, community and legal leaders, law enforcement, governments and religious organisations, to develop **Terms of Reference** [[click here](#)] [A plain English version of the ToR will be on the webpage next week] that balance the real and legitimate perspectives of the range of stakeholders.

To improve the efficiency of the evidence gathering process and to avoid delaying the Commission's work, the Government will introduce legislation into the Parliament to amend the Royal Commissions Act 1902 to allow evidence to be taken by a single or multiple Commissioners.

The Prime Minister thanked the individuals and organisations who have provided input into the Royal Commission's establishment and the terms of reference; and acknowledged those who have campaigned for many years for a full and proper investigation into child sexual abuse in Australia.

**Schoolkids Bonus cash from 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2013** – Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs, announced on Wednesday that the first payment of the **Schoolkids Bonus** would be delivered directly into the bank accounts of 1.3 million families.



Each year eligible families will receive **up to \$410 for each child in primary school and up to \$820 a year for each high school student**. The families of 1.2 million primary school kids and 1 million high school kids will receive this cash bonus.

Families with kids starting primary or high school next year need to ensure that their child's enrolment details are up to date with Centrelink, this can be done by checking details on the Centrelink website.

Families who claim their **Family Tax Benefit** at the end of the financial year will receive payment then. The Bonus is paid in **two instalments - January and July**.

There will be **494,450** school kids in **280,900 Queensland** families who will receive the Schoolkids Bonus; in Claire's Duty Electorates these figures are:

<i>Electorate</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Schoolkids</i>	<i>Electorate</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Schoolkids</i>
Ryan	4,850	8,500	Fisher	8,450	14,900
Fairfax	9,250	16,250	Bowman	8,600	15,150
Bonner	7,250	12,800	Brisbane	2,800	4,950
Griffith	4,100	7,200	Moreton	6,800	11,950

Young people in school receiving **Youth Allowance** and some other income support payments can also be eligible for the **Schoolkids Bonus** and should contact Centrelink.

Latest information: [www.australia.gov.au/schoolkidsbonus](http://www.australia.gov.au/schoolkidsbonus). or [www.facebook.com/FamiliesInAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/FamiliesInAustralia)

**REMEMBERING GRANTHAM AND TOOWOOMBA'S FLOOD VICTIMS** – Yesterday [Thu 10 Jan 2013] marked the second anniversary of the floods which swept through Grantham and Toowoomba claiming 25 lives and destroying homes.

The Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management Nicola Roxon and Claire visited both areas on Thursday to pay their respects to those who lost their lives and to thank everyone involved in the reconstruction efforts.

The 2011 floods were one of the worst natural disasters Australia has faced, and the day will be remembered as one of great sadness for the Grantham and Toowoomba communities, particularly for those who lost family members.

The Australian Government has provided almost \$300 million to the Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley to help rebuild, including over \$9m to the **Strengthening Grantham Project**, involving the reconstruction of Grantham at a safer location. For flood-affected residents, this reconstruction will not only provide safe homes and essential services but peace of mind that the community is better protected for the future.

All levels of government and private and community organisations have made significant contributions to this project, and there has been significant progress since work began in 2011. Since 2009-10, the Australian Government's contribution to Queensland's disaster recovery bill is estimated to be \$9 billion.

**Indigenous housing target exceeded ahead of schedule** – More than 5000 homes in remote Indigenous communities have now been refurbished or rebuilt by the Australian Government, nearly two years ahead of schedule. The refurbishments are delivered under the \$5.5 billion **National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing [NPARIH]**, which is building new houses, refurbishing or rebuilding existing homes in remote Indigenous communities across the country.

The Government has surpassed the overall target set of **4876 refurbishments by 2014**, with all areas either exceeding or on track to meet their individual targets. We are also on track to meet the target of **4200 new homes built by 2018**, with more than 1440 houses constructed so far. In total, more than **6000 homes in remote Indigenous communities have been built or refurbished since 2009**.

**Dad and Partner Pay Jan 2013** – This Dad and Partner Pay scheme started on 1 Jan 2013, and provides eligible working dads or partners with financial support to take time off work to bond with their new baby and to support mums or partners in the vital early months of their baby's life.



This payment is for two weeks paid leave at the national minimum wage, currently about \$606 a week.

To be eligible, applicants **MUST**: be caring for a child born or adopted from 1 Jan 2013; be an Australian resident; have worked for at least 10 of the 13 months **prior** to the birth or adoption; have worked at least 330 in that 10-month period [just over 1 day a week] with no more than an 8 week gap between 2 consecutive working days; have an individual adjusted taxable income of \$150,000 or less in the previous financial year; be on unpaid leave or not working during the Dad & partner Pay period.

Dads & Partners may be eligible if they work on a full-time, part-time, casual, contract or seasonal basis, or work in a family business.

More information call 136 150 on **Parents hotline** or Visit [www.australia.gov.au/dadandpartnerpay](http://www.australia.gov.au/dadandpartnerpay). Download *Dad & Partner Pay* supporting material here: [www.fahcsia.gov.au/dadandpartnerpay](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/dadandpartnerpay)

**Thousands of students get a helping hand to attend university** - A record number of students are now receiving financial support from the Gillard Government to go to University. Nationally, more than 207,000 Australians received Youth Allowance payments in 2012 to help them access university, an eight per cent jump up from 192,000 students in 2011.

At the same time, there has been a 10% increase in the number of students accessing the **Student Start-up Scholarship**, paid in two instalments a year of \$1025.

**245,000 students received a payment in 2012 compared with 223,000 in 2011 – an increase of 22,000.**

Access to the **Relocation Scholarship**, designed to assist students who move away from home to attend university, has surged 60% in the past two years. **In 2012 more than 41,000 university students received the scholarship compared with 26,000 in 2010.**

Last month [Dec 2012], Opposition spokesperson, Brett Mason, confirmed the Coalition will cut student support payments, including the Student Start-up Scholarship, meaning only those students from wealthy backgrounds will be able to afford to go to university.

**The Gillard Government invested \$429 million in the Student Start-up Scholarship program in 2012.**

*The Gillard Government spent \$1.8 billion on Youth Allowance payments to university students in 2012. This is expected to increase to \$2 billion in 2013. The average Youth Allowance payment received by a university student in 2013 is expected to be approximately \$320 a fortnight.*

University students paid Youth Allowance will receive **Student Start-up Scholarships, totalling \$2050/yr.**

**Eligible university students who need to move to study can also receive Relocation Scholarships of up to \$4048 in 2013.**

**Heatwave – We're having a heatwave!**- Temperatures are rising across Australia, bushfires are rampaging across the states and territories, Australians are reminded to be prepared.

The Commonwealth Government's improvements to the **Emergency Alert** system, ensure Australians will be able to receive location based emergency alerts to their Telstra mobile phone if disaster does strike.

All landlines and mobile phones, regardless of carrier, will be able to receive **Emergency Alert** warnings. The Australian Government's [Preparing for the Unexpected brochure](#) and the [Red Cross's Emergency REDiPlan](#) are good resources to help be better prepared should disaster strike.

**Prepare a household emergency kit: battery-operated radio, torch, 1st aid kit and medications. Also - copies of important family documents, contact details for your out-of-town contact and spare clothes and strong shoes.**

## What's on – What's URGENT!

**Karen New Year Celebration** – The Karen Era 2752 – will be held at the Burnie Brae Convention Hall in Chermside on Sat 12 Jan from 10am to 2 pm. Explore Karen culture and traditional dress, witness Karen traditional dance and music performances. More information on 0402 857 378 or 0412 069 426

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**Wynnum Manly Brisbane City Council FREE Australia Day Breakfast on Saturday 26 January - with free rides, sausage sizzle, damper and entertainment on Australia Day – More details next week**

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**Highfields Pioneer Village** hold their annual **Australia Day celebrations on 26 Jan 2013**. The program includes blacksmithing, tin and silversmithing, sheep shearing and wool spinning and weaving. The demonstrations start at 9:30am. Find out more about the day's activities by clicking [here](#).

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On the **Australia Day 2013** public holiday, 28 Jan, '**Fernberg**' will be opened to the public. Government House is located in Paddington and is the official residence of the Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley, AC. Details for the day can be found [here](#).

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**TECHFEST 2013** will provide participants with the opportunity to network with global and local leaders in government, industry, education and research. There will be invaluable insights from expert speakers on digital transformation and join the debate regarding the ICT skills gap in Australia.

The Great Hall, Parliament House Wednesday, 13 Feb 2013 from 1.00 - 6:00 pm (EST). There will be the opportunity to interact with the latest technology. For more information follow the [link](#).

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**Fire Ants** – New changes to the Fire Ant Restricted Area (RA) came into effect in December 2012. The fire ant RA is now aligned to suburb boundaries and new movement controls are now in place to make it easier for residents and industry. These movement controls will be applied within 2 zones; a high risk and a lower risk area. The Red [High Risk] will cover suburbs containing 3 or more fire ant sites; the Orange [Lower Risk] will cover suburbs with 1 or 2 fire ant sites. Contact Community Engagement on **3310 2873**, further information from **Biosecurity Queensland** at: [www.daff.qld.gov.au/fireants](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/fireants).

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**Have your say on Queensland's electoral laws**, - The Queensland Government released a [discussion paper](#) at the beginning of the month which seeks to explore the '*issues and options for improvement and change to Queensland's electoral law.*' and purports to have been '*developed to facilitate public input into changes and improvements to the electoral laws*'. It's into two parts:

*'Part A focuses on options for reform in relation to political donations, public funding for elections and election campaign expenditure; and*

*Part B identifies a range of other issues including the voting system, voter enrolment, postal voting and political advertising The most controversial element of which was the option to dump compulsory voting in state elections'.*

One of the proposals, among an extensive list of options, is to move towards a **voluntary voting system at state elections**. The State Government is seeking feedback from the public and organisations on issues and matters. **Consultation closes on 1 March 2013**.

Submissions by email: [electoralreform@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:electoralreform@justice.qld.gov.au) OR by Post to:

Electoral Reform, Strategic Policy, Legal & Executive Services, Department of Justice & Attorney General  
GPO Box 149, Brisbane QLD 4001

## Current Senate Committee Inquiries

To make a submission to an inquiry, visit the Parliament website, [here](#)

**Private Health Insurance Amendment (Lifetime Health Cover Loading & Other Measures) Bill 2012.** Closing date not set. Reporting date: 12 Mar 2013.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill** Closing date not set. Reporting date: 13 Mar 2013.

**The impacts on health of air quality in Australia** Closing date not set. Reporting date: 16 May 2013.

**The Involuntary or Coerced Sterilisation of people with disabilities in Australia.** Submissions by 22 Feb 2013. Reporting date: 24 April 2013.

**Australia's domestic response to the World health Organisation's (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of health report "Closing the gap within a generation"** Reporting date: 27 Mar 2013

Keep up to date on all [Senate Inquires here](#), and all [House Representatives Inquiries here](#).

***Petitioning the Senate [here](#). Petitioning the House of Representatives [here](#)***

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