



School League Tables

Background Information

Following adverse media coverage in 1997 about the HSC results of a particular school, the Carr Government made a [regulation](#) prohibiting the disclosure of School Certificate and HSC examination results (and related assessments), plus results of basic skills testing. The effect of the regulation was to prevent the publication of particular students' school results and/or rank, as well as information comparing particular schools.

The regulation allowed for certain exceptions, such as when a student consented to the release of his/her individual results, or where such results were 'outstanding'. This regulation remained in force for more than 12 years.

At its meeting of November 2008, [COAG agreed](#) that:

The new Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority will be supplied with the information necessary to enable it to publish relevant, nationally-comparable information on all schools to support accountability, school evaluation, collaborative policy development and resource allocation. The Authority will provide the public with information on each school in Australia that includes data on each school's performance, including national testing results and school attainment rates, the indicators relevant to the needs of the student population and the school's capacity including the numbers and qualifications of its teaching staff and its resources. The publication of this information will allow comparison of like schools (that is, schools with similar student populations across the nation) and comparison of a school with other schools in their local community.

Consistent with this agreement, to facilitate the disclosure of information about school results, the NSW Government introduced the *Education Amendment (Publication of School Results) Bill 2009*. Its object was to transfer relevant provisions from the regulations to the *Education Act 1990*, and to amend those provisions. In its original form, the 2009 Bill authorised the State to provide school results to the Commonwealth, or an authority established by the Commonwealth, in accordance with any national agreement to which NSW is a party. It further provided for the publication of results relating to particular schools in accordance with any such agreement.

According to the Agreement-in-Principle speech of 18 June 2009, the Bill was designed to 'permit the public reporting of school results in new national student tests on a nationally consistent basis', in accordance with the COAG agreement set out above.

In the Legislative Council, the Greens successfully moved an amendment to the Bill, expressly prohibiting the release - in a 'newspaper or other document that is publicly available in this State' - of material that:

- includes the ranking, or any other comparison, of schools in relation to school results; or
- identifies a school as being in a percentile of less than 90% in relation to school results.

In both cases the prohibition could be overridden with the permission of the principal/s of the school/s concerned. The fines for breach include 50 penalty units in the case of an individual and 500 penalty units in any other case.

On 24 June 2009 the Legislative Council passed the Bill, with the Greens' amendment. On 25 June 2009 the Legislative Assembly agreed to the amended Bill. The *Education Amendment (Publication of School Results) Act 2009* was assented on 1 August 2009 and came into force the same day.

In a [press release](#) issued on 7 July 2009, the Premier announced that the Government would introduce in the next sitting of Parliament a Bill to repeal the amendment discussed above. The purpose of this foreshadowed Bill is therefore to permit the publication of comparative information on school results (or 'league tables') in a 'newspaper or other document that is publicly available in this State'.

Parliamentary Material

The [First Print](#) of the *Education Amendment (Publication of School Results) Bill 2009* (unamended);

The [Explanatory Memoranda](#);

The [Agreement in Principle](#) Speech;

Parliamentary debates in the [Legislative Assembly](#) (pre amendment);

Parliamentary debates in the [Legislative Council](#) (amendment)

[Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment](#) in the Legislative Assembly; and

The relevant section of the [Education Act 1990](#) (as amended).

Governmental Reports and Journal Articles

Arguments for and against the publication of school 'league tables' are found in a range of sources, including journal articles and government reports. The following are a selection of such sources.

Governmental Reports

[Principals and Protocols for Reporting on Schooling in Australia](#)

Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood, Development and Youth Affairs
June 2009

Geoff N Masters, Glenn Rowley, John Ainley and Siek Toon Khoo

[Reporting and Preparing School Performances](#)

Commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations
December 2008

Australian Journal Articles

Chris Bonnor

[One league away from disaster](#)

'Inside Story' at <http://inside.org.au>
September 2009

Trevor Cobbold

[League Tables](#)

Profession Educator
March 2009

John Graham

[Education Reform: Revolution? What Revolution?](#)

Australian Education Union News
October 2008

Jennifer Buckingham

[Making the Grade: School Report Cards and League Tables](#)

Centre for Independent Studies
November 2008

Caroline Rance

[See Through "Transparency"](#)

Australian Educator
Summer 2008

Bob Harris

[Why Ranking Schools would do More Harm than Good](#)

Paper presented to the Australian Education Union Federal Executive
September 2007

Kenneth J. Rowe

[Assessment, League Tables and School Effectiveness: Consider the Issues and
'Let's Get Real!'](#)

Journal of Educational Enquiry
August 2000

Overseas Journal Articles

Peter Cowley and Stephen Easton

[Report Card on Secondary Schools in British Columbia and Yukon 2009](#)

Fraser Institute

June 2009

Harvey Goldstein and George Leckie

[School League Tables: what can they really tell us?](#)

Significance

June 2008

Peter Wilby

[It's wrong to publish league tables](#)

New Statesmen

January 2008

Media Coverage

Below are some selected media articles on the issue.

News articles

[Stand off looms over high school league tables](#), 26 May 2009, SMH

[Firth moves on school league tables](#), 9 June 2009, SMH

[Ban lifted on school league tables](#), 19 June 2009, SMH

[Parents shut out by ban on school league tables](#), 26 June 2009, SMH

[Legal experts ridicule State ban on school rankings](#), 30 June 2009, The Australian

[Rees to turn tables on O'Farrell over release of school results](#), 7 July 2009, SMH

[Teachers to get tough on league table plans](#), 13 July 2009, SMH

[Strike threat over school rankings](#), 14 July 2009, The Australian

[Principals refuse to trust data](#), 30 July 2009, The Daily Telegraph

[Don't bury school data, warns US expert](#), 1 August 2009, SMH

[Tables will compare rich, poor schools](#), 7 August 2009, SMH

[All eyes on report card as Gillard backs move](#), 10 August 2009, The Australian

[League tables can play to fears of parents](#), 11 August 2009, SMH

[Gillard to ignore protests over school results](#), 13 August 2009, The Australian

[Private school parents put tables low on list](#), 19 August 2009, SMH

Opinion pieces

[School-reporting policy in league of own as Greens get their clause into it](#), 29 June 2009, SMH

[School league tables must be stopped](#), 30 June 2009, SMH

[To make choices, parents need facts](#), 9 July 2009, The Australian

[In a league of their own](#), 12 July 2009, Sun-Herald

[Trust league tables](#), 17 July 2009, The Australian

[Publish school results](#), 30 July 2009, The Australian

[Class comrades fear a revolution](#), 12 August 2009, The Daily Telegraph

To update newspaper articles, click on to our [dynamic link](#).

Radio clips

These [radio clips](#) relate to coverage of the school league tables issue across various radio stations.

Press Releases

Premier Nathan Rees has issued the following press release:

[School Reporting Laws Back Before Parliament](#)

NSW Liberal Party press releases:

[Rees Must Negotiate With NSW Libs/Nats On League Tables](#)

[Gillard Blows Whistle On Firth's Lies Over League Tables](#)

NSW Greens' campaign webpage on [league tables](#)

Other States and Territories

In Queensland, the Queensland Studies Authority publishes an annual report on [Year 12 outcomes](#) obtained from data provided by the State's schools as part of their [annual reporting](#) requirements. Although the data does not 'rank' schools, it does provide performance indicators from which rankings could be derived.

In Victoria, the [Post-Compulsory Completion and Achievement Information](#), published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, provides a wide range of data on school programs and student outcomes, including school completion rates, median study scores and percentage of scores considered high. The data is tabled into a school-by-school breakdown of test results.

In Western Australia, the Curriculum Council publishes annual [school comparison statistics](#) that rank schools according to a set of various performance indicators.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the [school and college achievement and attainment tables](#) measure schools against a set of performance indicators and provide schools with average point scores. However, the tables have been the subject of some criticism by sections of the media.

[School league tables are meaningless](#), 27 July 2009, The Daily Telegraph (UK)

[School league tables are worthless, say academics](#), 28 May 2009, The Daily Telegraph (UK)

Advocacy / Interest Groups

[New South Wales Teachers Federation](#)

[Federation of Parents and Citizens' Association of NSW](#)

[Centre for Independent Studies](#) – for a collection of articles on school league tables and related matters, refer to 'Schools of Thought' by Jennifer Buckingham, available in the Parliamentary Library.

[Institute for Public Affairs](#)

Last updated: 21 August 2009

For further information please contact the Library on 9230 2382

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