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ACT schools good-ish (?)

ACT Greens MLA Deb Foskey has described the Education Minister's glowing response to a report by Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) on educational outcomes for ACT school students as 'school wash.'

"The first finding of the ACER report, released today, is that there has been a significant decline in the reading literacy performance of students in the ACT from 2000 to 2006" Dr Foskey said today.

"I don't think that is something the ACT Education Minister can boast about."

"The other noticeable factor is that the gap between students at the upper and lower socio-economic levels in the ACT is the widest in Australia, except for the Northern Territory. And that gap hasn't closed in the past six years."

"While Minister Barr finds reassurance in ACT students still being at the top of Australia in educational outcomes, their families are at the top in terms of income and tertiary qualifications too, so it's no surprise".

"The weakness of this report is that it doesn't compare the ACT's government, Catholic systemic and independent non-government schools; so it doesn't help us to understand what's going on in the ACT, and what we need to do to address the problems of inequity here."

"Too many parents are taking their students away from government schools. That could be because they think they will buy a better education from the non Government system. But in my view that is not true. "

"The Greens would like to know what changes there have been in the student mix at ACT Government schools and what changes there have been in student needs and outcomes."

"We all need to know what is being done to improve school education in the ACT, both for students at the high achievement end and for those who are not doing so well out of it" Dr Foskey said.

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“It is also worth noting that ACT schools over the past few years have not improved the relative educational outcomes of kids coming from low socio- economic levels.”

“That may not be a surprise, given the focus on choice rather than educational outcomes, of the Howard Liberal government’s finding of school education..

“The only change, which is true across Australia, is that there’s been a bit of slippage from students at the top academic levels, particularly in reading.”

“That is unfortunate, and needs to be addressed. It is also ironic given the Howard Government’s emphasis, for most of the past 11 years, on a fairly narrow notion of literacy.”
