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PAGE 5

School of future here

INTERNET learning from home, staggered starts to the school day and retirees as guest teachers are part of the Bracks Government's radical vision for education.

The days of one teacher fronting a class of 20 pupils could be numbered, Education Minister Lynne Kosky warned yesterday.

She was speaking at the launch of Schools In: 2020, a study that will focus on modernising the education system.

"We're looking at what schools will look like in the year 2020, what we would like them to look like and what we need to do to get them there," Ms Kosky said.

She said the internet would become an even bigger classroom tool in the next decade.

"In the senior classes we could have students accessing their classrooms via the internet from home rather than actually attending," she said.

"How students learn in the year 2020 will be different to how they learn now. We need to make changes so that students stay in education."

Starting the school day in two shifts — early morning and afternoon — would help solve space problems in many schools, Ms Kosky said.

Shannon McRae

Skilled members of the community could contribute to schools in a tutor-mentor role.

"We've got an ageing workforce — we're looking at how we might get people to provide teaching skills," Ms Kosky said.

"In the future there might be teachers who teach but also do other jobs, and we could use some tutors who might not be at that expert teaching level, providing back-up for teachers."

The future-of-education study was announced just a day after Victoria's primary school curriculum was branded one of the worst in the country.

The Federal Government report compared the states on English, maths and science, ranking Victoria worst alongside Tasmania.

Australian Education Union Victorian president Mary Bluett yesterday welcomed the 2020 study, predicting a huge overhaul in the way children are taught.

She said the rapid growth of technology and changing needs of families could spell the end of the traditional classroom.

Recommendations from the nine-month study are expected next June.

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pg. 8 News

Revive teaching of trades: Beazley

By DAVID WROE
and CHEE CHEE LEUNG

LABOR has floated sweeping education proposals that would let parents choose a state school for their children and force businesses to train more workers under a "mutual obligation" deal.

Admitting Labor made a "big mistake" by neglecting trades when it was in government, leader Kim Beazley said schools needed upgrades to the "dusty and Dickensian workshops" that were turning young people off trades.

Under Labor's plan, state school zones would be enlarged, allowing students and their parents to pick the school that best suited them. And stand-alone senior schools would specialise in certain trades or subjects in years 10, 11 and 12 for students who wanted to pursue tailored courses.

Mr Beazley also put Australian businesses on notice, telling them under a Labor government they could not rely on importing skilled workers from overseas.

"We want to make sure companies fulfil their obligations to train Australians first. Businesses must not rely too much on skilled migration. The government should work with businesses to help train young people," he told the Australia and New Zealand School of Government education conference in Sydney.

"I want to be clear about this — there is a mutual obligation here."

Labor announces plan for Pacific community

THE Labor Party has proposed a new vision for the Pacific, including a regional parliament, court and common market, freer movement of workers and widespread adoption of Australian currency.

While the Pacific Community idea has not as yet been adopted as party policy, Labor says the themes of its discussion paper, released yesterday, have already won widespread support in the region.

The paper, if translated into policy, would initially allow 5000

Pacific Islanders into Australia as guest workers, mainly in farming. This would be expanded to 10,000 after five years.

Labor's overseas aid and Pacific island affairs spokesman Bob Sercombe announced the plan surrounded by Papua New Guinean dancers and singers at Parliament House. He said the paper proposed a regional commitment to counter inflation, a peace and security centre to help prevent and manage security crises, and an environment and resource agency.

On the schools plan, Mr Beazley hinted he would force state governments to co-operate through the \$2 billion in direct funding the Commonwealth gives the states for public schools.

And he urged greater flexibility, so that students could do the final years of their school certificate at TAFE along with their vocational course, while maths and science schools could be established alongside university campuses.

"We need to train fewer lawyers but more tradespeople," he said. "We need to train fewer merchant bankers but more engineers. We need to train fewer financial advisers but more apprentices. We need to train fewer advertising executives but more nurses."

State Education Minister Lynne Kosky said Victorian schools could become more like

universities, with classes in lecture theatres, smaller tutorials and summer schools.

Ms Kosky said her *Schools In: 2020* project — which the Education Department is due to begin drafting soon with help from a private consultant — would consider "the big picture" for education and schooling.

Federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson said instead of "waffling, whingeing and whining" Mr Beazley should persuade unions and Labor governments to accept changes to the award system to allow school-based new apprentices.

"Mr Beazley could also persuade the Labor states and territories to deliver more places for bricklaying, rather than belly dancing," Dr Nelson said.

In the year to March 31, about 74,000 people took up trades and related occupations, 12 per cent up on the previous year.