

Student enrolments down in independent sector

Job cuts hurt schools

ENROLMENTS at independent schools are dropping amid job cuts and uncertainty.

Independent Schools Tasmania said it believed some schools, especially in the north of the state, were already seeing a drop in numbers for next year. A few were considering teacher redundancies.

"I think some schools who traditionally have waiting lists just have shorter lists," executive director Tony Crehan said.



MICHELLE PAINE
EDUCATION REPORTER

"But a number of schools are in areas badly affected by unemployment - more (located) in the north.

"I've heard of some concern about enrolments not holding up next year."

Mr Crehan said schools would be hurt by families moving interstate for work.

"There have been one or two reports of potential enrolment losses leading to staff redundancies," he said.

The most expensive private schools have long waiting lists, so do not have as much to fear from a drop in demand.

However, shrinking waiting lists increase the pressure on schools to compete.

Catholic Education director Trish Hindmarsh said although it was too early to know about enrolments for next year, they were expected to be fairly steady.

"They were down a little overall this year but it's looking stable," she said.

"We have lost some families because of unemployment but we've received some too."

Dr Hindmarsh anticipated there would be a "slow move-

ment" of families who had found work interstate and while people sometimes moved from expensive private schools to low-fee Catholic schools, Catholic schools overall could see a drop.

In Tasmania, the independent sector is proportionately smaller than the Australian average, accommodating about 9000 students, or 11 per cent of the total student population, compared with about 14 per

cent interstate. The Catholic system has about 15,500 students, about 20 per cent, similar to the national average.

The public system educates about 63,500 students, almost 70 per cent, slightly above the national average.

The most expensive independent schools cost about \$15,000 a year for senior students, three to four times more than most Catholic schools.

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Stories straight from the heart

I think it's because when the story becomes alive in me, from that place inside where all fire, passion and heartbreak comes from, that's exactly the place it connects to in people who read the books.

PERSONAL TOUCH: Author Paullina Simons in Hobart yesterday to chat with fans about her new book, *Children of Liberty*.

Picture: RICHARD JUPE

ELIZABETH LORD

FANS of internationally renowned author Paullina Simons were given a glimpse into her literary world in Hobart yesterday.

The New York-based writer, whose best-selling novels include

Tully and *The Bronze Horseman*, spoke about the personal aspects of her new novel, *Children of Liberty*, during a lunch at the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania.

Russian-born Simons moved with her family from Leningrad to America at age 10, an experience

that has informed many of her popular stories.

"Quite a lot have been about a person coming into a new place, of belonging somewhere else or of not belonging," she said.

Describing her relationship with her readers as one of the most

important in her life, Simons said she believed it was the heart-to-heart connection that attracted fans.

"I think it's because when the story becomes alive in me, from that place inside where all fire, passion and heartbreak comes from, that's exactly the place it

connects to in people who read the books," she said.

Dymocks owner Kate Campbell said it was always exciting to have international authors visit the state. "And once they come to Hobart they seem to return," she said.

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Body could be missing woman

A MANHUNT was last night under way after the body of a woman believed to be Sarah Cafferkey was found in a house in Melbourne's west.

Homicide squad investigators raided a house at Point Cook on Saturday night, discovering a body inside. Victoria Police have not formally identified the body.



Cafferkey

Giddings talks about sexism

TASMANIAN Premier Lara Giddings discusses sexism in this month's *Women's Weekly* magazine, on sale from today.

The magazine interviewed Ms Giddings and four other high-profile women on the topic of whether sexism exists in the workplace.

The feature is in response to Prime Minister Julia Gillard's "misogyny" tirade against Opposition Leader Tony Abbott in Federal Parliament last month.

Ms Giddings recently accused Mr Abbott of sexism for describing her behaviour as "schoolmarmish" in 2007.

Ringo to tour with all-Starr line-up

RINGO Starr will tour Australia with his All-Starr Band in February.

The group includes Steve Lukather from Toto, Gregg Rolie of Santana and Journey fame, Mr Mister's Richard Paige, David Lee Roth's drummer Gregg Bissonette and multi-instrumentalists Todd Rundgren and Mark Rivera.



Starr

Lightning strikes bombard NSW

ABOUT 24,000 lightning strikes have been recorded in wild weekend weather in NSW.

The Bureau of Meteorology said the state's highest rainfall was recorded at Coffs Harbour, with 160mm in the 24 hours to 9am yesterday.

Wind gusts of up to 100km/h were also recorded in the state's north.

The NSW State Emergency Service had 150 callouts on Saturday and yesterday, most from the northern NSW township of Woodburn.

Dangerous thunderstorms with large hailstones were last night moving into Queensland's southeast, with warnings issued.