

Schools website 'difficult'

EDUCATION experts have criticised the Federal Government's new My School website for being difficult to use and failing to compare schools properly.

Education consultant Russell Boyle said the new database, which posts performance data on every school in Victoria, did not make it easy for parents to compare schools in a particular area.

"You can't easily get a feel for where a school is — looking at statistically similar schools," he said.

And when the *Sunday Herald Sun* looked for comparative data on six Melbourne high schools, on each occasion data on dozens of interstate schools were offered. In some cases, the nearest Melbourne secondary school was not included.

"The fact you can look up your own school is a big plus. The Federal Government and ACARA (the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) deserve a big tick for persisting with this in the face of virulent opposition from the teachers'

union," Mr Boyle said. "But when you look at statistically similar schools for a particular high school, you are given information about a lot of primary schools, which is next to useless.

"It's unwieldy. Why would you want to see data on primary schools when you are looking for information on high schools and independent schools in a particular area?"

Mr Boyle said the database seemed to be designed to avoid the construction of league tables.

"It is very difficult to compare schools. They seem to have avoided, as much as possible, any realistic comparison on the website.

"And you can't export the data, which effectively blocks any creation of league tables."

Teaching academic Phil Smythe said the table went only part way to giving parents the ability to compare their school with others in the area.

"The site is designed so you can't immediately see how your school compares with others. You need to spend a lot of time looking at the data and taking notes," he said.