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AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

**Our Voices Our Vision –
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workers in Public Education**

Our Rights to the Future

A newsletter produced by the Australian Education Union for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members

The Arthur Hamilton Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

The Arthur Hamilton Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education is named in honour of Arthur Hamilton, a proud Palawa man, educator and union activist. Arthur passed away in 2004 leaving behind a legacy of a strong consciousness for equity and social justice, cross-cultural awareness, recognition of Indigenous peoples and the elimination of racism within the Australian Education Union and in schools.

This Award is in recognition of AEU members who are committed to ensuring that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have the right to high quality education throughout their lives. The AEU is dedicated to ensuring that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have local access to a free, publicly funded education system, which affirms cultural identity, and enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to contribute to, and participate in, their own, and broader society.

Photo: AEU ACT Branch ATSIEC delegate, Beth Craddy (right) presents 2007 winner Narrabundah Primary School Principal, Trish Keller with the Arthur Hamilton Award for Reconciliation in Education

Nomination forms can be obtained from the AEU by phoning (03) 9693 1800, faxing (03) 9693 1805, or emailing samg@aeufederal.org.au or can be downloaded from

www.aeufederal.org.au/Atsi/2007/AHnomform.pdf

The closing date for nominations is Friday, 30 November 2007. The award will be announced at the AEU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education seminar in January 2008. The winner will receive a \$500 prize and will be flown to Sydney to accept the award at the Seminar. All nominees will receive a certificate from the AEU.

If you would like to know more, please email samg@aeufederal.org.au or contact Wayne Costelloe, Federal Aboriginal Education Officer, or visit www.aeufederal.org.au



Have your say at the Federal Election

Feedback received through the ACTU Indigenous committee has indicated that many people in the Indigenous community are asking about the process of voting, in particular, how the preferential voting system works.

Kara Touchie, Indigenous Officer at the Queensland Council of Unions has provided the following information.

How to Vote

Senate Ballot Paper

The order of the candidates on the ballot paper is [determined by a random draw](#) conducted in the office of the Australian Electoral Officer for that State or Territory, following the public declaration of nominations. Senate ballot papers are white in colour.

How to complete the ballot paper

The ballot paper is divided into two sections to distinguish the two alternative methods of voting for Senators:

1. Above the Line

Voters may vote for a political party or group by putting the number '1' in one box only above the black line. The rest of the ballot paper is left blank.

By casting a vote this way, voters are following the Group Voting Ticket (GVT) that the party or group has lodged with the AEC. All the preferences will be distributed according to the GVT.

2. Below the Line

In the section below the line electors can vote by putting the number '1' in the box of the candidate they want as their first choice, number '2' in the box of the candidate they want as their second choice, and so on until all the boxes have been numbered. The top part of the ballot paper is left blank. You must put a number in every box below the black line. You decide your own order of choice for all the candidates.

House of Representatives ballot papers

The order of the candidates on the ballot paper is [determined by a random draw](#) conducted in the office of the Divisional Returning Officer immediately after the declaration of nominations. House of Representative ballot papers are green.

How to complete the ballot paper

To vote for a Member of the House of Representatives, an elector is required to write the number '1' in the box next to the candidate who is their first choice, and the numbers '2', '3' and so on against all the other candidates, in order of the elector's preference.

Ballot papers which are not marked according to the rules for voting are called informal votes. Ballot papers cannot be counted if they are informal.

Polling officials at the polling place are available to assist you in completing your ballot paper. Remember, if you make a mistake on a ballot paper you may return it to the polling official who issued it to you and receive a fresh one.

The order of the candidates on the ballot paper is [determined by a random draw](#) conducted in the office of the Divisional Returning Officer immediately after the declaration of nominations. House of Representative ballot papers are green.

Public Education Campaign Update:

The AEU Federal Office has established a 2007 Federal Election Campaign Website. The website has Fact Sheets that you can access and use in your lobbying activities. The focus for the website is the Public Education Campaign and there are a range of Fact Sheets on topics including, Indigenous Education, Literacy Vouchers and Early Childhood Education. The site can be accessed via the following link <http://www.aefederal.org.au/E07/election.html>

Howard Government Intervention in to NT Aboriginal Communities

The ACTU Executive has endorsed a resolution from the *ACTU Indigenous Committee* on the Howard Government Intervention into NT Aboriginal communities.

The resolution recognises the urgent need for Governments to deal adequately and appropriately with the issue of violence in the Australian community, particularly violence against children.

We recognise and understand the profound impacts that the history of colonisation in Australia has had and is still having on its Indigenous people.

We also recognise and understand that substance abuse contributes in a profound way to violent behaviour, including abuse of children which occurs all too often in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities alike and that violence and substance abuse is all too often linked to poverty and disadvantage.

We acknowledge the work of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders and workers, both men and women, who have advocated tirelessly at community, state and national levels for an urgent response and intervention from Governments of all persuasions to the national crisis of the abuse of Aboriginal children.

Whilst we acknowledge the sense of urgency in which the Howard Government has responded to the "Little Children Are Sacred" (Anderson – Wilde report), we express our deep concern about the nature of their plan, in its current form, to intervene in, and take control of, remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

All expert evidence and advice, and indeed the report that this intervention is based on, tells us that centrally imposed 'quick fixes' by a remote

bureaucracy in Canberra or any other capital city in Australia, will not work.

We support the Northern Territory Government resistance to the linking of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to the child protection issue.

We reject absolutely the Federal Government arguments that suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, changes to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 and the elimination of the permit system have any relationship to genuine measures to protect children.

We express concern about the impacts of the sudden abolition of the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) on the CDEP workers in these communities, many of whom are council workers, teachers, teacher assistants, health workers, rangers, community police and community workers who address the issues of alcoholism and domestic violence through running services such as women's shelters and night patrols.

With the passing of the Government's legislation, it is incumbent on the Howard Government, who have had 11 years to address these issues, to stop apportioning blame to others and to fully fund the provision of quality services for all Indigenous children and all Indigenous communities in the areas of education, employment, health, housing, policing, municipal services and infrastructure. Such resources must be made available on a long term basis.

It is estimated that approximately \$90 million extra funding for Aboriginal health services is needed per year and approximately \$700 million is required as the cost of bringing health hardware (housing, water, sewerage) to an acceptable minimum standard in Aboriginal communities.¹

¹ A proposed *Emergency Response and Development Plan* to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory A preliminary response to the Australian Government's Proposals

Recognising that the legislation has been passed, we call on the Howard Government to:

- Work with Indigenous leaders at community, state and national levels to further refine their plans;
- Develop long term solutions and strategies for addressing the issues, including the provision of cross cultural awareness programs for all employees and volunteers engaged in the response;
- Consult widely on any changes to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976;
- Provide adequate resources to enable the building of social and physical infrastructure;
- Revisit the notion of a national and representative Indigenous body to interface with Government on these matters; and
- Provide immediate funding to ensure those people who were working on full time CDEP develop, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, an alternative plan to the replacement of CDEP with mainstream welfare provision. For example, replace CDEP with funding for jobs in municipal, health, education, infrastructure and community services.

We call on the ALP and other opposition parties to:

- Work with Aboriginal leaders and communities in the Northern Territory to lobby the Government to address their concerns; and
- Work with Aboriginal people to develop a comprehensive policy on Aboriginal Affairs to take to the 2007 election, including the establishment of a national representative Indigenous body.

By the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory

The ACTU Executive will:

- Support Indigenous and non-Indigenous members in terms of provision of information and networking opportunities around these issues;
- Support Indigenous communities in terms of provision of information and networking opportunities around these issues;
- Call on union members working in those areas affected by the plan to consult widely with the local Indigenous leadership and work with them to assist to address their issues; and
- Call on Unions to conduct research into quantifying the resources required to provide all Indigenous children and all Indigenous communities with quality services in the areas of education, policing, nursing, health services and community services, and to present claims for those resources to the Federal Government.

FAEO's Report from the NZEI Hui Te Reo Areare Annual Hui– July 2007

I was invited to attend the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) Te Riu Roa Annual Hui (Meeting) in Auckland 30th June – 3rd July 2007 where I presented a paper on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) perspectives pervade the Australian Education Union's (AEU's) National Public Education Campaign. Co-presenting with me was Waine Donovan and Kerry Toomey who are practicing teachers and activist members of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation (NSWTF).

The NZEI is New Zealand's largest education union with more than 44,000 members. The members are teachers and support staff working in primary, area and secondary schools and early childhood centres, Specialist Education Services and Colleges of Education. As a union and professional institute, NZEI is committed to quality public education for all New Zealand children.

NZEI underwent structural changes in 1989 which included investigating ways to enable Maori members to have greater participation in the organisation. As a result of this process, the Maori Council of NZEI now determines the Maori policy of the organisation and advocates for change in Maori education.

The AEU Presentation

As Waine, Kerry and I worked as a team, we organised a three tiered approach to presenting information about NPEC¹. I presented the following information on the \$2.9 billion public education national recurrent funding shortfall, identified by the MCEETYA Schools Resource Taskforce and how Indigenous education issues pervade the campaign.

The shortfall in funding across public education impacts upon all students and has a particularly harsh impact upon Indigenous students and their education. This impact is felt in but not limited to the following areas:-

- Access to schooling in their home communities;
- Qualified teachers, particularly teachers from that community;
- Compulsory pre-service and in-service Indigenous studies;
- Attendance and retention rates; and
- Funding regimes for Indigenous education programs.

The case for improvement in the better and more targeted provision of education for Indigenous students is well documented. In spite of some improvements, Indigenous students remain the most educationally disadvantaged group of students in Australia against all benchmarks. Since 87.5% of all Indigenous students attend Government schools, improvements must first and foremost concentrate on the public education system.

Research has shown that school attendance and retention rates are impacted upon by access to

¹ National Public Education Campaign

schooling. In spite of this, there are still thousands of Indigenous students across Australia who cannot access schooling in their home communities, particularly in the early childhood and secondary areas. Teachers of Indigenous students still have limited access to pre and in-service training in Indigenous studies. Numbers of Indigenous teachers are tragically low and Indigenous education workers suffer from below standard employment conditions.

This background led well into Waine's information about the NPEC at a state level and also about Indigenous representation in the NSWTF. Waine spoke on the Aboriginal members committee and conference and how they provide advice on Indigenous education to the NSWTF. Kerry presented information from a local perspective and how her involvement in the Union has benefited her, particularly the Anna Stewart program. In this way, we were able to provide a comprehensive picture of the campaign. The 2007 NZEI Hui was highly successful and Kerry, Waine and I enjoyed our time there. The 2008 Hui will be in Invercargill.

Feedback

What do you think about our newsletter? Please help us to make it yours by sending your articles, photos and ideas to:

wcostelloe@aeufederal.org.au



Wayne Costelloe
*AEU Federal Aboriginal
Education Officer*

Subscription

This newsletter will be produced twice a year. If you would like to be put on to the subscriber list, please email samg@aeufederal.org.au



Authorised, printed and published on the internet by:

Susan Hoggood
Federal Secretary
Australian Education Union
120 Clarendon Street
Southbank Victoria 3006

Phone : (03) 9693 1800
Fax : (03) 9693 1805
E-mail : aeu@aeufederal.org.au
Web : www.aeufederal.org.au