Gonski breakthrough
NSW first to sign funding deal
The older I got, the smarter my teachers became.

Ally Carter

Teachers Health Fund gives teachers the credit they deserve with:

- Competitively priced health insurance
- An understanding of the needs of teachers & their families
- Online claiming for a range of Extras services
- A mutual, for-member health fund
- A simple switching process
- Generous benefits for services we know are important to you. Join today!

For the well-being of teachers & their families. Proudly caring for the needs of over 240,000 people across Australia.

Visit teachershealth.com.au or call 1300 728 188

Teachers Federation Health Ltd. ABN 86 097 030 414 trading as Teachers Health Fund. A registered Private Health Insurer. THF-05/13
Contents Winter 2013

04 My view
Jonathan Biggins
Jonathan Biggins is always ready to debate the benefits of public education.

08 Funding
Taking the lead
The NSW Premier put children above politics when he became the first to agree to Gonski.

16 Industrial relations
Pushing for performance
The ACTU’s Secure Jobs campaign is about dignity and respect for workers.

Other features

10 Privatisation
Not in the public good
Allowing private interests in public education doesn’t profit students.

12 Forum
Global concerns
Privatisation is a hot topic around the world.

20 TAFE
National inquiry welcomed
Strong opposition to continuing cuts to TAFE has led to a federal parliamentary inquiry.

22 Professional development
Tapping into free global resources
The Australian version of the online educational resource TES Connect.

25 Indigenous
Road to recognition
The road to a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Constitution is becoming clearer.

26 Arthur Hamilton award
Yarning with the Aunties
A look at the award-winning program for young women at a Sydney remand centre.

28 International
The audacity to dream
Looking back on Dennis Van Roekel’s powerful address to the AEU Federal conference.

30 International
Celebrating change
Promoting democracy and human rights has been a life’s work for Aloysius Mathews.

33 International
African story
Teachers in Senegal face many disadvantages.

34 Technology
Screen gems
Online video content has become a significant and engaging part of teaching in many classrooms.

Regulars

06 From the president
36 Books
38 Casebook
Sheree Arnett

Teachers Health Fund gives teachers the credit they deserve with:
• Competitively priced health insurance
• An understanding of the needs of teachers & their families
• Online claiming for a range of Extras services
• A mutual, for-member health fund
• A simple switching process
• Generous benefits for services we know are important to you.
Join today!

For the well-being of teachers & their families.
Proudly caring for the needs of over 240,000 people across Australia.
Visit teachershealth.com.au or call 1300 728 188

Jonathan Biggins is always ready to debate the benefits of public education.

The older I got, the smarter my teachers became.
Ally Carter

www.aeufederal.org.au
Alert and alarmed

The acerbic side of Jonathan Biggins has served him well in his work, but it’s his concern for public education that really fuels his fire.

by Steve Packer

Jonathan Biggins says he does anything he can to support the notion of public education – access to an excellent education for everybody, no matter what their wealth and status – because it is the only chance Australia has of being an egalitarian society in the future. He likes talking about it and debating the issues, but sometimes his concern turns to anger and he has to shut himself up.

“I think public education is under a greater threat in this country than it has been since it began,” says Biggins, a Sydney-based actor, singer, writer, director, comedian and corporate speaker with myriad film, stage, television and radio credits.

In the education sphere, he’s an ambassador for the Public Education Foundation, his wife Elaine (a former actor) is a teacher-librarian at a public school and their two daughters attend a public high school.
If you want to give your child an education of the real world, where no-one is turned away, then you should send them to a public school.

Jonathan Biggins

“It’s ironic that many of the people leading the charge grew up having the benefit of a public education,” says Biggins, “and it is very sad that a lot of the people who have traditionally championed public education have bought into the notion that something is of quality only if you pay for it.

“I would say to them that you have already paid for it, which is why it’s called public education, and if you want to give your child an education of the real world, where no-one is turned away, then you should send them to a public school.”

Highly debatable

At the time of the interview for this story, Biggins was continuing to direct the Sydney Theatre Company’s long-running, mockingly topical Wharf Review and directing an operetta, Orpheus in the Underworld, for Opera Australia.

He credits the beginning of his multifaceted “slow burn but long life” career to the day he joined the debating club at Newcastle Boys’ High School.

“I was a bit of a class clown,” he says. “I’d resort to the humour card with the teachers and for the survival mechanism you need at an all-boys school.

“Private schools are more about the people who are kept out than the people who are let in, he adds.

“It is one of the great tragedies of our age that people are willing to swallow many of the values they would profess to hold by sending their children to private schools.

“To those atheists who send their children to Catholic schools, for example, because they have a perception that those schools have better values, I say, ‘Well, what’s the first value you are teaching your child? Hypocrisy?’

“I also think that, in the context of the growth in religious schools, people are confusing religious independence in society at large with their belief that religious tolerance can be taught only at a school dedicated to their own religion.

“So I think two forces are at work there which are detrimental not only to public education, but to society as a whole. That’s why I’m reaching the point where I can’t discuss the issue with some people any more because I get so incensed by it.”

Learning resilience

Biggins says it needs to be recognised that school doesn’t have to be “hunky-dory fabulous” all the time.

“High school is a difficult time because you’re a teenager, but it’s something you have to work your way through. My parents said, ‘We don’t care if you don’t like your school. That’s where you’re going. You don’t have a choice in the matter.’ Which I think is a very good thing.

“Parents who flip from school to school, trying to make their child happy, are missing the point. Changing schools isn’t going to make a great deal of difference. It’s something the child has to work through to learn a bit of resilience.

“And if you’re going to be a creative artist or in the sort of profession I’m in, you need something to kick against. Mollycoddling children and greenhousing them in model vocational schools that might suit their wishes or talents doesn’t necessarily create better performers or artists or whatever at the other end.”

Steve Packer is a freelance writer.
From the president

The cost of inaction

We cannot rest until we achieve school funding reform, writes the AEU’s Federal President.

There is no doubt that the failure of Australia’s state and territory leaders to sign on to the Federal Government’s proposed historic funding reform at the Council of Australian Governments meeting on April 19 is disappointing. However, it has only strengthened our resolve to achieve school funding reform.

The choice for us is stark. We either intensify our campaign efforts to achieve funding reform or face the consequences of inaction. Maintaining the current funding arrangements will mean a cut of $390 million (the equivalent of more than 3000 teaching positions) in Commonwealth funding for public schools in 2014. The effect will be worse in states where extra cuts have been imposed by coalition governments.

Australia’s premiers and chief ministers would do well to revisit the reasons for the establishment of the Gonski Review back in 2010: the need for a more equitable transparent and well-funded education system designed to achieve high quality education outcomes for every student. Premiers and chief ministers will need to explain to the millions of parents with school-age children, as well as teachers and principals across Australia why they’ve refused to honour their central obligation to ensure that all children have the necessary support they need and deserve to achieve their best at school.

The Gonski Review clearly established not only the case for significantly increased investment in education, but also the social and economic costs of failure to close Australia’s increasing equity gap.

Benefits for all sectors

All sectors stand to benefit from the new funding arrangements on offer from the Commonwealth but the greatest share of the new funding would go to public schools. This is inevitable when shifting to a new system that better matches student funding with student need across the country. Public schools are the universal provider open to all, and they educate the vast majority of our
Maintaining the current funding arrangements will mean a cut of $390 million (the equivalent of more than 3000 teaching positions)... in 2014.

disadvantaged students. Investing more in public schools remains the only way to ensure quality and equity in education for all.

Despite the failure to reach agreement at COAG, the opportunity remains for state and territory leaders to sign on to making the Gonski vision of a high quality, high equity education system for all Australian students a reality.

We know that in the political contest over education and schools funding, Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne continue with their opposition to school funding reform and their steadfast support for the current broken funding system. There is no doubt that they have been putting significant pressure on state and territory coalition governments not to sign up to funding reforms. But we also know that all politicians, federal and state, are acutely aware of the strong public support for funding reform and the proposed changes. They are reminded of the words of NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell when he said last year that we ignore Gonski at our peril.

O'Farrell was the first premier to sign on to the Gonski package, after agreeing on a $5 billion funding deal with the Prime Minister

Cost of inaction

Beyond the cuts in funding already referred to, the cost of inaction by state and territory governments also manifests itself in the lost investment that would flow with funding reform. The Prime Minister outlined in April a total funding package of $14.5 billion over the next six years from 2014, with the Commonwealth contributing $9.4 billion (65 per cent) in return for 35 per cent ($5.1 billion) from the states. Significantly, the states would also be required to commit to three per cent school funding growth every year which would mean an end to funding cuts and freezes.

Of the $14.5 billion, $3 per cent (approximately $12 billion) is base funding derived from a new Student Resource Standard (SRS). The remaining 17 per cent is made up of needs-based loadings that will be added to the base funding to reflect the added costs of educating students with special needs, from Indigenous backgrounds, from low socioeconomic status families, and students with limited English proficiency. The size and the location of schools is also considered.

The new SRS base funding amount for 2014 would be $9,271 per primary student and $12,193 per secondary student. Public schools would attract the full SRS base funding amount.

The base funding amount for non-government schools would factor in their capacity to contribute to the cost of educating their students, ranging from a 90 per cent public contribution for the lowest SES school to 20 per cent for the wealthiest private schools.

A much-needed boost

The new funding would mean an increase in schools funding for every state and territory.

The $14.5 billion over six years is clearly less than the amount of additional funding recommended by Gonski. Nevertheless it is a major milestone in the transition from the current complex and inequitable schools funding arrangements to a new funding model designed to match funding to need and to overcome the large gaps in outcomes between more and less advantaged students. This structural reform is vital if we wish to lift overall student performance and close the widening achievement gaps that have emerged as a result of the existing funding arrangements.

What is disappointing is the Federal Government’s intention to partially fund the increase from cutting $2.8 billion from the university sector. While Budget decisions are ultimately a matter for the Government, we don’t believe that some of the funding for Gonski should come from cuts in university funding. The provision of high quality public education at all levels should be a top priority for all governments.

There is no reason for any further delay by any other state or territory leader. Investment brings results, and it is our firm hope that they will all now take a leaf out of Premier O’Farrell’s book. Parents outside NSW will rightly be asking why their leader would wait any longer to commit to Gonski. By signing up, there would be $14.5 billion in additional funds across the country. No leader should knock that back.

Angelo Gavrielatos

AEU FEDERAL PRESIDENT

Australian Educator 78 Winter 2013
Taking the lead

Premier Barry O’Farrell put children above politics when NSW became the first state to agree to the Gonski funding reform package.

by Cyndi Tebbel

The news out of Canberra didn’t look good as the Council of Australian Governments meeting wrapped up on the afternoon of 19 April. Not a single state or territory premier had signed on to the Prime Minister’s plan for improving school funding, the National Education Reform Agreement.

Under the Gonski school reforms, schools would receive an additional $14.5 billion over the next six years under a two-for-one deal, requiring the states to come up with 35 per cent of the funding, or $5.1 billion. Prior to COAG, Julia Gillard set a 30 June deadline for states and territories to sign up to the reforms, which will take effect from 2014.

The state premiers didn’t refuse to commit; most indicated they needed more time for consultation, bargaining and budget reviews. Nevertheless, the media was quick to pronounce Gonski another epic fail for the government.

Opposition leader Tony Abbott took to Sky News to reiterate that the Coalition would retain the current funding system if it wins the federal election in September. “It’s not broken,” he said of the current system.

Two days later NSW Liberal Premier Barry O’Farrell announced he was “delighted” to have reached a deal with the Prime Minister and he had “done the right thing” for his state. The Prime Minister called it a “historic announcement” for the 1.1 million school children in NSW and “Australian education”, and was confident other states would follow. She said the agreement “set a benchmark for other states to meet”.

Non-government community organisations commended the NSW Premier for showing leadership by being the first to sign the Agreement.

The NGO Leaders for Educational Opportunity, a group representing 15 organisations, called on COAG members to put their political differences aside and deliver on school funding reform.

Facing up to the facts

AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos says the $5 billion that will flow to NSW over the next six years as a result of O’Farrell’s agreement will change the face of schools in the state and “start to bridge the divide of disadvantage that plagues our current model of schools”.

“It is our firm hope that the other state premiers will all take a leaf out of Premier O’Farrell’s book and commit to the Gonski reforms so that every child gets the support they need to achieve their best at school.”

Gavrielatos says new research from Barbara Preston, using data from the 2011 Census, provides the first insight into the composition of schools and confirms the urgent need for more equitable funding arrangements.

“Twenty-five years ago the proportion of low income and high income students was broadly similar in public secondary schools and private schools,” he says.

“Now public secondary schools have almost twice the proportion of students from low income families as high income families and the reverse is the case in private schools.”

In any case, rejecting the Gonski funding reforms is not an option, says Gavrielatos. If the current funding arrangements are left to continue for another four years, funding for schools will decrease next year by $390 million. That’s equivalent to about 3000 teaching positions, he says.

How many premiers will join O’Farrell in signing on to Gonski is likely to be known by the time this issue of Australia Educator is published. In the meantime, the reforms have garnered support from stakeholders in business, education, social and community services, and the wider community, who see it as critical to Australia’s success.

Backing a winner

When the Gonski recommendations were announced, Business Council of Australia chief executive Jennifer Westacott said they were “a positive contribution to refocusing school funding on lifting student outcomes and ensuring all children have access to a quality education regardless of their cultural or socio-economic background or where they live”.

In July 2012, while attending a federal government economic forum in Brisbane, Westacott joined Westpac CEO Gail Kelly and the heads of the Smith Family...
and the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) to recommend the government reform funding in line with the Gonski recommendations. Independent MPs Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott are also supporters of schools funding reform. The former described Gonski as “probably the biggest revolution that we’ve seen in education since I’ve been alive”, while Oakeshott thinks its “the most important decision of this 43rd parliament”.

Leader of the Greens Christine Milne says it’s critical to pass the Gonski legislation before the election “so the Greens in the balance of power can make sure an Abbott government won’t be able to repeal it” or see it become “watered down such that public schools miss out on their fair share yet again”.

The benefits of investment in school reform are backed by ACOSS CEO, Dr Cassandra Goldie. “This is an area of common ground between us and the business community: it should be to the absolute peril of our country for us to fail to reach bi-partisan support over core policies that have a long-term goal. “ACOSS produced a widely-endorsed report that says the time has come for reform. The latest report from the Grattan Institute also indicates Australia will face significant inter-generational pressures on the budget for health outcomes and post-retirement aged pension,” she says. “We know the two most important safeguards against poor health outcomes or being solely reliant on the aged pension are protection against poverty and a good education, and we will do whatever it takes to face up to the leaders of the country and ask: what are you doing?”

The Smith Family also sees value in funding schools on the basis of student need as a critical part of delivering a high-quality education system. CEO Lisa O’Brien says it will improve outcomes for “significant numbers of young Australians, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds”. Dr John Falzon, chief executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society, agrees and says the reforms are a challenge to “put education ahead of partisan politics”. He believes maintaining the current level of inequality in education resources is a recipe for social exclusion, and that social and economic costs always far outweigh the cost of investing in education for all.

“The Gonski reforms are essentially about building an equitable education system, focusing especially on the needs of kids experiencing disadvantage. We cannot afford to fail in our commitment as a nation to these kids.

“We appreciate that it is a tough road to any agreement between the Commonwealth and the states but if we don’t try we have already failed,” Falzon says.

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.
Privatisation

Not in the public good

Allowing private interests in public education doesn’t profit students.

by Tracey Evans

Briefly

- Privatisation of public schooling is a growing concern around the world.
- Market-based education ‘reforms’ are also creeping into Australia.
- There’s a lack of evidence to prove that the dramatic restructuring of public education offers advantages to students.

As governments around the world open up their public schools to the private sector, there are indications that Australia may follow a similar path. The most telling of these is the push for greater school autonomy by the federal government and a number of states and the recent establishment of “independent public schools” in Queensland and Western Australia. Privatisation of education comes in many forms but one model that has been spreading around the world is the charter school. (‘Free schools’ in the UK, are based on the US charter school model.)

Generally speaking charter schools are publicly funded and must not charge tuition fees. They are usually exempted from many of the requirements that apply to public schools such as hiring qualified teachers and following a particular curriculum. They focus on local control of hiring and firing, budgets, salaries and working conditions.

“Charter schools are a particular manifestation of devolved decision making and school choice, being pursued as a part of a wider neo-liberal agenda of schooling reform,” according to an AEU research report, Charter Schools and Marginalised Ethnic and Racial Groups – Implications for Australia.

Yet “few if any researchers” find greater innovation in charter school classrooms compared with other types of schools, say academics Joel Windle and Christopher Lubienski in an article published on The Conversation website (‘Don’t play the market when it comes to children’s education’, 2011).

“Despite a few bright spots, most research shows charter schools are underperforming, on average, compared to other public schools,” the academics argue.

Worse, there is evidence that charter schools contribute to greater segregation on class and ethnic/racial lines and a greater concentration of marginalised groups in underperforming schools, the AEU report has found.

Nonetheless supporters of charter schools claim they ‘break the mould’ of a public schooling system that has conspicuously failed to deliver quality educational outcomes to disadvantaged ethnic and racial groups, the AEU paper says.

Rapid growth

Introduced to the US almost 20 years ago, charter schools have undergone a rapid growth in the last decade or so. The number of students enrolled in
charter schools quadrupled to 1.6 million in the 10 years to 2010. An estimated 5600 charter schools operate in some 40 states. But the advantages promised for the charter school model and other education reforms have largely failed to be delivered.

A review of market-based education reforms, including charter schools, standardised testing and school closures, has found that test scores increased less, and achievement gaps grew more, in cities that introduced comprehensive market reforms compared to those that did not, according to economist and public education advocate Trevor Cobbold.

“The report found that market-based education policies miss a critical factor driving achievement gaps: the influence of poverty on academic performance,” writes Cobbold in an article on the Save Our Schools website (‘Market-based education policies in the US have failed to increase student results’, 2013).

“School systems that have implemented these policies have failed to provide programs to alleviate the effects of poverty on student outcomes. They have drawn attention and resources away from policies with real promise to address poverty-related barriers to school success.”

The report, ‘Market-oriented Education Reforms: Rhetoric Trumps Reality’, assesses the impacts of market-based reforms in three large urban school districts: Washington, DC, New York City, and Chicago. It was published by The Broader, Bolder Approach to Education.

In all three cities, school closures affected black and low-income students disproportionately, says Cobbold.

While charter schools have been promoted as providing better results for students in “failing” public schools, the evidence of success is patchy.

“The report notes that some charter schools have been highly successful, but the gains may not be replicable on a broader scale for several reasons. For example, using funding to extend school days and provide enriching extra-curricular activities may not be feasible in larger numbers or based on public school budgets. Parent contracts and commitments cannot necessarily be obtained from most parents, nor can all parents provide the consistent support that benefits some charter school students disproportionately,” says Cobbold.

Outside the city
Charter schooling has been largely an urban phenomenon in the US and most charter school research has focused on urban areas, notes the AEU report.

“While a majority of Indigenous Australians live in urban settings, it is worth noting some of the significant problems that would be confronted by Indigenous charter schools in rural and remote settings.”

A study of Native American charter schools found that the price the schools pay for their autonomy is to be cut off from the support and networking of the public system.

“The demands of ‘running your own show’ are very high and ongoing. In this regard, it can be noted that the 14 Western Australian Aboriginal Independent Community Schools have depended on a government-funded support unit with responsibility to: raise the profile of the schools as legitimate and effective education providers; provide a channel for communicating policy developments linked to funding opportunities; support recruitment and the interpretation of relevant industrial relations/awards; support individual school administrations in the areas of planning, budgeting, acquittals, submissions, etc; assist in the organisation of shared and/or individual school conferences, workshops etc; and provide up-to-date information on curriculum and teaching materials development. (Kimberley Institute, 2010, p. 4)

While some Indigenous communities may have the capacity to meet the demands of self-management, many would find the challenges extremely daunting,” the AEU report says.

The review of US market-based reforms in education concludes that other jurisdictions considering such reforms have no reason to think they’ll increase student or school success.●

Tracey Evans is Australian Educator’s commissioning editor.

Read more about the effects of charter schools in the US as well as similar moves in the UK and New Zealand in Forum over the page.

Resources
- Article: ‘Don’t play the market when it comes to children’s education’, www.theconversation.com

Australian Educator 78 Winter 2013
Forum

“A cruel hoax” on Katrina victims

Karran Harper Royal has been an active public school parent for 21 years in New Orleans, Louisiana. She’s a member of the New Orleans Education Equity Round Table, a research-oriented group fighting against the privatisation of public schools.

The US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said Hurricane Katrina was ‘the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans’. We needed help with many things after Katrina, but what we didn’t need was a takeover of our public school system.

While many of us were in exile in other states because we could not legally reinhabit our homes, our legislators moved to change the definition of a failing school. Despite being operated by democratically-elected local school boards, the vast majority of our schools (many of which were succeeding) were redefined as failing and placed into the state-owned recovery school district.

The US Department of Education provided $23 million in funding to open charter schools, but not traditional public schools. The only way that good public schools could quickly reopen was as charter schools. So, many neighbourhood schools were eliminated, along with 7500 teachers and other employees.

Our kids returned from Katrina with all kinds of problems, but instead of getting the help they needed, their schooling was totally disrupted.

Prior to Katrina, New Orleans had eight charter schools and 120 traditional schools. Today we have 90 charter schools (which represent 80 per cent of our schools) and 18 traditional public schools. Of those 18, six are operated by elected school boards and 12 are operated by the state recovery school district.

I’ve always been very involved in schools, but what happened after Katrina really focused my attention on school reform. I served as a volunteer on the recovery school district advisory council, but soon realised they had no intention of transforming our schools for the better; they just want to sell them off to the highest bidder.

Education reform post-Katrina in New Orleans is a cruel hoax perpetrated upon the poorest, most vulnerable children in our city. It’s all about pulling public money from public coffers and putting it into the hands of private entities. It’s not a conspiracy: it’s a plan! And they make no bones about it. They’re privatising public education. Worst of all, they call it the new civil rights. It is insanity.”

“Our kids returned from Katrina with all kinds of problems, but instead of getting the help they needed, their schooling was totally disrupted.”

This proof is representative of the final printed result. It has been produced to the best electronic workflows available. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are satisfied with the overall content of this proof before giving it your approval.

For colour accuracy, this proof is dependent on correct viewing conditions. The proof should be assessed and matched under lighting set at 5000K and 500Lux @ 125Lux.
NZ charter schools ignore trained teachers

Paul Goulter, general secretary of the New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI), reveals the role of ‘disaster capitalism’ in the creation of charter schools after the Christchurch earthquake.

A lot of schools got trashed in the Christchurch earthquake. Our government responded with a ‘community consultation’ on the shape of schooling across the city.

Last September, all principles and trustee chairs were called to a meeting and told what was happening to their schools. Each was handed a coloured badge. One colour was for schools that were staying open, one was for those that were merging and one was for those that were closing.

Schools that thought they were immune – those west of Christchurch, with no damage – were slated for closure or merger because they were ‘failing school communities’ (no one had ever told them that before).

Christchurch had turned into a test bed for the further introduction of the Global Economic Reform Movement, [or GERM as Finnish educator Pasi Sahlberg characterises it] into New Zealand schooling.

It’s part of a grubby coalition deal between the current national government and the Act Party. Charter schools were never mentioned in the election and there is no call for them. New Zealand schools are self-managing, and there’s already the provision for schools that can quickly adapt to the particular characteristics of their communities.

But like every other country, we’ve got this fixation with competition and privatisation. The coalition deal was meant to fix the problems of disadvantage in Christchurch and South Auckland. Instead we’re seeing the proposed advent of super-sized schools.

Our polling shows there is no public appetite for charter schools or unqualified teachers, a key vulnerability for a government that is apparently all about lifting teacher performance.

“Our polling shows there is no public appetite for charter schools or unqualified teachers, a key vulnerability for a government that is apparently all about lifting teacher performance.”

As Australian Educator went to print, the New Zealand government appeared to have the numbers to pass legislation to establish charter schools.
Free schools “devastate” UK education

Christine Blower is general secretary of the National Union of Teachers in the UK, where academies and charter schools are a priority for the government.

Privatisation is on the agenda because there’s a lot of money in education and our enemies want to get hold of it. The global market and trading on education is worth about US$4 trillion a year and online education is about US$7.38 billion. In the UK support services are worth almost US$25.5 million.

The English system is very complicated: seven per cent of our children are educated in private and independent schools. Then there are state schools, trade schools, Catholic schools and Anglican schools (although religious in character, they pay rates are the same as other schools and they’re are not in the private sector).

We’ve also got academies and the new kid on the block: free schools.

The previous Labour government set up the legislative framework to allow this to happen. It took the view that schools were failing and the way to deal with that was to take them out of local authority control and offer the possibility of being sponsored by the private sector. Under the coalition government, there are 2619 academies and its intention is that all schools will be either free schools or academies.

There’s a reason why Pasi Sahlberg calls what’s going on ‘the global education reform movement’, i.e. GERM – it’s something small and very nasty that can have a devastating effect – and it actually takes money away from education. Academies lose the economy of scale of being in local government and have to buy support services on the open market. Meanwhile, support in remaining public schools is being cut to ribbons. Local governments get much less money now, so services they once provided – support in numeracy, literacy, speech, language, and behaviour – are all gone.

Unlike academies, free schools are completely de-regulated. Any appropriate group can get taxpayers’ money to set them up in offices, hotels, warehouses, anything. There are schools being run by profit-making companies, although they’re not yet allowed to make a direct profit.

Education Secretary Michael Gove is “extremely relaxed” about profits made by public sector schools. But I think when you get a fixed fee for every child from the government and you make a profit, that’s theft.

Of course, the biggest cost in education is teachers’ wages. Around 90 per cent of UK teachers are unionised. Free schools only have to have one qualified teacher. Gove says there are plenty of good people about so there’s no reason free schools need take on qualified teachers with “vested interests”.

Crucially, we have to make sure that if the Labour government is returned, we’ve got at least two years to go, they roll back some of this, because otherwise the education landscape will be completely devastated.
Free schools "devastate" UK education money to set them up in offices, hotels, warehouses, anything. There are schools being run by profit-making companies, although they're not yet allowed to make a direct profit.

Education Secretary Michael Gove is "extremely relaxed" about profits made by public sector schools. But I think when you get a fixed fee for every child from the government and you make a profit, that's theft.

Of course, the biggest cost in education is teachers' wages. Around 90 per cent of UK teachers are unionised. Free schools only have to have one qualified teacher. They'll get rid of that soon. Gove says there are plenty of good people about so there's no reason free schools need take on qualified teachers with "vested interests."

Crucially, we have to make sure that if the Labour government is returned, we've got at least two years to go, they roll back some of this, because otherwise the education landscape will be completely devastated.

Where can I find creative learning resources?

All mapped to the Australian Curriculum?

Just Splash around!

ABC Splash is your go-to website for world-class digital learning experiences. It features 100s of locally produced videos, audio clips and cool interactive games, perfectly aligned to what you're teaching.

Quite simply, it's the best free source of Australian content about Australian things!

Just Splash around to uncover engaging resources for your classroom.

www.abc.net.au/splash
Industrial relations

Pushing for permanence

The ACTU’s Secure Jobs campaign is about dignity and respect for workers.

by Lesley Parker

The ACTU is stepping up its Secure Jobs campaign ahead of the federal election, saying too many workers – including teachers – are being sidelined in casual or contract work.

Non-permanent work is a “growing cancer”, AEU president Angelo Gavrielatos told the AEU federal conference in February.

The ACTU estimates that about 40 per cent of workers are in non-permanent arrangements such as casual, temporary, fixed-term, contract or agency work.

It says such work denies people a secure income and leaves them with little control over their working lives. Their pay fluctuates, they have inferior entitlements, there’s little or no paid leave, no tenure and they have no ‘say’ at work.

The fight is for “workers to be treated with dignity and respect” in their workplace, ACTU secretary Dave Oliver told the conference.

“No one can plan their lives because of unpredictable hours, people can’t get finance for a car, people can’t get finance for a home,” he said. “People have to reapply for their own jobs not only at the end of the year, but at the end of each semester – particularly in your industry.”

Oliver gave the example of a Melbourne father of two who had been a teacher for eight years, but had never had a ‘permanent’ job. The conference also heard of a case where a South Australian teacher had worked for 17 years, 12 of them at the same school, but had been a full-time employee for just 12 months of that time.

“How can you have a quality education system in this country if we have teachers and childcare workers who don’t feel secure about their jobs or their income?” Oliver said.

“How can we have decent communities if parents are at the whim of an SMS to know when the next shift is going to start, instead of being able to plan ahead so they can be involved in their children’s sport and education?”

Sham contracting

In the first stage of the Secure Jobs campaign the ACTU sought to quantify and raise awareness of the problem. The
centrepiece was the Howe Inquiry, headed by former deputy prime minister Brian Howe, which reported late last year.

The panel found that about 2.2 million people work as casuals and 1.1 million as contractors. It concluded that a significant number are pressured into ‘sham’ contracting when in fact they ought to be treated as employees.

Fixed-term employment accounts for just over four per cent of all workers and is heavily concentrated in a few sectors, such as education. Up to 300,000 workers are employed through labour-hire agencies.

The figures put Australia second only to Spain among developed countries in terms of temporary employment.

The way ahead

The next stage of the campaign is about pushing the union movement’s alternative vision for work, says Paul Erickson, the ACTU’s Secure Jobs coordinator.

“The alternative is a decent, secure job – a job where you have fair and equal pay, and a say about when, where and how you work, access to important conditions like paid leave, penalty rates, skills development and training, a healthy and safe environment, and the right to join a union.”

This year the emphasis is on the federal election, although the campaign will continue no matter which party is elected. There will be an ‘umbrella’ union campaign ahead of the poll on September 14 that positions job security as the frame through which people should look at the economy.

“It’s about decency and security at work, and we’ll be calling on each of the parties to support that,” says Erickson.

Persistance pays off

A marathon pay dispute has resulted in a ‘significant win’ for teachers in Victoria, with a new proposed agreement announced on 17 April.

Under the deal, brokered by the AEU and the State government, public school teachers will receive salary increases between 16.1–20.5 per cent, principals from 17–19.6 per cent, and educational support staff from 12–17.1 per cent.

AEU Victorian Branch President, Meredith Peace, called the in-principle agreement “an historic achievement” that improves conditions of employment for all public education staff and rewards their hard work.

“The proposed deal, which will run from 2013 through to October 2016, includes significant salary increases, competitive with New South Wales and in line with other Victorian public sector deals,” said Peace. “It also includes no performance pay, no increase in class sizes or face-to-face teaching hours as well as improvements to the contract system of employment.”

Education support staff will benefit from additional leave and contract entitlements, with no unpaid recall during school holidays.

“We are already one of the hardest working, highest performing public educators in Australia and by international standards,” said Peace, who is confident the in-principle agreement will play a significant role in addressing statewide staff shortages, provide an incentive for teachers to stay in the classroom and reduce the level of contract employment.

The proposed deal has been endorsed by the Joint Primary and Secondary Council and must now go to all members for approval, then to Fair Work Australia for a ballot of the Victorian Teaching Service.

Specifically, political parties will be asked to commit to:

- Legislative protection of penalty rates to ensure work on weekends and public holidays is adequately compensated.
- A national portable entitlements scheme.
- Family-friendly work arrangements for people with caring responsibilities.
- Reliable public services delivered by a skilled, professional and stable public sector workforce.
- Strong protections in law for insecure workers in casual work, labour hire and contracting jobs.

“The next step is to go out and campaign until the federal election, not by saying people should vote one way or the other, but to campaign on the issue of insecure work,” says Erickson.

Individual unions such as the AEU will run their own campaigns based on the particular industry’s issues with job security.

Resolution reaffirmed

Insecure work has featured strongly in recent teacher pay negotiations and was the subject of a resolution at the 2013 AEU annual Federal Conference.

Teachers Australia-wide are concerned that state government budget cuts will lead to greater reliance on temporary employment to achieve cost savings.

The AEU conference passed a resolution reaffirming that priority
must be given to secure employment for its members.

“Secure employment and working arrangements for qualified educators and support staff underpin quality teaching and learning,” says the resolution. “The intensification of devolutionary policies that are designed to cut expenditure in public education and training pose a direct threat to secure employment of AEU members and learning conditions of their students.”

The resolution says the continued prevalence of insecure work among teachers is unacceptable on the grounds that it undermines continuity and stability in staffing, and therefore the collegial work practices fundamental to successful learning processes.

The conference recommended that the AEU continue to take part in, promote and support a wide-ranging reform agenda across labour law, the tax and social security systems, and government funding and procurement policies.

The resolution says the AEU should use its industrial and professional campaigns to obtain greater job security by:

■ Confining the circumstances in which fixed-term, temporary or casual employment can be used.
■ Limiting the duration of such modes of work.
■ Allowing conversion to secure employment without loss of work hours.
■ Ensuring service as a casual or fixed-term employee counts as service for all purposes and is portable.
■ Gaining or improving entitlements such as paid leave and professional development.
■ Ensuring service in non-metropolitan, rural, remote and other difficult-to-staff locations provides assured security of employment.
■ Seeking centralised monitoring, auditing and reporting of employment practices to promote transparency in staffing.

The resolution also calls for targeted recruitment and education campaigns aimed at organising employees in insecure modes of employment.

Lesley Parker is a freelance writer.
Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor.

In Anti-Poverty Week, your school can help fight poverty and hardship by getting involved. Every initiative counts, no matter how small.

Action your school can take includes:

- Organising an activity to promote understanding or action
- Incorporating poverty in the school curriculum
- Launching a program to enable students experiencing poverty to participate fully in all aspects of school life

For school-friendly activity ideas as well as information and educational resources for the classroom:

Visit www.antipovertyweek.org.au  Email apw@antipovertyweek.org.au  Call 1300 797 290
National inquiry welcomed

Strong opposition to continuing cuts to TAFE has led to a federal parliamentary inquiry.

by Margaret Bozik

The AEU has welcomed a parliamentary inquiry into TAFE’s activities and its role in competitive training markets.

Budget cuts in the past 12 months have led to the loss of nearly 3000 teaching jobs and hundreds of courses at TAFEs in Victoria, NSW and Queensland. Fees have risen for most of the sector’s 1.2 million students, many of whom are in rural areas.

AEU TAFE secretary Pat Forward says the federal inquiry, by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment, will help put TAFE in the spotlight ahead of the September election.

“It has been the AEU’s campaigning and lobbying, particularly in the three states most critically affected by the budget cuts, which has brought us to this point,” she says. “The community response to TAFE cuts has surprised governments, and we had some small victories in 2012 due to the efforts of our campaign.”

Forward told the AEU federal conference in February that the hundreds of millions of dollars state governments had ripped out of the TAFE sector, subsequent job losses and campus closures were largely the result of policy determinations during the last days of the Howard government.

The 2012 National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development shifted funding for vocational education and training (VET) from public TAFE institutions to students by means of a voucher which could be used at any one of almost 5000 private providers in an undifferentiated market.

“What was not made clear at the time was that the funding attached to this voucher would decrease over two years, and that, at the same time as governments were actively encouraging the growth of private provision, they were also insidiously shifting the costs of vocational education onto individual students,” says Forward.

Budget blowout

In Victoria, the first state to ‘open up’ VET funding, TAFE market share fell from an already comparatively low 66 per cent in 2008 to 45 per cent in early 2012. Meanwhile, the private provider share of the market grew from 14 to 46 per cent.

In addition, there was a $400 million budget blowout, most of which went into the pockets of for-profit private providers.

“All this was before the massive state budget cuts to TAFE in the May 2012 budget in Victoria,” says Forward.

On a national basis, between 2008 and 2011, the TAFE share of the market fell from 80 to 66 per cent while the private provider share rose from 11 to 26 per cent.

“While the impact of events in Victoria is reflected in the national figures, there is no way of escaping the impact of policies to increase allocation of public funds to the private sector in most states and territories.”

The AEU successfully campaigned last year to persuade the federal government not to pass on funding in the national partnership agreements to Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

“The withholding of funds to these three states is critically important for two reasons,” says Forward. “It is the single most important lever the federal government has to influence these three state governments to restore the budget cuts to TAFE. But it is also a clear indication, particularly among Labor Party MPs, of growing opposition to the free market policies of the federal Labor government.”

Margaret Bozik is a freelance writer.

Resources

- Register your support at www.stoptafecuts.com.au
- Visit the Facebook page www.facebook.com/StopTAFECuts
A new 360° Reflection Tool aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals

Australia’s schools need outstanding leaders who create student centred schools and the best possible conditions for quality learning and teaching to occur.

Research tells us that the most effective leaders engage in a process of continuous improvement by reflecting upon their performance and seeking feedback from others. The 360° Reflection Tool, which identifies the attributes of high performing principals, provides school leaders with the opportunity to use feedback to reflect on their leadership, learn more about their strengths and explore opportunities for improvement.

The recently released 360° Reflection Tool was built upon the Australian Professional Standard for Principals, which sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do.

Anthony Mackay - AITSL Chair

Register now
aitsl.edu.au/360
Professional development

Tapping into free global resources

Teachers can now access an Australian version of the online global educational resources platform TES Connect.

by Margaret Jakovac

A free online platform for high-quality teaching resources mapped to the Australian curriculum is being officially launched in June. Already more than 90,000 Australian teachers have signed up to the platform, TES Connect.

The AEU has partnered with the parent company of TES Connect, TSL Education, along with the Board of Studies NSW and the Centre for Professional Learning to offer the platform. TSL is the world’s largest supplier of educational teacher exchange resources.

TES Australia will be the tailor-made version of the successful UK-based TES Connect, which was set up about five years ago and which 2.5 million teachers from every country in the world now use. In the US, the platform is called Share my Lesson.

AEU federal president Angelo Gavrielatos says the union’s partnership with TES Connect benefits the profession nationally. “It has the potential and is already bringing together tens of thousands of Australian teachers to share their lessons and engage in their ongoing development of professional practice. “It also locates our union as the lead organisation in the provision of professional support for teachers.”

At its official launch, TES Connect is expected to have half a million resources already mapped to the Australian curriculum. It’s not just altruistic teachers who have uploaded their best road-tested lessons and programs onto the site to share with peers.

TES has teams of professional staff working with the Board of Studies NSW advisors to get up to speed with the curriculum across Australia and fine tune the resources to give the site an Australian “look and feel”, says Bill Donoghue, TSL’s chief operating officer.

“Once a teacher posts a resource on the platform, a TES lead adviser and teaching panel read and review it as part of the quality assurance process,” he says.

“When you are searching for [TES] resources, the most popular come up first, but that doesn’t mean the resources most downloaded. We’ve loaded algorithms into the system to take into account the quality ranking. It truly allows the best resources to be taught to every child.”

Democratising education

Donoghue says TES resources generally don’t date. Rather, they tend to be used “over and over again” by different teachers who each put their personal stamp on the material when they present it to students. Teachers can also post feedback on the TES resources they’ve used, which adds another

The spinoffs

■ TES PRO lets teachers store resources using cloud computing.
■ An online school term calendar for teachers.
■ Live web chats.
■ Q&A sessions.
■ Specific channels for English or science.
■ A Twitter account to post updates for teachers.

““The resources are for teachers and by teachers. It’s really democratising education.””

Briefly

- The AEU has entered into a partnership to establish an Australian online platform for high-quality teaching resources.
- Teachers can download or upload peer-reviewed resources for free and use the site in many other ways.
- Those who have used the resources say they save time and are inspirational.
Five years ago, soon after TES was launched, 100,000 teachers had registered; now 2.5 million have registered globally and there are almost one million resources available.

The site connects more than 47 million teachers and students globally.

In January there were 10 million visits to the TES global websites.

By March this year, 90,000 Australian teachers had registered with TES.

When TES Connect is launched in June, it’s expected to host half a million resources already mapped to the Australian curriculum.

Element of peer review.

“Our policy is to keep resources, but our quality assurance process also means that about 150 resources a month are taken down because they aren’t appropriate or aren’t of great quality,” says Donoghue.

So what do teachers think about the resources? Over the past five years, feedback from teachers using TES globally – including 4000 Australian teachers – has said it saves them time, is inspirational and the resources are high quality, says Donoghue.

“The resources are for teachers and by teachers. It’s really democratizing education. They give real inspiration to teachers – especially new teachers – to make the lesson real and exciting.”

This juggernaut of online resources is timely. The introduction of the Australian curriculum is happening while departments of education across the nation “have retreated from providing adequate support for the teaching profession”, says Gavrielatos.

The Board of Studies NSW has gone digital in a big way with its e-Syllabus launched last October with a range of new resources. Its role in the TES Connect partnership is giving the curriculum advice needed to provide relevant support to Australian teachers.

Board of Studies president Tom Alegounarias says his state recognises that TES is popular with Australian teachers and sees the main benefit of working with TSL as giving Australian teachers an Australian framework for accessing the site.

“The education sector in NSW is a major contributor to the national knowledge base for teachers and the board has established this partnership with TSL with a view to helping all teachers in Australia,” says Alegounarias.

Margaret Jakovac is a freelance writer and casual primary school teacher.

Resources

- www.tesconnect.com
- www.tes.co.uk
Thinking about buying a new car?
Consider a novated lease.
It’s the most tax effective way to finance your new vehicle.

What are the advantages of novated leasing?

No need to drive a lot
Recent changes in legislation mean that everyone can save, no matter how many km you drive or how much you earn! This means even more people can benefit from taking up a novated lease.

Enjoy the flexibility
You can choose which car you want to drive – whether it’s new, used, or even your existing car. You can also update the vehicle you are leasing every few years.

No GST
Save 10% on the purchase price of the car and its running costs.

Huge fleet discounts
Smartleasing’s buying power means we get exceptional fleet discounts, which can save you thousands off the purchase price of your new car.

Great tax savings
On average our customers save approximately $2,500* a year just by salary packaging running costs, like Rego, CTP, insurance, fuel and service.

Forget budget stress
Your lease repayments and running costs are broken down into manageable monthly payments, which means no more large lump sum payments.

What happens at the end of the lease?
At the end of your lease you can: pay out the residual value and keep your existing vehicle, or salary package another one - the choice is yours.

Check out our novated lease calculator online to get a detailed picture of how much you’ll save, along with an obligation-free quote.
Or call us and speak to one of our friendly leasing consultants.

1300 156 497
www.teachersleasing.com.au

*Annual savings of $2,500 are indicative only and are based on an annual salary of $85,000 and 15,000 km travelled per annum. Actual savings will depend on your tax bracket, vehicle model, lease term, individual circumstances and the GST processing method nominated by your employer. For more information about the GST processing method that applies to you please contact your employer.
The road to a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Constitution is becoming clearer.

Recognise is part of Reconciliation Australia, which is leading the campaign for constitutional change.

Gartrell says that when the Australian Constitution was first drafted in the 1890s there was no involvement by, or consideration of, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

“In our founding legal document there is no recognition at all and there are clauses in the Constitution that still permit discrimination on the basis of race.”

These include Section 25, which allows state governments to discriminate in this way. The section was last used in Queensland in 1965 to stop Aboriginal people voting in an election.

There is also Section 51(xxvi), ‘the race power’, which was used to the detriment of Aboriginal people in the Hindmarsh Island bridge case in the 1990s.

Recognise deputy campaign director Tanya Hosch says constitutional change is critical. “I really believe that if we as a nation can get our act together and finally admit in our founding document the true and full history of this country… then I think it’s going to make every other conversation we need to have as a nation much easier, much fairer and much more equal.”

An Act of Recognition Bill, passed by federal parliament in February this year with support from all parties and independents, is the first step towards a referendum aimed at changing the Constitution to recognise the nation’s first people.

It was the first time politicians had voted on the issue rather than just making “vapid statements” of support, says Tim Gartrell, campaign director for Recognise (formerly You, Me, Unity).

An expert panel – which included Indigenous and community leaders, constitutional experts and parliamentarians – has recommended that Australians should vote in a referendum to:

- Remove Section 25 of the Constitution, which says the states can ban people from voting based on their race.
- Remove Section 51(xxvi), which can be used to pass laws that discriminate against people based on their race.
- Insert a new section, 51A, to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and preserve the government’s ability to pass laws for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Insert a new section, 116A, banning racial discrimination by government.
- Insert a new section, 127A, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were Australia’s first tongues, while confirming that English is the national language.

However, Gartrell notes that in Australia’s most successful referendum, in 1967, more than 90 per cent of people voted to remove exclusions in the Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal people.

Margaret Bozik is a freelance writer.

Resources

- www.recognise.org.au (includes a schools kit for Years 10-12)
- www.reconciliation.org.au
The 2013 Arthur Hamilton Award, for an outstanding contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, has gone to Sunning Hill School’s Aboriginal Education Team, led by Alexis Trindall.

The school, for young females remanded in custody, is at Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre at Lidcombe in Sydney.

At any one time, Sunning Hill has about 36 students, aged 12 to 18 but mostly 15 or 16. About 60 per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The award, announced at the AEU federal conference in February, is for the highly successful ‘Yarning with the Aunties – an Elders Program’, which Trindall introduced.

The program engages students in education by reconnecting them with their culture and heritage. The first step involves training all staff and elders in a model of ‘Eight Aboriginal Ways of Learning’ (apo.org.au/website/8-aboriginal-ways-learning).

Trindall, worked in outreach programs at TAFE for 20 years, mainly with youth at risk. She has a degree in adult education from the University of Technology, Sydney, where she majored in Aboriginal Studies.

She joined Sunning Hill School as Aboriginal education officer three years ago.

Sense of worth

“In Aboriginal culture it means something to connect with somebody who knows somebody in your family,” says Trindall.

“When the elders visit [Sunning Hill], a lot of the girls are able to identify somebody who knows their family and build a steady relationship with them.

“The elders provide a positive role model and a sense of worth. The girls see that they can follow their lead, they can achieve anything and they are worthy of an education, a job, a good partner and a nice family.”

Trindall, a Kamilaroi woman from north-western NSW, grew up in foster care.

“I spent time away from my family, so I have a certain empathy with the girls here. I was never in any trouble, but I’ve experienced some of the issues these girls go through.”

Trindall says being separated from her family meant she had problems with her identity as an Aborigine, and she sees the students at Sunning Hill School struggling with the same problems.

“Having a sense of identity is so important. It doesn’t matter whether you are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. That’s what I aim to give the kids here: self-esteem, together with a passion for who they are and what they can do.”

“The girls see that they... can achieve anything and they are worthy of an education, a job, a good partner and a nice family.”

The program is consolidated through Aboriginal art and cultural expression lessons, with students taught about their own totems and their importance in the cultural identity of each Aboriginal clan.

Recording the stories

‘Yarning with the Aunties’ has also fulfilled its goal to produce an illustrated children’s book based on the lives of the elders, Our Aunties Remember. An unexpected by-product was to go a step further by producing a second book, Yarning with Aunties, about the process involved in creating the first one.

Sunning Hill School’s assistant principal, Lynne Kirkpatrick, has presented a copy of Yarning with
Tribute to commitment

The Arthur Hamilton Award is named in memory of Arthur Hamilton, a Palawa man who was committed to providing high-quality public education to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Hamilton, who died in 2004, was an educator and union activist. He fought for the recognition of Indigenous peoples and for greater cross-cultural awareness.

Angela Rossmanith is a freelance writer.

Aunties to the AEU. Kirkpatrick says Trindall is the fire behind the Aboriginal Education Team and a “remarkable woman”.

Over the years Trindall has not only raised her own children, but also fostered a number of young girls, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who had no home. She volunteers at the local children’s hospital and helps out at a soup kitchen at her church. She also plays an active role in the local reconciliation group.

All this, and she has been legally blind since 2000.

“I had a couple of years off when I lost my sight, and then managed to get back to work,” she says. “I’ve had to change my direction a little bit. What I do is more limited now, but I’m at a wonderful school that offers me a lot of support.”

One of her ideas is for an outdoor learning centre that includes a ‘yarning circle’ and Indigenous garden. Elders will be involved in constructing the site and planning and maintaining the garden.

“But my big dream is to find funding to open up a place for some of these young women to go to when they’ve finished here at Sunning Hill School,” says Trindall. “I’d like to see them in a nice home where they have support and can continue studying.”

Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre, above, and Yarning with Aunties, left, one of the books which has been created out of the program.

Aunties to the AEU. Kirkpatrick says Trindall is the fire behind the Aboriginal Education Team and a “remarkable woman”.

Over the years Trindall has not only raised her own children, but also fostered a number of young girls, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who had no home. She volunteers at the local children’s hospital and helps out at a soup kitchen at her church. She also plays an active role in the local reconciliation group.

All this, and she has been legally blind since 2000.

“I had a couple of years off when I lost my sight, and then managed to get back to work,” she says. “I’ve had to change my direction a little bit. What I do is more limited now, but I’m at a wonderful school that offers me a lot of support.”

One of her ideas is for an outdoor learning centre that includes a ‘yarning circle’ and Indigenous garden. Elders will be involved in constructing the site and planning and maintaining the garden.

“But my big dream is to find funding to open up a place for some of these young women to go to when they’ve finished here at Sunning Hill School,” says Trindall. “I’d like to see them in a nice home where they have support and can continue studying.”

Angela Rossmanith is a freelance writer.
Passion, humour and a commitment to shared values were front and centre in Dennis Van Roekel’s powerful address to the AEU Federal conference.

The audacity to dream

by Helen Vines

Briefly
-
- Unions need strong global relationships to counter attacks on public education.
- US teachers are continuing to fight the “flawed” approach of standardised tests.
- Opposition to these tests is growing among teachers and school administrators.

Education unions around the world may be fighting many different battles but they share a commitment to uphold the right to a quality public education for every child. With that fundamental right under attack, the future of public education depends on building and maintaining strong, supportive global relationships.

Those close connections were manifest at the AEU Federal Conference, where delegates and speakers compared notes, shared strategies and celebrated working together. Often to great effect, as demonstrated in the address by Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association.

Van Roekel has a vast reservoir of material to draw on: a maths teacher for 27 years, his anecdotes and analysis drew laughter and applause from delegates.

The message was serious and straight down the line, and no one was left in any doubt that Van Roekel presents a formidable obstacle to those in government and the private sector who would undermine the rights of teachers to professional recognition, and students to an exemplary public school education.

Formed in 1857 with 43 teachers, the NEA is a boldly powerful union. “Sometimes we take criticism for that,” says Van Roekel. “People ask ‘Why would you want power, you’re supposed to be educators, you work with small children?’”

His retort is succinct: “Of course we want power. Can you imagine any kindergarten teacher on the first day...
“In America... they want to silence us because if we were not in their way there would be a straight path towards privatisation, more testing and profiteers.”

of school or a maths teacher right after lunch saying ‘I hope I’m powerless today?’ Power is good. I wanted it every day as a parent, I wanted it every day in my classroom and I want it every day as a unionist. Power is the ability to act, to influence, to make a difference... and it ought to be something that we aspire to.

Power points
Van Roekel praised the AEU’s I Give a Gonski! campaign and applauded Angelo Gavrielatos for his observation that “it is our fundamental belief in the transformational power of public education and what it means to each individual child and the nation as a whole that defines us, that drives us”.

“I love that he used the word ‘power’,” says Van Roekel. “In America, they just want us gone. They want to silence us because if we were not in their way there would be a straight path towards privatisation, more testing and profiteers.”

Van Roekel’s advocacy for power and solidarity among educators is deeply connected to his vision of education as the solution, not the problem, in managing the challenges of the future.

He says that being advocates for educational professionals is a “noble mission statement” for teacher unions. But that the “vision statement” of a great public school for every student is where members’ passion, commitment and energy lie. Which is why the agenda must be driven by a desire for change, rather than perpetually reacting against what he calls the “status quo”.

“Here’s why it’s so important, because when members look to their union, number one they want us to fight against all those bad ideas. I call that the defence – we’ve got to stop these whackos who have charter schools that don’t make sense, who’ve got an obsession with testing – we’ve got to stop all that.”

Van Roekel regaled delegates with examples of the bad ideas his members are grappling with in the US. Notably, the scores from “flawed” testing that will be used to measure and label students, teachers, schools, districts, states, colleges, universities and teacher preparation programs.

In several states, for instance, between 30 and 60 per cent of a teacher’s professional evaluation is based on a three-hour, high-stakes standardised test given on one day of the year. In Florida, specifically, only 35,000 out of a total 225,000 educators teach subjects that are covered by the state test.

Van Roekel says for some who don’t teach maths or reading, 50 per cent of their evaluation will be based on the school’s average test scores.

What about all the rest? Van Roekel says that when he’s told that anyone with a hat on the first day and says, “Kids, I want it every day as a parent, I wanted it every day in my classroom.”

“Teachers do that hundreds of times every day, those are professional skills, and I’m sick and tired of the whackos who have charter schools that don’t make sense, who’ve got an obsession with testing – we’ve got to stop all that.”

Van Roekel is clearly fed up with outsiders who don’t have a clue what it means to work in public schools, having the gall to tell teachers what they ought to do and how to do it. As a maths teacher, he takes it as a “personal insult” when he’s told that anyone with a degree in math can do what he does in the classroom.

If that were the case, he says he could “walk in on the first day and say, ‘Kids, I already know how to do every problem in the book. We’re done’.”

Knowledge, Van Roekel counters, is merely the floor. Everything beyond that involves the professional knowledge and skill to create an environment, recognise when a student needs a hug or a push, or which one has a question, before they open their mouth.

“Teachers do that hundreds of times every day, those are professional skills, and I’m sick and tired of the de-professionalisation of who we are and what we do,” he says.

To those involved in the debate – or debacle – and therefore in need of some optimism, Van Roekel sniffs a change in the wind. He points to Texas (ironically the state that kicked off standardised testing madness in the US), where 86 per cent of state superintendents recently signed a petition to ‘Stop the insanity’.

“We’re starting to get people saying, ‘wait a minute, there’s something wrong here’. You cannot make high-stakes decisions based on these numbers because they are too unreliable and they are not valid. That’s a good sign,” says Van Roekel.

Helen Vines is a freelance writer.
Celebrating change

Promoting democracy and human rights through teacher organisations has been a life's work for Aloysius Mathews.

by Cyndi Tebbel

Aloysius Mathews is a long-time friend and comrade of the international community of teachers and their union organisations.

His retirement as chief regional coordinator for Education International's Asia-Pacific region coincided with the AEU Federal Conference, where his remarkable career was celebrated and he was named an honorary member of the union.

Mathews thanked the AEU in return for the role it has played in assisting teacher organisations in the region. “I’m referring to the contributions – physical, material, financial – the resources that all of you have been contributing to the region in the development cooperation work education has been waiting for,” he said.

He also gave a poignant shout out to the Australian education system for training his daughter to become a medical doctor. The only daughter of a single parent, who was the son of a single parent, is now working at a hospital in Queensland. “And she doesn’t want to come back; I’ve ‘lost’ her!”

AEU federal secretary and EI President Susan Hopgood says the Asia-Pacific region is EI’s largest in geographical terms with 72 affiliates in 35 countries and territories, covering a vast area comprising Central Asia, south-east Asia, north-east Asia and the Pacific.

“Due to the huge scale, EI faces a multitude of education, human rights and trade union rights issues across diverse cultural, social and economic countries,” says Hopgood.

“In crisis-torn areas life-threatening situations are not uncommon, such as having to travel through the Khyber Pass to help teachers in Afghanistan to form a teacher organisation, being deported from Nepal for working with teachers, and working in countries where there is a high element of risk of ‘being disappeared’.”

Hopgood remembers the aftermath of the Tsunami disaster in 2004, seeing Mathews and the team from the regional office in the frontline “to assist in repairing the damage and destruction and help heal survivors”.

Mathews shrugs off any suggestion that he’s brave; the risk is nothing compared to the passion he feels for training teachers to be the leaders of tomorrow, the inspiration for his 27-year career. He retires having seen important changes, including a reduction of child labour in many countries, more children attending school and the emergence of women leaders in unions.

The AEU has been a champion for gender equity, says Mathews, and held the first EI seminar for women around 25 years ago.

“At that time we did not have women in the leadership. It was a man’s world. But with that initial work and the subsequent assistance provided by the AEU to the leadership of teacher organisations in the Asia-Pacific region, the numbers have increased.”

But he says much more needs to be done. “Inside you feel impatient but sometimes change takes a lot of time. You’ve got to change the leaders, their thinking, and their attitude. So when we have seminars and conferences we’ve got to start with the leaders at the top before we take it down to the lower levels.”

Mathews believes EI’s next challenge will be to engage “with our very big brother country in this part of the world”: China.

“They have about 15 million teachers and engaging with this very big organisation is crucial when thinking about defending and deciding all matters of education and human rights for teachers.”

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.
27-year career. He retires having seen important changes, including a reduction of child labour in many countries, more children attending school and the emergence of women leaders in unions. The AEU has been a champion for gender equity, says Mathews, and held the first EI seminar for women around 25 years ago. “At that time we did not have women in the leadership. It was a man’s world. But with that initial work and the subsequent assistance provided by the AEU to the leadership of teacher organisations in the Asia-Pacific region, the numbers have increased.”

But he says much more needs to be done. “Inside you feel impatient but sometimes change takes a lot of time. You’ve got to change the leaders, their thinking, and their attitude. So when we have seminars and conferences we’ve got to start with the leaders at the top before we take it down to the lower levels.”

Mathews believes EI’s next challenge will be to engage “with our very big brother country in this part of the world”: China. “They have about 15 million teachers and engaging with this very big organisation is crucial when thinking about defending and deciding all matters of education and human rights for teachers.”

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.
African story

Teachers in Senegal struggle with many disadvantages, including the government's divide and rule approach to their unions.

by Denis Peters

Class sizes in the West African country of Senegal average 80 students and up to 100 is not unheard of. Classrooms are often 'temporary' – sometimes little more than thatched huts – but are, in reality, permanent. Often classes have to be cancelled if the weather is bad. In this environment, and with the government doing little to improve matters, the teachers face a daunting task to educate the young, and their unions have their work cut out.

Marième Sakho Dansokho, general secretary of the Senegal teachers’ union, SYPROS, outlined Senegal’s education challenges when she spoke at the AEU federal conference in February.

"Before 1995 there was correct recruitment of teachers and they were trained for three or four years," says Dansokho, whose principal language is French. "But since that date, with the conditions set by the financial institutions, they say they have to re-use the salaries. So they keep on recruiting what they call volunteers and contractors to fill the gap of teachers."

It was supposed to be a stop-gap measure in a country with a population of 12.5 million and per capita GDP less than one 20th of Australia’s. But in 2000 a new government made it law.

"Now you have to be a volunteer or a contractor," she says. "So this is not..."
African story

Teachers in Senegal struggle with many disadvantages, including the government’s divide and rule approach to their unions.

by Denis Peters

Class sizes in the West African country of Senegal average 80 students and up to 100 is not unheard of. Classrooms are often ‘temporary’ – sometimes little more than thatched huts – but are, in reality, permanent. Often classes have to be cancelled if the weather is bad.

In this environment, and with the government doing little to improve matters, the teachers face a daunting task to educate the young, and their unions have their work cut out.

Marième Sakho Dansokho, general secretary of the Senegal teachers’ union, SYPROS, outlined Senegal’s education challenges when she spoke at the AEU federal conference in February.

“Before 1995 there was correct recruitment of teachers and they were trained for three or four years,” says Dansokho, whose principal language is French. “But since that date, with the conditions set by the financial institutions, they say they have to re-use the salaries. So they keep on recruiting what they call volunteers and contractors to fill the gap of teachers.”

It was supposed to be a stop-gap measure in a country with a population of 12.5 million and per capita GDP less than one 20th of Australia’s. But in 2000 a new government made it law.

“Now you have to be a volunteer or a contractor,” she says. “So this is not progress. You go backwards.”

Dansokho became interested in the union movement during her teacher training and signed up in 1983, two years before she began teaching.

“When I became involved in the teaching sector, I heard that it had many problems. It was really, really stressful with 80 pupils in a classroom, four at one desk instead of two. Sometimes they don’t have a desk. They come with something to sit on.”

The Senegalese government has signed documents setting out universal education as its goal, but little has improved. There are 40 or more teacher unions in the country, which Dansokho puts down to the government’s divide and rule strategy.

“The fragmentation of teacher unions means it is not possible to make enough impact to win battles against a government that does not seem to make education a priority.”

“Teachers are not happy, parents are not happy, pupils are not happy, and the results are bad.”

As a result, government teachers are not well looked after. They have poor pay and conditions, and often have to find part-time jobs in the burgeoning non-government school sector to make ends meet. Sometimes monthly wages come 10 or 15 days late.

“Teachers are not happy, pupils are not happy, pupils are not happy and the results are bad. That’s why the unions are always struggling for increases in high quality teacher training, qualified teachers and improved teaching conditions.”

Denis Peters is a freelance writer.

Australian Educator 78 Winter 2013

33
Screen gems

Online video content has become a significant and engaging part of teaching in many classrooms.

by Cynthia Karena

Briefly

■ Many teachers are using short, targeted online video clips in their lessons.
■ The National Broadband Network can transform the way video is delivered to classrooms.
■ Teachers and students can make their own video clips for viewing via YouTube.

As internet access improves, online video content is taking over from DVDs and videotapes in the classroom, allowing teachers to use shorter, more targeted video clips in their lessons.

Prue Miles, media and arts teacher at Indooroopilly State High School in Brisbane, still uses DVDs, but increasingly downloads programs from the internet. "Many institutions are providing video resources online," she says. "For example, Brisbane's Gallery of Modern Art has interviews with artists, and curators talking about exhibited work. Many videos are free to download. There is very little content we would pay for because we don't have the budget."

Miles can embed links to online videos in slides, which students can access from their laptops anywhere, anytime from the school's virtual classroom.

Indooroopilly does buy some programs from ClickView, which has video libraries featuring content from producers including Video Education Australia, Marecom Projects and National Geographic.

"The days of running a 45-minute video are gone," says ClickView CEO Harvey Sanchez. "Teachers are now looking at five to 10-minute clips to support a lesson. For example, with Pythagoras' Theorem, a clip can be shown to reach out to students visually."

Miles screens mostly video clips rather than watching entire films. "In Year 11 music we would access musicians' websites to watch clips, or if we discuss mise en scène in Year 10 media, we watch a small piece of a film."

There are still times when students watch complete films, such as when the Year 10 media class compares and analyses films from different countries. But teachers at Indooroopilly don't stream video (see breakout) because the school doesn't have the fast internet connection required and it takes too long.

The main limitation is bandwidth, says Sanchez. Where the bandwidth is low, ClickView delivers low-resolution video.

Broadband transformation

Willunga High School, near Adelaide, is connected to the high-speed National Broadband Network and streams all its video, says principal Janelle Reimann. "The NBN has transformed the way we deliver content and the way we teach. We find that, with videos, students are more engaged in their learning," she says.

"Before the NBN, the connection was inconsistent and would drop out all the time. The NBN gives us consistency of upload and download. More than 800 students can get onto the same site and download videos without it dropping out."

The school started with two terabytes of data a month, but "students get excited and download everything" so it has moved to a bigger plan, says Reimann.

The $250-a-month two-terabyte plan has been replaced with four terabytes for $400. "Not bad, given that there are 1000 students."
The NBN gives teachers at Willunga the flexibility to stream videos as soon as they want to use them, says science and maths teacher Judith Boyle, who is also the e-learning coordinator. “We used to download and save YouTube clips for lessons, but if the lessons go down another path we can now screen another video immediately. Or if students have a query they can access a relevant video straightaway.”

Doing it yourself
Teachers and students at Willunga also create videos. Teachers further explain their lessons and students make video reports as well as written reports.

This year the school’s student representative council prepared a video that was uploaded to YouTube and viewed by individual classes prior to voting. “In the past [the candidates] would stand in front of a whole school assembly and make speeches,” says Reimann.

Schools with fast internet connections like Willunga’s can access free sources such as YouTube’s education segment. There’s also EnhanceTV Direct, which provides an online streaming service delivering broadcast content to schools and free study guides. The content is curated so it is age appropriate, says manager Jamie LeHuray. “It’s a persistent archive, available permanently, so teachers can create lessons based on the material without worrying that it will be taken down,” says LeHuray.

Cynthia Karena is a freelance writer.

Downloads, streaming and the NBN
There are two ways to watch videos on the internet. They can be downloaded to a computer and viewed, or they can be streamed. Streamed video is viewed as it comes to the computer. It’s like an online radio station streaming music; people typically listen to the music live and don’t download it.

The faster the internet connection, the higher the quality of video that can be streamed.

The National Broadband Network improves bandwidth, providing a “fatter pipe” for data to travel along when compared to the skinny pipe of a dial-up connection.

The NBN enables schools to download or stream high-definition videos from the internet. It will significantly improve the quality and speed of broadband access currently available to most Australian schools.

Resources
- www.youtube.com/education
- www.nbn.gov.au
- www.cisco.com
- www.enhancetv.com.au
Books

Quest for excellence

What’s going wrong in education systems around the world is countered with research in a new book based on where it’s going right.

by Steve Packer

Elegant prose, academic poise and clean reasoning based on impressive and innovative research characterise The Global Fourth Way: The Quest for Educational Excellence, by Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley.

“We’ve worked every hour we’ve got on this because we believe in what we’re doing and we believe our work serves a growing need in the community,” Hargreaves, pictured right, told Australian Educator on the line from Boston, Massachusetts, where he and Shirley are professors at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College.

“The book comes out of our research into a number of high-performing education systems in different parts of the world. We were challenged in places as different as Finland, Singapore and Canada to figure out what appeared to be some common principles that explain high performance, not only on the policy level, but right down to the level of practice in teaching, learning and leadership in schools.”

“The fact is, the strongest, highest-performing systems in different parts of the world are overwhelmingly public systems where private education is negligible or non-existent. Most of the investment is in public schools and most of the public is prepared to invest in public schools,” says Hargreaves.

Increasing attack

The book begins with the statement that, in most of the Anglo-American group of nations, public education as it has been known for over half a century is under increasing attack.

The idea of public education for the common good is being replaced by the insistence that anyone can provide education, even at a profit, so long as it improves tested outcomes for individual students, the authors write.

“One of the most serious new developments is the escalating assault on teachers. What teachers do is constantly demeaned. The inspiring purposes that brought teachers into teaching and that keep children engaged with their learning are no longer officially respected.

“These things are being squeezed aside by demands to drive up test scores, to compete with other schools and teachers, to deliver a centralised curriculum.

“A profession that once was – and in the highest-performing countries, still is – dignified as the achievement of years of long and rigorous training, is
now being recast as something that can be picked up in a few quick weeks of preparation over the summer holidays.”

The book, which follows on from Hargreaves and Shirley’s previous book, The Fourth Way: The Inspiring Future for Educational Change (2009), outlines the changes that are redefining the teaching profession, and not, according to the evidence, for the better: marketplace models of school improvement, technology as a replacement for teachers, and pay for performance.

It shows that, after more than a decade of such reforms, teachers are becoming weary. Major surveys in America have found that the percentage of teachers who say they are very satisfied in their job has declined from 59 to 44 per cent in the last two years, and the modal (most commonly occurring) number of years of teaching experience is now just one year.

“It’s absolutely terrifying,” says Hargreaves.

Principles of change
The Global Fourth Way doesn’t include Australia in its descriptions of what’s going wrong in education in some of the world’s wealthiest nations, but it doesn’t need to. Its primary aim is to pinpoint where it’s going right, and why.

“This book invites readers to explore the high-performing systems and schools to see how their underlying principles of change can be put to work in other institutions and systems – including, we hope you will discover, your own,” say the authors.

Hargreaves will be visiting Australia in early July to speak at the 2013 International Congress of Principals in Cairns. He will then conduct a series of all-day sessions at leadership development institutes in state capitals.

Shirley will also be visiting, to speak at a conference in Melbourne in September, preceded by sessions with the Australian Council for Educational Research in Sydney and Brisbane in August.

Steve Packer is a freelance writer.

Casebook

Happy days

Fun plays a big part in Sheree Arnett’s classroom as she helps children develop lifelong enthusiasm for learning.

“I’ve always been interested in education and teaching children,” Arnett says. “If I could do anything I wanted, I would have been a teacher.”

But Arnett, who has been teaching prep and Year 1 students at Edge Hill State School in suburban Cairns since 2006, never imagined being anything but a classroom teacher.

“I love being in the classroom every day and watching children grow and learn,” she says. “It’s a great feeling to see their faces light up when they discover something new.”

Arnett typically works 10-hour days, starting at 7am to ensure her students are welcomed with a vibrant classroom that reflects and celebrates their achievements.

“I have a wall of photos and projects I’ve done with the kids and other classes – all the fun stuff that showcases their enthusiasm for learning,” she says. “That gives me the motivation to think about what I can do tomorrow to make it even more exciting.”

Positive partnerships

This term Arnett’s students have been looking at symbols and signs in the environment. After a lively discussion, they identified signs they had seen at the zoo and collaborated in creating a rainforest in the classroom, with signs indicating where the various animals are located.

“We work together and talk about what they know already and what we need to do to learn more. It’s about extracting their previous knowledge, cementing what they’ve learnt and putting it into a situation they can understand and enjoy.”

Collaboration is a recurring theme in Arnett’s teaching philosophy. Creating positive partnerships means her door is always open to parents.

“They are the child’s first teacher and you need to work with them to create a successful learning environment,” she says.

“It’s so exciting when parents tell me their kids have started singing a song, counting or reading signs when they are out shopping. They’re taking the knowledge they learned in the classroom and applying it to the real world.”

She has extended that focus with an intervention program she began facilitating in 2011. Butterfly Wings invites children aged two to five years and their parents to a two-hour session of singing, reciting rhymes and playing games to prepare them for school.

“The difference in those kids coming into prep has been amazing,” she says.

Arnett also enjoys sharing what she’s learned with other teachers at her school, elsewhere in Far North Queensland and around the world. She speaks regularly at regional education conferences, and her work with the regional curriculum development officer led to her teaching methods in Year 1 reading comprehension being filmed as part of a series of video vignettes for the Supporting the Australian Curriculum Online (SACOL) initiative.

“It’s great to see my teaching, and that of other teachers, acknowledged as a worldwide resource…”

by Cyndi Tebbel

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.
When the vast majority of teachers do come to exemplify the power of professional capital, they become smart and talented, committed and collegial, thoughtful and wise. Their moral purpose is expressed in their relentless, expert-driven pursuit of serving their students and communities, and in learning, always learning, how to do that better. Those few colleagues, who persistently fall short of the mark, even after extensive assistance and support, will eventually not be tolerated by their peers because they let their profession and their students down by not teaching like pros!

BE INSPIRED to apply the guidelines of Professional Capital to your own practice as a leader and a teacher!

Individual: $330 per person  
Team: $300 per person (for teams of 5 or more)

About Andy Hargreaves

Andy Hargreaves is the Thomas More Brennan Chair in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. After teaching and lecturing in England, he co-founded and directed the International Centre for Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. He presents to and consults widely with governments, foundations, teacher unions and other groups across the world.
New 2013 Range Out Now
Creating engaging learning environments for over 50 years.
Maths • Literacy • Art & Craft • Science • LEGO® Education

Offer only valid with online orders placed before 30th June 2013. To qualify each online order needs to have at least $200 of Art & Craft items excluding GST & freight. All eligible Art & Craft items are in the Art & Craft section within the PRODUCT CATEGORIES tab at teaching.com.au

P 1800 251 497   F 1800 151 492   W teaching.com.au