Funding our future
Fighting for the full Gonski
SEA LIFE Aquariums offer guided lessons for your class with our expert staff, plus self-guided options.

Discover thousands of amazing marine creatures across a number of marine habitats, including sharks, turtles, jellyfish, rays, penguins, sea horses and many more!

Our education programs are National Curriculum aligned and can address all areas of the Australian science curriculum as well as geography, tourism, arts and hospitality.

Free downloadable teacher resources are available from our websites.

Animal display selection varies by location – contact us or visit our website for more information.

SAVE 10%* ON ALL EXCURSIONS. CALL NOW! 
QUOTE “AUS ED”

* Mention this advert when you book a new class visit to save 10% off the normal school rate. Only valid for new bookings, you must book and visit by 31 December 2016.
Global teachers’ unions offer Haiti a helping hand
An estimated 100,000 children can’t attend school because of the damage caused by Hurricane Matthew, which killed more than 1,000 people.

Stargazers unite
Schools can follow the progress of the Gaia satellite as it maps our galaxy.

Pokémon Go in the classroom
Two academics are suggesting that the Pokémon Go phenomenon could be harnessed for educational use.

Gonski: more important than ever
Needs-based funding is crucial to supporting every child’s education.

Will the numbers add up?
Claims that schools are “awash” with funds are far wide of the mark.

Time to make VET work
The time is ripe to reform the vocational education and training sector.

Keeping families safer
Schools across Australia are playing a part in helping to prevent family violence and two states in particular have stepped up their commitment.
Free trade comes at a big cost

Unions will be celebrating the possible end of the federal government’s free trade deal with 12 countries, the Trans Pacific Partnership or TPP, following the US presidential election.

Abolishing the TPP was a key part of the Trump campaign. In evidence to a parliamentary inquiry, the ACTU said the TPP would destroy 39,000 Australian jobs over 10 years. Australian education unions had long campaigned against the deal, concerned it would seriously diminish the integrity of Australia’s education system.

The AEU, National Tertiary Education Union and Independent Education Union jointly lobbied the federal government to abandon the deal. Representing more than 250,000 teachers, academics and professional staff working in schools, colleges, universities, early childhood and vocational settings, the three unions said the TPP would fundamentally limit the capacity of Australian governments to protect and preserve the quality of education in Australia. “Becoming a signatory to the most controversial and comprehensive regional agreement that has been negotiated in the Asia-Pacific region without a plebiscite or an election illustrates the Australian Government’s contempt for democratic accountability,” says AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe.

TPP negotiations were completed last year with Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, New Zealand, the United States and Vietnam.

The Foreign Affairs and Trade department claims the TPP would establish a ‘more seamless’ trade and investment environment by setting commonly agreed rules and promoting transparency of laws and regulations. “The TPP will provide greater certainty for businesses, reduce costs and red tape and facilitate participation in regional supply chains,” according to the department.

Coding works of art

Great works of art will get a new lease on life with a new technology-based program at the National Gallery of Victoria.

The NGV Digital Creatives program for school students uses technology to introduce new ways for students to understand and respond to art as well as create their own masterpieces.

Artists have used materials and tools in innovative ways to make art throughout history, says NGV director Tony Ellwood. “Contemporary artists working today use a variety of technologies to create artworks, including virtual reality technology, 3D printing and robotics. NGV Digital Creatives introduces students to computer code and digital technologies and prepares the next generation of Australian artists with new art-making materials,” he says.

Workshops held at the gallery will use the visual arts to help develop students’ digital literacy and skills in problem solving, and critical and computational thinking. There’s also a full-day coding workshop for teachers.

For more information go to ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/education
Net benefits

Indigenous Australians are 68 per cent less likely than non-Indigenous people to have any internet connection but a new project by Melbourne University aims to help out.

Seventy touchscreen kiosks have been installed by the social enterprise HITnet in remote, regional and urban communities with content covering health, nutrition and education.

Studies have shown that digital technologies can be used as an effective way of overcoming Indigenous disadvantage by providing culturally relevant information in areas such as health and education, according to a research paper published by the Melbourne Networked Society Institute.

For more information go to bit.ly/2e9rwMF

Sharing your work risks

Education workers around the world are being asked to participate in an online survey about the psychosocial risks they face at work.

The Education and Solidarity Network and MGEN (Mutuelle Générale de l’Education Nationale, France) are hoping to learn more about education professionals’ working conditions to help provide better support.

The organisations are hoping to hear from teaching staff and education support workers, including both young and more experienced professionals.

Complete the survey at bit.ly/2ey8ECz

Global teachers’ unions offer Haiti a helping hand

In Haiti, an estimated 100,000 children can’t attend school because of the damage caused by Hurricane Matthew, which killed more than 1,000 people and destroyed thousands of homes and more than 300 schools in October.

Education International (EI) is meeting with teacher unions in Haiti to plan for long-term assistance.

EI, the world’s largest federation of unions, represents more than 32 million educators around the world.

Entire regions in the southwest of the country have been devastated with residents at risk of cholera and struggling the access clean water and food, says local teachers’ union official Magalie Georges. She says the destruction is overwhelming.

“It is a true catastrophe for teachers and pupils. We have to answer to urgent needs of our members, help educators to relocate and schools to go on with the curriculum and finish the school year,” says Georges.
Pokémon Go in the classroom

Two Monash University academics are suggesting that the Pokémon Go phenomenon could be harnessed for educational use.

In a paper for The Conversation website, Amber McLeod, lecturer in education, and Kelly Carabott, assistant lecturer, write that the popular app makes game-based learning even more accessible because it uses technology that most people already have in their pockets.

"Pokémon Go has a big fan base among school students and it is clearly keeping them engaged," according to McLeod and Carabott.

“It can be used as a stimulus for a wide variety of topics over a number of year levels. Pokémon Go is a pedometer, GPS, data collection and journaling tool, and requires maths skills to play. These features can be employed to link playing the game with student learning and the curriculum.”

Their ideas for curriculum links include:

• whole-class discussions of how the movement of tectonic plates has affected GPS readings in Australia (science, geography, English)
• photographing both real insects and virtual Pokémon and then writing up Pokédex entries for the insects they have collected (science, media studies, ICT, English, art)
• designing classification flowcharts for Pokémon as a lead-up to classification of animals (science, English, maths)
• assigning students the job of Pokéstop tour guide (Pokéstops are often positioned in front of historical locations), requiring them to research and report on the history of the area (history, art, English)
• framing maths problems around the data available for each Pokémon such as height, weight and strength. For example, if I have 3,700 stardust, what combination of Pokémon can I power up that will use up all my stardust? Or Asha’s house is 600m from school. The only time she plays Pokémon Go is as she walks to and from school every day. How many days will it take her to hatch a 5.0km egg?

You can read the article at bit.ly/2bsMTSU

Ending the torment

UNESCO has drawn on evidence from around the world in a new publication aimed at helping to prevent bullying and cyber bullying.

The publication, Ending the Torment: Tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace is for government leaders and decision-makers, as well as researchers, educators, health professionals and child protection workers.

It encourages them to help design policies and laws and promote their effective implementation while supporting families and making a lasting difference in the lives of children, says Marta Santos Pais, special representative of the secretary-general on violence against children.

“The analysis, experiences and advice provided are both well researched and accessible - the data can further advance knowledge in the field, the evidence of what works provides practical examples, and the voices of children reflected in some of the articles provide essential insights for all who are interested in tackling bullying, she says.

The publication can be downloaded at http://bit.ly/2dHYq1v
There’s plenty of proof that Gonski funding is already helping disadvantaged students, so it’s vital to resist the federal government’s plan to cut schools funding.

Stand up for Gonski

Last month I visited Canberra with a fantastic group of principals and parents to tell our politicians first-hand about the importance of resourcing our schools. I was inspired by their commitment and the evidence they presented that Gonski is working to change kids’ lives.

The benefits of the extra investment in children extend from their schools to entire communities. It is hugely important that educators get out into the community and talk about the benefits that extra resources can deliver.

Unfortunately, the federal government refuses to accept the evidence that Gonski is working. They will use any distraction to shift the focus from their plan to cut $3.8 billion in schools funding in 2018 and 2019 alone.

We need state and territory governments to fight for Gonski funding, and for the new Senate to stand firm against any changes to the Australian Education Act, which controls school funding.

Birmingham is wrong: Gonski is working

In 2016, schools across Australia are receiving more Gonski funding than ever. In most states it appears as a line item in school budgets, so educators and parents can see exactly what they’re getting and how it’s being used.

Students are receiving help through speech pathology, one-to-one support in class and extra literacy and numeracy programs. Teachers are being supported by classroom aides and better training and professional development.

Education minister Simon Birmingham claims Gonski has been ‘corrupted’ or is not working. He is wrong.

The problem is not Gonski, but a federal government walking away from needs-based funding and pushing ahead with a plan to strip resources from the most disadvantaged schools.

Denying those schools resources to close gaps in achievement will see students from low-SES families two to three years behind their high-SES peers by the time they reach Year 9.

Minister Birmingham claims the Gonski agreements are flawed because the federal government provides different amounts of money to schools of equal need in different states.

The real reason for the disparity is that each state started from a different point and has a different capacity to fund schools.

New plan doesn’t solve lack of resources

Redistributing funding from one under-resourced system to another, pitting state against state, won’t solve the problems caused by a lack of resources.

Because when it comes to our public schools EVERY state public system, apart from the ACT, is below the schooling resource standard (SRS). In some states the average public school is receiving just over 80 per cent of what it needs.

Despite minister Birmingham’s comments that some private schools are over-funded, his model would see private schools receive an extra 62 per cent of extra federal funding after 2017. That’s what happens when you ignore need.

In contrast, public schools, which educate around two-thirds of all students, would receive 80 per cent of the extra federal funding in the last two years of the Gonski agreements.

The Coalition says it wants to re-design schools funding, but it has no plan, only a series of threats and thought bubbles to disguise its real agenda of cutting funds to schools.

How does the federal government expect schools to maintain and extend the great results they’re achieving through Gonski without extra resources?

More importantly, how can it explain to disadvantaged students and their parents why it does not think they deserve the support they need at school?

Gonski is changing lives across Australia. For many children in disadvantaged schools it is the only chance they have to get the support they need. That’s why we’ll keep fighting for it.

Correna Haythorpe

AEU FEDERAL PRESIDENT

...pitting state against state won’t solve the problems caused by a lack of resources.
THE AEU is calling on state and territory governments to stand firm against Malcolm Turnbull’s plans to scrap needs-based Gonski funding after 2017.

Gonski: more important than ever

The ‘I Give a Gonski’ community campaign has increased public awareness of schools funding inequities and the need to ensure that schools have the resources to educate every child.

The Gonski campaign is continuing and the focus now shifts to the states and territories as the Federal Government tries to negotiate a new funding agreement, and to the Senate, which will need to stand firm and block any changes to the Australian Education Act that reduce schools funding.

AEU Federal president Correna Haythorpe says the ongoing campaign builds on the efforts of the thousands of parents, educators and community members who worked to make Gonski an issue during the federal election campaign.

An AEU delegation of principals, parents and teachers visited Canberra in September to meet federal MPs and tell them why the benefits flowing from Gonski must be continued.

Principals from disadvantaged schools told of how extra resources were being used to change the lives of their students.

Rebecca Hack, principal of Berserker Street State School, a highly-disadvantaged school in Rockhampton told MPs that Gonski had enabled the school to develop a six-month intensive training program for new teachers, to equip them to deal with students with disability or who had suffered from trauma.

The school has also used the extra funds to provide extra one-to-one support, literacy interventions and speech pathology for students who are behind their peers, as well as laptops for students and running a gifted students program.

‘Educators who are seeing the benefits of Gonski first hand know how important it is that we continue our campaign to secure this funding,’ says Haythorpe.

The Turnbull Government continues to ignore public support for Gonski and is pushing ahead with its alternative funding plan, which would deny $3.8 billion to schools in 2018 and 2019 alone.

Its model effectively ends needs-based funding, with 62 per cent of increased federal funding going to private schools, regardless of their need.

In addition, the promise the Coalition made in 2013 to fund all students with disability according to their need has been postponed yet again, and now will not happen until at least 2018.

We know that more than 250,000 students with a disability, who need funded support, are not getting it – that’s over half of the total.

We need the federal government to take the lead on ensuring disability is properly funded in our schools, not keep delaying the support that schools and students urgently need.

States must hold firm

The state and territory education ministers met federal education minister Simon Birmingham in September to discuss the distribution of needs-based school funding arrangements and poured cold water on the federal government’s plan. All states except WA said they would oppose any attempt to cut funding.

“The Coalition’s plan would deliver a terrible outcome for public schools, in particular for those with high levels of disadvantage,” says Haythorpe.

“We need all states to stand firm for needs-based funding and not accept
any deal which short-changes schools and students.”

Minister Birmingham is doing his best to discredit Gonski, but can offer no firm evidence to back up his claims that it’s been ‘corrupted’ and doesn’t work.

In fact, the Gonski funding that schools across Australia received in 2016 surpassed any previous year. And, it is being distributed according to individual student needs.

The biggest increases have gone to schools in regional areas, schools with high numbers of low-SES students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students from non-English speaking homes.

The NSW, Victorian and Queensland governments have announced their Gonski allocations for 2017. In NSW, schools will receive an extra $219 million while in Victoria, schools will get another $358 million.

Haythorpe says funding for additional teachers and resources is making a huge difference and if the minister has a better strategy for how schools will maintain and extend the results they’re achieving without Gonski needs-based funding, she’d like to hear it.

“The federal government pays lip service to needs-based funding but its plan would mean the most disadvantaged schools will never receive the resources the Gonski Review found that they needed,” she says.

Birmingham has said he wants to redistribute funding between states but this would just mean shifting funding from one under-funded public school system to another, and not add a single extra educator or program.

The Senate will also play an important role, with any cuts to Gonski likely to require amendments to the Australian Education Act. With Labor and the Greens backing Gonski, that means the crossbenchers may have a big say in how schools are funded.

So far, Gonski has the support of the Nick Xenophon Team and independent Senator Jacqui Lambie, which will make it very difficult for Malcolm Turnbull to end Gonski after 2017.

If Senators voted against Gonski they would be going against the wishes of voters. A poll taken after the election by The Australia Institute found that 64 per cent of Australians wanted the Senate to vote to retain Gonski.

**The Coalition’s plan would deliver a terrible outcome for public schools, in particular for those with high levels of disadvantage.**

Correna Haythorpe
AEU federal president

Keeping the pressure on

The funding situation is so dire that David Gonski himself pledged to donate his own money to disadvantaged public schools in NSW, and has persuaded other philanthropists to join him.

This announcement should be a wake-up call that all public schools should have their needs met by government, not by charity.

A lack of resources affects everything a school needs or tries to do for its students, whether it is professional development for teachers or investment in support programs to give students their best chance to succeed.

The Gonski Review recommended that all schools be lifted to a minimum level of funding by 2019, a benchmark known as the Schooling Resource Standard. At this stage, every state public school system — apart from the ACT — is below the SRS. In some states the average public school is receiving just over 80 per cent of what it needs.

Schools in the NT and Tasmania, which receive more funding from the federal government because their state governments don’t have the resources to meet student needs alone, will simply miss out if the Gonski funding plan is torn up.

In NSW and South Australia, governments know Gonski is working and have promised to fund their share of the full six years, regardless of what the federal government does.

Haythorpe says all states need to guarantee their own Gonski funding as part of keeping the pressure on the federal government.

“Investing in education is vital, not just for today but for the future of our workforce,” she says.

“The AEU will continue its campaign for proper, needs-based funding of our schools because we know Gonski is working and schools, students and parents should be able to rely on the certainty of funding which Gonski is delivering,” Haythorpe says.
“It’s a hand up not a handout”

Needs-based funding is giving schools in Victoria the support they need to bring real change to students, teachers and their communities.
Allocating school budgets is always a juggling act for principals. There’s never enough money to satisfy every contender’s demands, however valid. But the task is even more difficult when planning is held hostage by uncertainty.

The federal government’s failure to commit to the final two years of Gonski funding is a game of bait and switch. Schools that have seen dramatic, positive change from additional funding face the very real possibility that it will be cut, weakening or obliterating programs that are already showing results.

Under allocations announced by the Andrews government, Victorian schools will get an additional $358 million in needs-based Gonski funding. Beyond 2017, there is no certainty and schools in the state could see cuts of up to $950 million in 2018/19.

In low-socioeconomic schools, it can mean the difference between a child participating in an excursion with classmates, taking a book home at night or mastering the physical dexterity necessary to hold a pencil correctly.

Even small cuts can be devastating for schools like Kangaroo Flat Primary, on the outskirts of Bendigo in northern Victoria, where 90 per cent of families are entitled to an Education Maintenance Allowance and most “struggle”, says Grade 6 teacher Alastair Pata.

This year the school received $500,000 in Gonski funding, the second-largest amount in the region. Pata, who’s also the sub-branch rep and state councillor for AEU Victoria, says the school made it a priority to explain to the school community what the funding would mean.

“We had a Gonski morning tea at the start of the year and put information in the school newsletter,” he says. “Everyone is happy to hear what we’re doing with the additional funding, but they’re really concerned about what will happen if it goes away.”

**Fighting the fear-factor**

The 2016 funding boost for Kangaroo Flat Primary meant more teachers and smaller class sizes for its 280 students. Plus 57 additional hours of education support staff to work with small groups on subjects like spelling, phonetics and writing.

In Prep 1 and 2, children meet with an occupational therapist to become more capable in holding a pencil, improving their ability to write letters and words.

“Teachers have noticed a significant improvement, particularly in writing stamina,” says Pata. “And we were able to purchase additional reading and numeracy resources so every child can have take-home readers, and it’s a different book each time.”

Grades 3-6, meanwhile, got a new transition officer two days a week to lessen students’ anxieties about the change to secondary school and help them feel good about the process.

“We’re looking at big improvements there to reduce the dropout effect in Years 8 and 9, which we notice here and across the state,” says Pata.

If funding ends in 2018, Pata says the effect will be devastating and students will bear the brunt of the cuts.

“Instantly we won’t be able to afford the additional ES hours and class sizes will increase.

“Teachers get frustrated when they hear that smaller class sizes don’t matter. They can see the difference when a Grade 1 or 2 classroom has 22 versus 16 students.”

Pata calls small group or one-on-one support a “golden time” for teachers when it comes to getting the most out of their students.
“It plays on teachers’ minds and they get frustrated because they can see that kids who don’t really work well in a large group are having success they didn’t have before because of the funding that allows for small groups,” says Pata.

Access for all
Magpie Primary is a small, low-SES school near Ballarat. Two years ago it had 43 students, now it’s up to 88 and expected to go higher, says principal Peter Clifton.

Limited support from the state education department has had minimal impact over the years. But $112,000 in new Gonski money for 2016 has made a big difference already.

For example, some of the funds have been used to reduce the cost of schooling for families by setting low flat fees for a range of activities from excursions to swimming to books. “We have kids who’ve never been to the beach except with the school, who’ve never been on the train except with school. And more than half of the school had never been on a tram!” says Clifton.

“Now it only costs $3 per student, so no one is getting left behind because mum and dad can’t afford it.”

More education and administrative support staff mean Clifton, who used to divide his time between teaching and running the school, can focus less on answering phones and more on teachers’ professional development.

Teachers regularly visit other classrooms in the region, gaining experience from their peers that they bring back to Magpie. And the school’s integration aide is being developed to transition from helping tie shoes and wipe noses to someone who can work alongside teachers as extra learning support.

“It’s having an amazing impact on the kids,” says Clifton. “Most of our results are well above state average and that’s a direct benefit.”

The budget for 2017 will be almost $250,000, and he’s excited by the prospect. Although he has no option but to wait and see if pressure on the federal government will lead to a change in policy.

“For this community, Gonski is a hand up not a handout. It’s helping to change the learning outcomes for a generation of kids who deserve a chance,” says Clifton.

Higher needs
Gonski funding doesn’t just make a difference in disadvantaged schools. In suburban Melbourne, Ringwood Secondary School put its 2016 allocation of $172,000 towards assisting students most in need.

Principal Michael Phillips told AEU Victoria’s AEU News the funds have been used to provide an additional comprehensive ESL program to cater for 80 students from refugee backgrounds across Years 7 to 12 who’ve had “little or no education at all”.

It’s also made a difference to students who lost funding from the Program for Students with Disabilities when they left primary school.

“By having the Gonski resource there, we’ve been able to...mitigate something that could have been pretty difficult,” says Clifton.
3 ways to save on a new car

1. Get a great discount
   You save $3,093* on the car’s purchase price, using our buying power

2. No GST to pay
   You save $3,104* as there’s no GST to pay on the car’s purchase price

3. Enjoy great tax savings
   You save $12,828* in income tax over 4 years

Save $19,025*
Over 4 years on a new Mazda CX-5 Maxx Sport valued at $37,918**

Save thousands with a novated car lease.
Get an obligation free quote today.
1300 156 497 | www.teachersleasing.com.au

*Savings example is indicative only and is based on the following assumptions: living in NSW 2123, salary: $70,000 gross p.a., travelling 15,000 kms p.a., lease term: 48 months. The purchase price discount represents a typical saving and is compared to the manufacturer’s on-road price of the new vehicle. All tax savings calculations include budgets for fuel, servicing, tyres, maintenance and re-registration over the period of the lease. These calculations also include comprehensive motor insurance, 2 year extended warranty and gold aftermarket pack which includes window tint as part of the offer. The total amount saved is a comparison to financing the purchase price of the vehicle over 4 years and paying for all running and maintenance costs out of your post-tax earnings. Your actual savings will depend on your income tax bracket, the GST processing method nominated by your employer, administration fees payable under your employer’s salary packaging plan, the negotiated Smartleasing discount on your chosen vehicle and your personal circumstances. **The vehicle price stated for CX-5 Maxx Sport is correct at the time of print and may be subject to change. Vehicle price stated includes all NSW on-road costs and government charges, and excludes gold aftermarket pack.
Claims that schools are “awash” with funds are way off the mark. The final tranche of Gonski funding – $3.8 billion in 2018 and 2019 – is vital to ensure every child at every school gets the resources they need.

Will the numbers add up?

The Coalition government has always been keen to downplay the urgent requirement for needs-based funding in schools and, to that end, has tended to overstate the new money flowing into the sector following the Gonski review.

Education minister Simon Birmingham talks about “record funding” to schools and his predecessor Christopher Pyne claimed that schools were “awash with extra funds”. Pyne told the ABC’s AM program in 2014 that “schools have all the money they need to get the outcomes for our students”.

The Coalition now plans to end needs-based funding after 2017 and stop schools from receiving $3.8 billion in extra funding in 2018 and 2019.

Are schools getting record funding? But has funding for schools grown to such extraordinary levels that they now have all they need to meet the diverse needs of their students?

The Productivity Commission has claimed that per student funding for schools has increased by about 14 per cent in the past decade, after taking inflation into account.

However analysis by Peter Goss, school education program director at the Grattan Institute, has found that this analysis ignores the fact that teachers’ wages have also grown each year by about one per cent above inflation, in line with typical wage growth.

“After accounting for the increase in student numbers and teacher wages, the effective increase is closer to half the Productivity Commission’s figure of 14 per cent per student across government and non-government schools.” Goss wrote in a FactCheck on The Conversation website.

This is an important point but still fails to take into account how that funding was distributed.

An analysis of the Productivity Commission’s own data by Save Our Schools found that from 2005 to 2014 government funding to public schools increased by just 3.3 per cent per student, compared to 9.8 per cent to private schools.

Even in the lead up to Gonski, with the addition of initiatives such as the National Partnerships Program, from 2009 to 2014 government funding to public schools grew at half the rate of that to private schools.

This is despite the fact that student need is much higher in public schools.

Analysis of My School data shows that low-SES students comprise 30 per cent of all public school enrolments compared to 15 per cent in Catholic schools and only nine per cent in Independent schools.

Whatever the many shortfalls and inequalities in their funding at the end of 2017, schools have been served notice that a Coalition government in Canberra has no plan to deal with them after that date.

A report by Dr Jim McMorrow

Education funding expert
The positive effects of a small overall rise in schools funding have been outweighed by the negative effects of not distributing it on the basis of need.

**Children missing out**
The Gonski Review’s comprehensive investigation into schools funding five years ago concluded that too many children were still missing out because of a lack of resources.

That is still the case today, with less than 20 per cent of the extra resources in the Gonski agreements delivered to schools by 2016.

Gonski’s recommendations included a new system to ensure adequate resources for all schools and more funding to help educate children with special needs. It used a benchmark – known as a schooling resource standard – to set a base rate of funding for each student with loadings added to cover the extra costs of meeting certain educational needs.

The Australian Education Act contains specific rates of indexation for schools, depending on how their funding levels compare to the SRS. The six-year Gonski agreements signed with states and territories outline the transition from the old funding system to the new one which will see schools reach the funding levels set out in the Australian Education Act.

The transition was steeply weighted to years five and six, with the intention that, by the end, every school would be funded to at least 95 per cent of the schooling resource standard.

**Making a difference**
Despite the overwhelming evidence of funding shortfalls in education that led to the Gonski Review and recommendations, the Productivity Commission report also asserted that the small increase in education funding over a decade had failed to see any more than a “little improvement” in student achievement.

But the report ignored the unfair distribution of resources prior to the introduction of the Gonski needs-based funding in 2014, says AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe.

“The lack of improvement in student results has happened during a time when funding was not based on need, and when the biggest increases in resources went to schools which did not need them,” she says.

A detailed analysis of the National Partnerships Program showed that extra targeted funding to low-SES schools had led to increases in literacy and numeracy for students – backing the recommendations of Gonski.

Today, public schools in most states are beginning to receive additional funding which can deliver benefits for students.

The evidence from schools, published in dozens of stories in Australian Educator as well as on the I Give a Gonski website and in the AEU report, *Getting Results: Gonski funding in Australian schools*, shows that Gonski needs-based funding is making a big difference.

While the real results are likely to be seen in the years to come, principals and teachers are already excited by students’ improved levels of engagement and their increased literacy and numeracy along with reductions in behavioural issues.

These early indications of the success of a program that targets the gaps in student achievement underline the need to continue Gonski funding, says Haythorpe.

This is particularly important with two-thirds of the extra resources to be delivered in 2018 and 2019.
NATIONAL FutureSchools EXPO + CONFERENCES
Shaping the future of Australia’s schools

It's time to book for
Australia's largest education event for schools

GET 10% OFF AS AN AEU READER
Use code ‘AEU10’ before 9 December 2016

REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!
Secure your seat at National FutureSchools Expo conferences and masterclasses.
www.futureschools.com.au

Interested in sponsoring or exhibiting at National FutureSchools Expo 2017?
Contact education@acevents.com.au
or call (02) 8908 8555
Abandoning what works
Alarming, the Turnbull government wants to abandon this system of needs-based funding just as the evidence is building that it is working.

The government’s re-election in July 2016 confirmed “the uncertain and troubling state of public policy for the funding of schools in Australia”, according to a report by education funding expert Dr Jim McMorrow.

The government’s education policy is largely outlined in the May 2016 Federal Budget, which abandons the Gonski Review’s recommendation of a schooling resource standard.

“Whatever the many shortfalls and inequalities in their funding at the end of 2017, schools have been served notice that a Coalition government in Canberra has no plan to deal with them after that date,” the McMorrow report says.

“As far as the Coalition is concerned, schools operating at resource levels below their ‘Gonski standard’ will just have to soldier on.”

The McMorrow analysis shows that:

- 62 per cent of extra federal funding would go to private schools after 2017, despite their lower level of need

- Per student funding to public schools would increase by just 1.8% in 2018/19 and 2.1% in 2019/20 - not enough for a school of 500 students to hire even one extra full-time teacher.

This is effectively a return to the pre-Gonski era of funding based on sector rather than need.

A resources vacuum
McMorrow notes that the values of the Australian Education Act, set out in its preamble, include the principle:

“...The quality of a student’s education should not be limited by where the student lives, the income of his or her family, the school he or she attends, or his or her personal circumstances.”

But the Coalition’s funding commitments don’t appear to be consistent with this principle, says McMorrow.

Rather than a clear position on equity and needs-based funding, the Coalition refers more generally to national agreements on teaching quality, school autonomy, parent engagement and curriculum reform – all in a “resources vacuum”, he says.

“The Coalition’s current policy...effectively ‘freezes’ Commonwealth funding for schools at the level reached in 2017. This is well short of the funding required for all schools to reach resource standards set out in the Gonski report and the Australian Education Act,” McMorrow says.

The Coalition’s pre-election announcement of $1.2 billion over four years does no more than cover enrolment growth, wage rises and inflation in the education sector.

McMorrow says the government has at best “budgeted for a holding pattern” with “no educational rationale for its future funding arrangements”.

He concludes: “This is an insecure and potentially volatile situation for schools.”

This is why false claims that schools are receiving record funding, or that increasing resources won’t make a difference to results, should not be allowed to distract us from the Coalition’s real agenda of undermining needs-based Gonski funding and leaving public schools without the resources they need.●

Great schools have great leaders
Principals Australia Institute (PAI) is committed to strengthening school leadership and the profession, and providing relevant and effective products and services to build and develop school leaders of tomorrow. With experience in delivering mental health and wellbeing programs – KidsMatter Primary and MindMatters into schools across the country – PAI is well-placed to help principals and their teams achieve positive outcomes for their schools. To find out more, contact PAI on 08 8394 2100 or email contact@pai.edu.au.
Public education in the Northern Territory is expected to get a boost following the change of government.

**NT schools back on the agenda**

If the new NT Labor government fulfils promises the party made during the recent election campaign, it will reverse cuts made by the previous Country Liberal Party government.

The CLP government was handed $272 million in Gonski funds from Canberra but it came with no strings attached. As a result, much of the money ended up in consolidated revenue or in rebuilding infrastructure, rather than helping improve results for students, says Jarvis Ryan, AEU NT branch president.

“Under the CLP government, none of that Gonski funding made a difference in schools. None of it was used to employ additional teachers or offer new programs. It was a huge waste of potential and money,” he says.

To add insult to injury, the government also cut funding to schools by about 5 per cent over three years.

Ryan says the most positive change for schools under the new government is the new education minister, Eva Lawler, who comes to the role with decades of experience in NT education.

“She is a teacher, a former school principal and has been a senior executive in the department of education. She is working assiduously to visit schools to identify the main areas that need immediate attention,” he says.

“She’s made it very clear that she wants a strong relationship with the union, the parents, lobbying groups, and COGSO (Council of Government School Organisations), and she wants to improve the culture in the education department.”

Labor pledged funds during the election campaign to employ an extra 165 teachers over four years as well as providing more for students with special needs.

“We’re hoping we’ll see an immediate change at the beginning of next year, with more teachers and support staff,” says Ryan.

The next step is to secure a commitment for Gonski funding from 2017 onwards, using the appropriate resourcing formula.

“The hope is we can work towards a genuine needs-based funding model in the Northern Territory,” says Ryan.

“We welcome Labor’s commitment to reverse the cuts but that’ll just restore funding to the levels of four years ago. We’ve seen significant inflation and wages growth since then.

“That’s why this additional Gonski funding is absolutely critical, along with a strong commitment from the new government that all of that money will be spent in schools, funding teachers, staff and programs,” Ryan says.

**Education’s bigger role**

Another major item on the new government’s agenda is the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory that followed an ABC Four Corners program about years of abuse in youth detention centres.

The AEU will be making a submission to the inquiry and a number of members are expected to be called to appear.

Ryan says it’s vital that the inquiry look more broadly at systemic disadvantage for Indigenous people.

“For example, there’s been evidence presented that 80 per cent of juvenile
Detainees suffer from hearing loss, which is quite extraordinary.”

It’s a key barrier to learning faced by Indigenous children, particularly those in remote areas, that could be overcome with appropriate levels of support in schools to make sure that students aren’t falling behind from an early age, says Ryan.

“We know that our jails are full of people who can’t read and write. And we’re failing these kids. That’s the great shame in the NT that needs to be addressed,” he says.

“Education has a role to play here and we need to ensure that we’re doing more to assist our most vulnerable students, those most at risk of falling into the criminal justice system. Additional funding will really help there.

“But it’s also about having better-informed approaches. For example, there’s increasing emphasis on recognising that trauma, such as family violence, is in the background for many students with behavioural difficulties.

Unless we get onto those issues early and come up with effective strategies, we’re looking at those kids potentially ending up in the justice system. Additional funding will really help there.

Shepherdson is one of nine bilingual schools in the Northern Territory. It teaches pre-school through to primary students who speak dozens of first languages and are taught exclusively in Djambarrpuyuŋu until the end of Year 3.

Cotton, who’s in his second year at Shepherdson, says the school’s focus is community capacity building through programs that acknowledge two worlds – the Yolŋu and Balanda (white) – and how strong relationships can bring them together.

At Shepherdson, capacity building starts with sending teachers and their Yolŋu assistants to meet-and-greet parents. A hello and a handshake, then other visits including sometimes taking students home at the end of the day to show parents their good work from school.

“A lot of our parents are fearful of coming to the school gates because of their experience of education,” says Cotton. Building strong relationships that foster better understanding means “you’re better able to have the harder conversations around misbehaviours or non-attendance”.

He wants parents to feel comfortable coming to the school to share opinions, ideas and complaints. And, most importantly, to be listened to.

Supporting self-determination

He says the school is funded and in a good position to offer hands-on support and partnerships that can advance self-determination for parents and students, as well as provide professional development and mentoring for Indigenous staff and aspiring local leaders and organisations.

For the Yolŋu, a big part of that is grounding the kids in culture through programs like Learning on Country, which puts kids together with local rangers to learn about country, bush medicine, the seasons and songlines.

“Australia’s immigrant populations are well versed in where they came from, their culture and their language. That’s been neglected here,” says Cotton.

“We’re losing Indigenous languages and associated cultures at a huge rate. If we want our people to progress and be self-determining in a true sense, they need to know who they are, where they belong. We need to value them.”

---

**Schools have an obligation to support the advancement of self-determination in Indigenous communities, says principal Simon Cotton.**

Dhapirrk Wukirri is the new motto of Shepherdson College. It means ‘amazing school’ in Djambarrpuyuŋu, the language of the Indigenous Yolŋu people who live in Galiwin’ku on Elcho Island, off the coast of Arnhem Land.

It features on the school crest and rings out from assemblies as principal Simon Cotton leads 800-plus students in a call and response. “I say dhapirrk wukirri three times and the kids say it back,” he says. “It’s really gaining ground.”

---

**Building capacity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch students from Shepherdson College performing as part of the Indigenous Hip Hop program: youtube.com/watch?v=w4Pcfl3oTTg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And in ‘We are the kids from Galiwin’ku’ youtube.com/watch?v=OsUa-Sh1YmU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**AGENDA**
Take your skills in education to the world stage!

AVI is recruiting all-year round for qualified and experienced educators for diverse roles including Vocational Trainers, Curriculum Development experts, Teacher Trainers, ESL/English Language program experts, Inclusive/Special Education teachers and Educational Management professionals.

For the Professional Learning and Mentoring Program (PLMP) as part of Australia’s Partnership for Human Development in Timor-Leste, we are seeking applications from experienced Teacher Trainers and Special/Inclusive Education experts.

Jocelyn Condon was placed as a Vocational Education Mentor with the East Timor Development Agency. She is pictured with her students at the Hospitality Training Centre in Dili.

For more information go to our website: avi.org.au
Contact: Ian McDonald +61 3 9279 1795; imcdonald@avi.org.au
The time is ripe to reform the vocational education and training sector and revitalise TAFE.

Time to make VET work

The federal government’s new vocational education and training student loans program, due to begin in 2017, should be seen as just a first step to reforming the VET sector, according to the AEU.

Education minister Simon Birmingham announced the end of the disastrous VET FEE-HELP loans scheme in October, saying it would be replaced by a new program that provides tougher barriers to entry for providers, properly considered loan caps on courses, stronger course eligibility criteria, mandatory student engagement measures, a ban on the use of brokers to recruit students and a stronger focus on students successfully completing courses.

VET FEE-HELP cost taxpayers $2.9 billion in 2015. It reduced the quality of courses, ripped off students and saddled taxpayers with huge debts, says AEU federal TAFE secretary Pat Forward.

The decision to scrap it can help to restore sanity to the way VET is funded, she says.

“All governments now need to admit that privatisation of vocational education and training has failed, and to make properly funding TAFEs a priority,” says Forward.

“The flawed VET FEE-HELP scheme went hand in hand with cuts to government funding for TAFEs.”

But restoring TAFE funding would ensure that everyone has access to quality vocational education, she says.

“We need to take that a step further and ensure that at least 70 per cent of all government funding is reserved for TAFEs.”

The education minister has effectively admitted that TAFEs are delivering high quality and good value. He’s indicated that they won’t be required to apply for registration under the new scheme, unlike private operators.

Forward says that investing in TAFE is essential to restoring trust in the vocational education system.

“We have seen enrolment in vocational education crash by 11 per cent in the last year – due to the loss of trust which has been created by dodgy private operators.”

“Vocational education remains the worst-funded sector of our post-school education system,” Forward says.

In the United Kingdom, a revolutionary change to vocational education and training, now referred to as technical education, is underway.

The Post-16 Skills Plan is the UK government’s response to the Sainsbury Review of Technical Education, which recommended a comprehensive overhaul of educational pathways for students who reach 16 years of age.

Various reports had found the previous system to be “an incoherent mishmash of vocational, general and academic studies with weak educational and employment outcomes,” writes Gavin Moodie, adjunct professor at RMIT University in The Conversation.

There’ll be two tracks for students to choose from, in addition to university.

The first is the traditional apprenticeship that includes at least 12 months on-the-job training and is primarily funded by an employer levy on large companies, writes Dr Don Zoellner, a research associate at Charles Darwin University, in The Australian TAFE Teacher magazine.

The second track is through colleges that must provide a substantial and fully funded work placement. There will be ‘bridging’ courses that will allow students to move between the two technical education tracks and university.

The Sainsbury Review made a number of quite specific and detailed observations of ‘high-performing technical education systems’ in other nations but Australia didn’t rate a mention, Zoellner notes.

Meanwhile, in what might be a lesson for Australia, the UK government’s panel saw a “strong case” for providing public funding only to not-for-profit providers.

UK overhauls technical training system

We need to…

ensure that at least 70 per cent of all government funding is reserved for TAFEs.

Pat Forward

AEU federal TAFE secretary

In the United Kingdom, a revolutionary change to vocational education and training, now referred to as technical education, is underway.

The Post-16 Skills Plan is the UK government’s response to the Sainsbury Review of Technical Education, which recommended a comprehensive overhaul of educational pathways for students who reach 16 years of age.

The Post-16 Skills Plan is the UK government’s response to the Sainsbury Review of Technical Education, which recommended a comprehensive overhaul of educational pathways for students who reach 16 years of age.

Various reports had found the previous system to be “an incoherent mishmash of vocational, general and academic studies with weak educational and employment outcomes,” writes Gavin Moodie, adjunct professor at RMIT University in The Conversation.

There’ll be two tracks for students to choose from, in addition to university.

The first is the traditional apprenticeship that includes at least 12 months on-the-job training and is primarily funded by an employer levy on large companies, writes Dr Don Zoellner, a research associate at Charles Darwin University, in The Australian TAFE Teacher magazine.

The second track is through colleges that must provide a substantial and fully funded work placement. There will be ‘bridging’ courses that will allow students to move between the two technical education tracks and university.

The Sainsbury Review made a number of quite specific and detailed observations of ‘high-performing technical education systems’ in other nations but Australia didn’t rate a mention, Zoellner notes.

Meanwhile, in what might be a lesson for Australia, the UK government’s panel saw a “strong case” for providing public funding only to not-for-profit providers.
Schools across Australia are playing a part in helping to prevent family violence, and two states in particular have stepped up their commitment.

By Rom Rogers

The family violence prevention and education program, Respectful Relationships, has received a massive boost from the Victorian Government following a successful AEU campaign. An injection of $21.8 million will provide extra staff, professional learning and resources and the program will become a mandated key curriculum area in Victorian schools for all years of schooling.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended that respectful relationships education be mandated in every government school in Victoria from prep to Year 12.

AEU Victoria lobbied the government to implement the recommendation and the union was consulted during the development of the program. The architects of the program from the University of Melbourne have refuted negative comments by some media commentators. In an article on The Conversation website, associate professor Helen Cahill and researchers Catherine Smith and Jessica Crofts note claims that the program presents “all men as ‘bad’ and all women as ‘victims’” but say this misrepresents the program.

The academics say it’s possible to talk with children and young people about gender without “activating a gender war”.

A 19-school pilot, run by lobby group OurWatch, showed widespread improvements in students’ knowledge, attitudes and confidence in discussing issues of violence, equality and respectful relationships.

Research shows that students presented with these programs:
- show improved academic outcomes
- demonstrate more positive social behaviour
- have lower rates of mental health problems
- are less likely to engage in violent, risky and disruptive behaviour
- are less likely to misuse alcohol.

The program’s whole-of-school approach is vital to helping change the culture, says AEU Victoria vice president Briley Duncan.

“If we can get students thinking about these things, then they’ll leave school with a broader knowledge about the impact of behaviours and that will then lead into their relationships.”

The government’s additional funding commitment is also an important factor.
in the program’s success, says Duncan. “We wanted to make sure that staff were supported in doing this work effectively and ensuring this wasn’t an additional workload for our members,” she says.

The state government has also acknowledged the AEU’s view that teachers will need support to deal with any instances of students reporting family violence. It has employed 17 dedicated health officers to assist with the expected increase.

Schools can apply to receive $10,000 per year for two years to implement the program. These schools will then act as mentors to other schools. While welcoming the funding, the AEU has called for it to be extended to the full five years as recommended by the Royal Commission.

In addition, family violence leave for staff is high on the agenda of current AEU negotiations with the Victorian government.

Queensland program underway
Meanwhile, Queensland is also introducing a Respectful Relationships program in schools.

The Queensland program was developed in consultation with unions, including the Queensland Teachers Union, and contains a new set of compulsory lessons from P-12.

“We’re pleased that the government has taken on board our view that it should be embedded within the curriculum rather than being treated as an add-on,” says QTU vice president Sam Pidgeon.

Pidgeon wants to see sufficient support and resources for delivery of the program.

“We want to ensure that it’s not simply lip service; that it drives long-term structural and cultural change,” she says.

Staff will be allowed to opt out if they feel uncomfortable with the material. The union is working to ensure that staff are given training on how to recognise and report signs of family violence displayed by students.

“We know that there are a number of staff and students in our classes who have experienced family violence and gender-based violence,” says Pidgeon.

She says it’s important to have a comprehensive approach that addresses the culture within the department and between colleagues.

“If we want schools where people are treating each other with respect, we need to promote cultures where women are valued and where there is a zero tolerance for bullying and sexism.”

If we can get students thinking about these things, then they’ll leave school with a broader knowledge about the impact of behaviours and that will then lead into their relationships.

Briley Duncan
AEU Victoria

Making it national
The new programs in Victoria and Queensland are celebrated as a significant boost in the campaign to prevent domestic violence and several other states are now hoping to follow suit based on the principles of a mandated curriculum, whole-of-school approach, and professional learning for teachers.

In New South Wales the updated syllabus contains resources for lessons on recognising signs of family violence. The NSW Teachers’ Federation believes the principles developed by OurWatch represent best practice.

AEU Tasmania has begun consultations with the state government, which has announced funding of $355,000 to develop and deliver a new respectful relationships program for K-12.

The ACT Government last year announced $615,000 to support the delivery of lessons about the importance of respectful relationships. Meanwhile, South Australian schools have been running similar programs for several years.

SHine SA trains teachers in most schools to deliver lessons on relationships and sexual health. Lesson topics include gender stereotypes, consent, signs of an abusive relationship and healthy ways to express feelings.

WA and NT have not yet incorporated compulsory lessons on domestic violence prevention and awareness into the curriculum.

Rom Rogers is a teacher and freelance writer.

Resources
If you or someone you know is affected by sexual assault or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au.
In an emergency, call 000. For more information about a service in your state or local area download the DAISY App in the App Store or Google Play.
With the end of 2016 in sight, some of our new educators are already reflecting on the experience they have gained from an often testing third term.

BY NIC BARNARD

No relaxing on the home straight

Ilness, injury and bereavement, and sudden changes of curriculum have threatened to dampen enthusiasm among the four graduate teachers *Australian Educator* has been following throughout the year.

The good news is that they can talk about the support they received from colleagues and leadership, and they still feel they chose the right career.

Secondary teachers Aiko Wendfeldt in Canberra, country Victorian arts teacher Cally Grogan, and English and history teacher Jenny O’Reilly in Tennant Creek are in their second year of teaching. Tom Davis is in his third year at a Melbourne school.

For Davis, Term 3 at Montmorency South Primary School was overshadowed by parent-teacher interviews and his first serious run-in with an unhappy parent, which took several weeks to resolve. It was stressful and mentally draining, he says. Illness early in the term didn’t help.

“It was probably the most difficult [parent issue] I’ve had,” says Davis. “But I had support from all the people around me – my team, the integration coordinator, the principal – and that helped me through.”

The matter is now under control and he can be philosophical about it. “It’s funny, because Term 3 is often the best term to teach. There’s little formal assessment, you know the kids well enough, you can relax and get on with teaching.”

Switch of focus

In the Northern Territory, O’Reilly has been grappling with a new style of teaching after Tennant Creek High School switched up its Year 11 program.

Students now devote each day to one subject area. O’Reilly and a colleague get them for all of Friday, not in school, but at a local training centre (“a more adult space”) and on field trips.

“There’s quite a strong focus on getting students to think about tourism careers and employment,” she says. “We have links with the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, Battery Hill Mining Centre and various other tourism sites around the town. Students get to talk to people who work in that industry. It’s contextual learning, not learning in class.”

Working up the program was “pretty intense”, she says. “But I’m glad to be part of it. I think the school is trying to be responsive to the needs of these students,” she says.
Just as O’Reilly was finding her feet, she turned her ankle. Or so she thought. “I walked around on it for three weeks, but it turns out it might be fractured and it’s in plaster. “Just keep pushing through! I think you need that in teaching.”

**Personal tragedies**

Grogan, who moved 650km to Gippsland to take up a new contract in Term 1, has felt the distance even more after a family bereavement, and then a serious car accident involving her cousin in western Victoria.

She has tried to focus on teaching and has been rewarded with students’ responses to her new photography class. “We started off with film-photography classes and they really loved that aspect. They’ve grown up with digital, so it’s new to them. The boys in particular seem to enjoy the technical aspect – seeing how a shutter works in a camera and learning about light sensitivity.”

Meanwhile, Wendfeldt has capped off a year at Campbell High School by gaining full teacher registration from the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. “I’m now a proficient teacher and not a graduate anymore,” she says.

While Wendfeldt felt confident in presenting her portfolio, it made her realise that she meets some parts of the standard more often than others. When promoting Indigenous reconciliation, for example.

“I did activities for Naidoc week, which was really good. But I feel I need to do more to really satisfy that criterion. It was a good opportunity to reflect on what I need to do.”

In Term 3 she was coached in behaviour management under a new mentoring scheme at the school. It has also been a good term for professional development for the others in our quartet. Assessment experts and John Hattie’s Visible Learning for Teachers program spent intensive time at Tennant Creek, and teachers at Montmorency South have been learning about meditation for students (and stressed teachers).
NEW EDUCATORS

Looking ahead
So, as Christmas approaches, what next? After three years with Year 4, Davis wants to switch to another group in the new year to expand his skills. O’Reilly is happy on a contract for now and hopes to stay at Tennant Creek. For Grogan, Term 4 will again mean applying for jobs and hopefully securing a move back west.

“It’s a bit stressful,” says Grogan. “You want to dedicate your focus to your teaching, but you have that feeling in the back of your mind, ‘When does that job close, when do I need to have that written, have I put the right school name in the letter?’ while you’re trying to remember how to make up lesson plans and prepare for your classes.”

After all this, do our new educators still think they’re in the right job?

“Yeah, I do,” says Wendfeldt. “It’s meeting all the inspiring people. It’s an occupation you learn so much from.”

“Most days I do,” says O’Reilly. “I don’t want to sound like a Pollyanna. There are definitely days – I think all teachers have them – when you think, ‘I’m going to work in a supermarket. I can’t do this anymore.’ Then something will happen – a kid will need you or a colleague will say something positive – and you say, ‘OK, I’ll just get to the end of the week.’”

Davis also admits to doubts: “Term 3 was quite challenging mentally for me, so I think I was reconsidering. But, generally speaking, I love what I do. It has its challenges, but it would be boring if it didn’t.”

The most unequivocal response, despite the year she’s had, comes from Grogan. “Oh yeah. I came into this career for a reason, so I could share my passion with younger people – that the arts are alive in Australia, especially in our smaller communities.

‘There were times when I doubted it a bit this year. But I always had the attitude that this was a career I was going to end up retiring from.’

Nic Barnard is a freelance journalist.
What have you learnt about teaching?

“Having seen two very different schools and very different sets of students, I know it’s important not to have too many expectations. I’ve learned that the hard way. The nature of teaching means you have to be adaptable and go with how the students are. Have they had a good lesson beforehand or was it a terrible one? Do they need a safe space to let go of whatever’s on their mind?”

“Aiko Wendfeldt

“In Japan [where she was born], teachers are very established figures in the community, whereas here I sometimes feel the parents and students question you. I didn’t imagine that some students would just have no respect. But I’ve learnt that, if you can build positive relationships with them, if you care for a student, they’ll respond.”

“Coming out to a community like Tennant Creek, you never realise until you get here how much pastoral work there is to do with children whose basic needs are not being met. That’s something I get very frustrated about when I see in the news that people who don’t live in this community are making decisions about these children and have no idea about the day-to-day reality of their lives.”

“Tom Davis

“I suppose I knew this, but didn’t realise how far it extended - that teachers are very accessible nowadays. Parents can email you at the drop of a hat. Last term taught me that it’s OK not to respond straightaway. You don’t need to be checking your email at 8 o’clock at night or first thing in the morning. I didn’t realise how important it is to take care of yourself and shut off where possible.”

Jenny O’Reilly

PLA Y.
SPORT.
AUSTRALIA.

10 tips to nurture your child’s sporting development

1 DON’T FORGET THE FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS!
Nurture a full range of movement skills including kicking or hitting a ball, running, jumping, climbing, balancing and basic aquatic skills.

2 PLAY AT HOME
Play in the backyard or even the hallway! Encourage using the left and right hands and feet!

3 CHEER FOR SPORT!
Choose to be an active family and limit screen time at home. Provide positive encouragement for sporting activity and refrain from being a passive parent and get involved and have fun.

4 GET THE RIGHT SPORT FORMAT AND EQUIPMENT
Check if your child’s school is registered for the Sporting Schools program.

5 SAMPLE AND HAVE FUN!
Encourage your child to try a few sports. This will help the development of a full range of sporting skills, coordination and control.

6 PRACTICE, BUT MAKE IT RELEVANT AND FUN!
The quality and type of practice is more important than simply how much you do it and make sure it’s challenging and fun.

7 BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL
You are the greatest role model. Always show respect to the coaches and officials, and demonstrate good sportsmanship. Be positive and supportive of your child’s sporting efforts.

8 THE QUESTIONS TO ASK
After the game, ask your child: ‘what felt good today?’ or ‘what do you think you could improve on for next time?’

9 BE SPORT-READY
Get a healthy sport-life balance. Get an understanding of the role that good nutrition, hydration, rest and recovery, plays in your child’s sporting life.

10 FIND THE RIGHT DEVELOPMENTAL ENVIRONMENT
Find a sporting club that provides products and services including quality coaching, that focus on fun and participation regardless of skill level and ability.

Check out our Top 10 podcasts at:
ausport.gov.au/participating/playsportaustralia/tips_for_parents

PLA Y A T HOME
Play in the backyard or even the hallway! Encourage using the left and right hands and feet!

2 GET THE RIGHT SPORT FORMAT AND EQUIPMENT
Check if your child’s school is registered for the Sporting Schools program.

4 SAMPLE AND HAVE FUN!
Encourage your child to try a few sports. This will help the development of a full range of sporting skills, coordination and control.

6 PRACTICE, BUT MAKE IT RELEVANT AND FUN!
The quality and type of practice is more important than simply how much you do it and make sure it’s challenging and fun.

7 BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL
You are the greatest role model. Always show respect to the coaches and officials, and demonstrate good sportsmanship. Be positive and supportive of your child’s sporting efforts.

8 THE QUESTIONS TO ASK
After the game, ask your child: ‘what felt good today?’ or ‘what do you think you could improve on for next time?’

9 BE SPORT-READY
Get a healthy sport-life balance. Get an understanding of the role that good nutrition, hydration, rest and recovery, plays in your child’s sporting life.

10 FIND THE RIGHT DEVELOPMENTAL ENVIRONMENT
Find a sporting club that provides products and services including quality coaching, that focus on fun and participation regardless of skill level and ability.

Check out our Top 10 podcasts at:
ausport.gov.au/participating/playsportaustralia/tips_for_parents

PLAY.
SPORT.
AUSTRALIA.

Australian Sports Commission

DON’T FORGET THE FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS!
Nurture a full range of movement skills including kicking or hitting a ball, running, jumping, climbing, balancing and basic aquatic skills.

PLAY AT HOME
Play in the backyard or even the hallway! Encourage using the left and right hands and feet!

CHEER FOR SPORT!
Choose to be an active family and limit screen time at home. Provide positive encouragement for sporting activity and refrain from being a passive parent and get involved and have fun.

GET THE RIGHT SPORT FORMAT AND EQUIPMENT
Check if your child’s school is registered for the Sporting Schools program.

SAMPLE AND HAVE FUN!
Encourage your child to try a few sports. This will help the development of a full range of sporting skills, coordination and control.

PRACTICE, BUT MAKE IT RELEVANT AND FUN!
The quality and type of practice is more important than simply how much you do it and make sure it’s challenging and fun.

BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL
You are the greatest role model. Always show respect to the coaches and officials, and demonstrate good sportsmanship. Be positive and supportive of your child’s sporting efforts.

THE QUESTIONS TO ASK
After the game, ask your child: ‘what felt good today?’ or ‘what do you think you could improve on for next time?’

BE SPORT-READY
Get a healthy sport-life balance. Get an understanding of the role that good nutrition, hydration, rest and recovery, plays in your child’s sporting life.

FIND THE RIGHT DEVELOPMENTAL ENVIRONMENT
Find a sporting club that provides products and services including quality coaching, that focus on fun and participation regardless of skill level and ability.

Check out our Top 10 podcasts at:
ausport.gov.au/participating/playsportaustralia/tips_for_parents

Australian Government

PLAY.
SPORT.
AUSTRALIA.
UN human rights experts are troubled by actions taken by the socialist government of president Rafael Correa to dissolve Ecuador’s largest teacher union.

Silencing dissent in Ecuador

They called the dissolution of the 100,000 strong National Union of Educators (UNE) in August this year “a legal death”. Education minister Augusto Espinosa blamed the union for failing to comply with obligations mandated by the Constitution and the law.

UNE president Rosana Palacios called the minister’s decision an act of political persecution. Thousands of teachers and supporters marched in protest in the capital Quito and regional cities, carrying banners proclaiming ‘The UNE lives, Correa goes away’ and ‘No more dismissals of union leaders, no more persecution of teachers’.

Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Ecuador in 1969, all people should enjoy the right to freedom of association. But in 2013 Correa expanded government powers to allow intervention in the operation of non-government organisations such as trade unions.

UN experts have suggested the dissolution of the UNE is related to silencing the union — as well as other associations and the media — for voicing their concerns on human rights abuses in the country.

Ecuador is already on notice from the United Nations Human Rights Council for failing to implement key recommendations, including protecting freedom of speech and association. It will have to explain its human rights record during a Universal Periodic Review this year.

Michel Forst, a UN special rapporteur, says depriving Ecuador’s most important teachers unions of the right to raise concerns could have “a chilling effect on civil society and human rights defenders in general”.

Education International has called on Ecuador’s ministry of education to immediately withdraw the notice of dissolution and has asked teacher unions around the world to show their support. EI says the government must respect its international commitments as a signatory to the International Labor Organisation conventions.

The AEU has also written to the education minister, protesting the action against the teachers’ union and asking him to respect the rights of educators.

You can join the campaign and petition the Ecuador authorities at bit.ly/2aX2vBS

Thousands of teachers and supporters marched in protest in the capital Quito and regional cities, carrying banners proclaiming ‘The UNE lives, Correa goes away’ ...

Colombia’s teachers call for peace

Teachers in Colombia are continuing their support for a peace process with FARC guerillas, despite the unexpected referendum result rejecting the deal.

In shades of Brexit, Colombians voted no to peace with the FARC, a guerrilla group that has been waging a violent campaign for 55 years.

Teacher unions campaigned in support of the referendum, which was held on 2 October 2016 and was expected to pass. But predictions of a landslide were premature and the ‘no’ campaign won by a slender margin.

The shock result was mirrored days later with news that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2016 had been awarded to Colombia’s president Juan Manuel Santos “for his resolute efforts to bring the country’s more than 50-year-long civil war to an end”.

FARC rebels financed their war by kidnappings, taking 27,000 people hostage between 1970 and 2010. They have killed 220,000 people, including 1,000 teachers, and landmines strewn in rural areas are still a grave danger.

One of Colombia’s teacher unions — Federación Colombiana de Educadores (FECODE) — has called for an active peace pedagogy. It wants schools in Colombia declared “territories of peace”, a crucial step to insuring lasting peace, democracy and the development of the country.

FECODE president Luis Grubert says the union supports the peace process with FARC but is totally opposed to the government’s regressive economic policies, including a new tax reform it says is “the most regressive and inequitable” in years and an “attack on the finances of workers, teachers and the economy of Colombian families”.

Teachers in Colombia are continuing their support for a peace process with FARC guerillas, despite the unexpected referendum result rejecting the deal.

Teachers in Colombia are continuing their support for a peace process with FARC guerillas, despite the unexpected referendum result rejecting the deal.

Teachers in Colombia are continuing their support for a peace process with FARC guerillas, despite the unexpected referendum result rejecting the deal.
Setback for privatisation in Uganda

A chain of 87 for-profit nursery and primary schools operated by Bridge International Academies has been ordered to close by the Ugandan Parliament.

The Uganda National Teachers Union has championed the case against for-profit schools.

Bridge International is one of the largest for-profit education companies in the world and is financed to the tune of US$100 million by a conglomerate of donors, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Facebook’s CEO Mark Zuckerberg, education conglomerate Pearson Ltd, as well as the World Bank and the governments of the United Kingdom and United States.

Despite such high-profile support, Bridge International has come under fierce criticism for applying a business model that uses public money to operate fee-charging schools that do not comply with the legal and educational standards of the Ugandan government.

Education International, the worldwide federation of teacher unions, released an incriminating report on World Teachers’ Day last October titled Schooling the Poor Profitably: The Innovations and Deprivations of Bridge International Academies in Uganda.

It found that up to 90 per cent of Bridge International teachers are unlicensed and that its schools fail basic minimum standards for construction, putting the health and safety of students at risk. In addition, dropout rates can be as high as 60 per cent due to the high fees. The company has plans to sell its pre-programmed ‘academy-in-a-box’ education services to 10 million fee-paying students in low-income communities throughout Africa and Asia by 2025.
Pacific nations face severe political, economic and environmental challenges as they work together to strengthen education and the union movement.

BY CYNDI TEBBEL

Common goals

It’s been a rough three years for teachers and their unions in the island nations of the Pacific. Cascading natural disasters have ravaged an already fragile region and its people, and the struggle to cope with the effects of climate change is pulling precious resources from other demanding and widespread socio-economic issues.

Govind Singh, secretary general of the Council of Pacific Education (COPE), told members at the organisation’s Triennial Meeting in Fiji last September that, despite their difficulties, “spirit has prevailed” within teacher unions working to achieve quality public education.

COPE is a sub-regional arm of Education International (EI), comprising 19 affiliates, including the AEU, from 11 countries in the Pacific. A vast region of 9.7 million people who live in ecologically fragile, vulnerable and often isolated towns and villages.

While culturally and linguistically diverse, Singh says Pacific nations share common goals including:
• equal access to education for children in remote and rural areas, from low-income families and with disabilities
• creating safe schools
• improving retention and reducing gender gaps
• boosting achievements in students’ literacy and numeracy, and the professional development of teachers

Singh says there have been gains across the region in providing basic education at primary and lower secondary levels, and addressing gender inequalities. However, universal primary education is still a struggle for many countries, along with better access to secondary schools and vocational training.

Imperfect partnerships

In addition to having to do more with less, teacher unions in the Pacific are fighting government interference and lack of consultation on educational issues.

In Fiji, education minister Mahendra Reddy responded to Singh’s COPE presentation by scolding teacher unions in the Fiji Sun for having “ulterior motives” and insinuating that “quality education for children” was secondary to them wanting to “run the ministry”.

There have been wins. Following pressure from the ILO, laws in Fiji passed by the Bainimarama government to limit union power were overturned in February 2016. Meanwhile, Tonga joined the ILO, and in Samoa the union movement is building strength.

However, the region needs to improve results in national examinations and Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) scores. As it stands, many countries aren’t sufficiently educating students with the skills they need to lead prosperous and fulfilling lives, says Singh.

While the region has seen an overall increase in education funding, many school budgets still rely on high levels of external funding. And, paradoxically, nations that focused on achieving Education for All goals are seeing more demand for quality education.

“An increase in educational attainment leads to increased lifetime earnings, not to mention a healthier and longer life,” says Singh.

“Therefore, governments will need to rethink funding priorities to ensure more balanced education development is supported,” he says.

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.
Let us sort out your A to B.

When you credit your whole salary to Victoria Teachers Mutual Bank you’ll receive a great discounted rate across our entire Car Loan range.

- Choice of New, Used or Green Car Loans available.
- Fixed or variable rates.
- No monthly fees.
- Low $90 establishment fee.

To find out more or apply:
Call 1300 654 822 | Visit victeach.com.au

Discounted Green Car Loan

5.29%
Promotional Variable rate per annum

5.41%
Comparison rate

Important Information
Promotional interest rates available for car loan applications received between 1 July 2016 – 31 December 2016 and funded by 31 January 2017. We reserve the right to amend or withdraw these offers at any time. Interest rate effective 1 July 2016 and subject to change. Check website for current rates. To qualify for the discounted car loan rate you must arrange for your whole salary to be credited to your Mutual Bank account. 1. Comparison rate calculated on a secured loan amount of $30,000 for a term of five years. WARNING: This comparison rate is true only for the example given and may not include all fees and charges. Different terms, fees and other loan amounts might result in a different comparison rate. Fees and charges apply. Terms and Conditions available upon request. Victoria Teachers Limited ABN 44 087 651 769, AFSL/Australian Credit Licence Number 240 960.
While technology is shaking up the classroom, new research underway may see other changes to the future of teaching.

BY MARGARET PATON

**Learning labs**

Technology is not the only disruptor in town when it comes to teaching. Researchers working on projects to understand more about how children learn may contribute to other big changes.

For example, one major ongoing project nearing completion involves researchers in neuroscience, psychology and education focusing on how people learn throughout life; including in classrooms. Eight research institutions and education departments in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia have been collecting evidence to find the most effective teaching methods under the umbrella of the Science of Learning Research Centre (SLRC). The researchers have summarised their findings so far in a collection of 10 principles.

One of the research tasks included monitoring Year 6 and 7 students’ engagement and behaviour in STEM classes.

The students wore electronic wristbands and were filmed so researchers could measure their nervous system responses to track motivation levels as a class unfolded.

Unsurprisingly, preliminary results showed that the best approach for learning was a small group rather than a whole class.

In a different exercise, the brain activity of a group of 12 to 14-year-old students is being measured as they undergo a series of tests to see if it’s possible to find ways to help them filter out distractions and recognise when their mind is wandering, attend to errors and correct them.

University students are also being studied. An SLRC chief investigator, Professor Jason Mattingley, has been working on a study monitoring the brain activity of uni students while they tackled fraction tasks.

“We looked for whether there were particular patterns of brain activity that predicted success in the task. We found that a second or so before they attempted a problem, we could predict, with reasonable accuracy, whether they’d get it right or not. It’s a marker of a type of readiness and I suspect it could be applied to many other domains. “If we could tap into this attentional...
readiness and present critical information in that space, you could potentially get much more effective learning outcomes,” says Mattingley, who is chair in cognitive neuroscience at the University of Queensland.

Another exercise has focused on pre-service teachers with and without self-reported anxiety about teaching maths. “We know some teachers are very anxious about teaching maths and I suspect, as a consequence, those teachers will choose to spend less time teaching maths. Potentially they may pass on their anxiety to their students,” says Mattingley.

Researchers monitored the teachers’ physiological reactions while they performed a series of maths tasks and reported their anxiety levels. They also took part in workshops to better understand their worries and were taught strategies to reduce anxiety.

Looking for evidence
Mattingley says teachers are highly motivated to do their best for students and are very open to trying new approaches. He’d like to see classroom teaching methods become more evidence-based.

“Every man and his dog is happy to give advice about what teachers should be doing in the classroom, but we need to establish an evidence base for teaching. We don’t have it. “It’s the brain that learns, yet teachers typically know very little, if anything, about how the brain works.”

Mattingley would like to see pre-service teachers learning about experimental psychology, the fundamentals of cognition and neuroscience.

He also points to the paucity of evidence supporting fads such as brain training in the context of classroom learning.

“The foundation of science is replication. One paper doesn’t make an evidence base. Multiple papers showing the same outcomes - that’s an evidence base.”

While the neural mechanisms of learning have been a subject of research for many decades, the knowledge hasn’t really been translated into how people learn in the real world, says Mattingley.

“We’d like to bring some of that knowledge to bear and work closely with teachers who have novel insights into learning, but don’t have the resources or skills to build a scientific evidence base.”

Other measures include a teachers’ advisory group to analyse new data about teaching strategies to see if they lead to effective outcomes.

“I’m not a teacher. I’m a cognitive neuroscientist. I want to understand learning in terms of the brain and higher cognitive processes. We need to work closely with teachers to decide how best to translate discoveries in the lab to the classroom,” Mattingley says.

Margaret Paton is a freelance journalist and casual primary school teacher.

We need to work closely with teachers to decide how best to translate discoveries in the lab to the classroom.
Because getting and keeping your first job can be tricky...

Download at worksite.actu.org.au/firstjobready
### My best app

**Bee-Bot**
(iOS; free)
Bee-Bot offers an introduction to programming where students enter simple commands to direct the Bee-Bot (a robot bee) forward, back, left, and right. The Bee-Bot moves in steps and 90-degree turns to follow coding directions to get through mazes. Chludzinski uses this app to help students improve their skills in directional language and problem solving. “It’s a fun and engaging introduction to coding. There is also a Bee-Bot robot that students can use to navigate mazes on the classroom floor.”

**Jigsaw Puzzles: 500+ pieces**
(iOS; free)
Learning to recognise and sort shapes, students solve jigsaw puzzles with increasing levels of difficulty, choosing the number of puzzle pieces from nine to five hundred. “This puzzle app has been a great hit with students. It can also create a puzzle based on their own high interest activity,” says Chludzinski. “This is a much more engaging activity when compared to traditional puzzles.”

**Color Zen**
(Android, iOS; free)
Students immerse themselves in a colour-matching game with colliding shapes. There is no score and there is no failure. “Simple for students to use, yet very engaging touch response and colour-matching activity that gets more and more challenging as levels increase,” says Chludzinski.

### More apps to explore...

**Swift Playgrounds**
(iOS; free)
This is a well thought out and comprehensive approach to learning how to code. With an interactive interface, Swift lets students see what they are creating as they are writing the code. No prior coding knowledge is needed. Initially, students practice coding by moving an animated creature by, for example, telling it to walk or jump. Students can solve interactive puzzles in the guided ‘Learn to Code’ lessons to understand the basics of coding such as loops, conditional statements, and variables. There are video lessons and detailed teacher guide iBooks to help teachers implement Swift in the classroom, no matter what their level of experience.

**Classroom**
(iOS; free)
Teachers use their own iPad to control a classroom of student iPads – for example, launching the same app on every student device at the same time or specific apps for different groups of students; locking all the screens to pause a classroom to get everyone’s attention; or locking all the devices at the end of a class. Teachers can also guide students through a lesson and see their progress.

---

**Mark Chludzinski**
Technology teacher
Eastern Ranges School, Ferntree Gully, Victoria, which caters for primary and secondary age students with an autism spectrum disorder.

Mark Chludzinski is interested in how technology can foster greater independence and improve outcomes for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). For example, using specific apps to support students with disabilities in communication and socialisation, as well as improve behaviours of concern.

Chludzinski, who’s been teaching for nine years, says apps provide benefits for students with ASD. “Apps build on students’ strengths of visual processing, as well as providing an engaging way of learning.”

**Mark’s tip**
“Using the iPad with an iPad schedule is an effective way to help students complete their tasks. iPad schedules help students with disabilities use the tablet in a more structured educational manner, and it fosters independence.”
For some students who exhibit challenging and worrying behaviour, the usual behaviour management strategies of sanctions and rewards won’t work. Instead, it might be better to consider the message underlying the behaviour, says United Kingdom-based Paula Nagel, a former primary school teacher, now an educational psychologist, and author of the new book Mental Health Matters: A practical guide to identifying and understanding mental health issues in primary school.

“Teachers are really well placed to spot the early signs of emerging problems,” says Nagel. “They know their pupils well and can be alert to changes in behaviour – often one of the early indicators of a mental health need.

“Much in the same way that teachers identify and support children who may have emerging literacy or numeracy difficulties, we need to be able to identify and support those who have emerging social, emotional and mental health needs too.

“If we can support problems early enough and before they take hold, we may be able to prevent some pupils from turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms.”

Good mental health and wellbeing are key to students reaching their learning potential. About one in seven children and young people had experienced a mental disorder in the past year, according to a 2015 Australian government report, The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents.

Unrecognised issues

Students with special educational needs or disabilities can be at greater risk of suffering from undiagnosed mental health issues.

“Sometimes their issues are explained as being part of their disability or diagnosis, and sometimes additional problems with communication can make it even more difficult for these children to make their emotional needs known,” says Nagel.

In one of the case studies in Nagel’s book, a student with autism blossoms from personalised approaches that help her understand and manage her stress and anxiety.

Nagel urges teachers to look through a “mental health lens” to detect the messages behind behaviour. This applies to challenging ‘acting-out’ behaviour as well as to often less noticeable, internalised ‘acting-in’ behaviour. This behaviour might or might not be linked to mental health issues, she notes, but it is important to think about risk factors in the child, its family and/or environment, or linked to significant life events.

“For many of these students the message has been about an emerging, or unmet, mental health need. Teachers who understand the link between mental health and behaviour are better able to provide appropriate and timely strategies to support emerging problems in the classroom.”

Risk factor framework

Nagel has pondered over years of case studies and developed a five-step framework that helps primary school teachers move through the impasse that something is not quite right with a student, to the next step: tweaking behaviour management strategies and/or bringing in targeted services.

Her framework poses a series of five questions:

• What can we see?
• What have we tried?
• What do we know?
• What is the mental health message?
• What would personalised planning look like for this child?
This involves a series of sessions where teachers glean information from their peers, parents, other staff and the child.

Once teachers are satisfied that the first three framework questions have been answered, they look through the mental health lens to ask if the child is at risk of mental health issues and, if so, how best to support them.

Teachers may have little influence over some of the risk factors their pupils face, such as poverty, homelessness, inconsistent or chaotic caregivers, trauma and bereavement, says Nagel. But they can help students by promoting resilience.

**Building resilience**

Children need to learn about the link between their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and how unhelpful ways of thinking can negatively affect what they feel and do, says Nagel.

“Part of this understanding is to acknowledge that good mental health doesn’t mean never experiencing distress or emotional anguish. How we manage difficult times and big emotions can set a blueprint for how we deal with future challenge and adversity.”

“Things like providing a supportive school environment, where they can really feel they belong, feel liked and valued and have at least one supportive adult who they can turn to, can make all the difference.

“A well-known Canadian researcher, Ann Masten, uses the phrase ‘ordinary magic’ to explain what helps to boost children’s resilience ... it reminds us that it’s the everyday things that can make the difference. Sadly, for some children school may be the only place where they have the chance to experience acts of ‘ordinary magic’.”

**Whole-school approach**

Teachers can’t do it alone. A whole-school approach is needed to support students to build their own resilience, says Nagel, by helping children to recognise their own personal strengths and sources of resilience.

Schools can put mental health on the agenda through policies and procedures that celebrate positive mental health and wellbeing. They should include individual as well as group interventions and access to a school counsellor, she says.

As well, behaviour management needs to focus on managing emotions, developing prosocial skills and problem solving. Teachers also need ongoing, continuing professional development on mental health as a way of knowing what’s typical development and what may signal concerns.

“It’s time to put mental health on the same footing as our physical health. Just like our physical health, we need to know what good mental health looks like, what helps us to remain mentally healthy, and the signs that indicate it needs some attention.”

Margaret Paton is a freelance journalist and casual primary school teacher.
Dance education is a valued part of the school curriculum in Darwin and across the Northern Territory.

BY CYNDI TEBBEL

Room to move

SARAH CALVER

Sarah Calver can remember getting into debates about the value of dance as an educational tool – “not just a school assembly item” – in the 1980s, when she was a young graduate from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Back then, Calver says, critics saw dance as a ‘no-brainer’ elective. But she’s seen opinions evolve during her 30 years as a dance practitioner and educator across the Northern Territory.

Calver became a full-time performing arts teacher at Darwin High School in 2007.

The school’s performing arts program is highly regarded in multicultural Darwin, where subjects such as dance are seen as an integral part of the community.

Territorians value the arts and there’s a high demand for dance across primary, middle and secondary schools, says Calver.

Darwin High has more Year 12 dance students than any other school in Australia, and the discipline has moved from an elective to a core subject.

“Dance educates the whole person, giving students skills in creative thinking, and the confidence to explore who they are at a different level to when they’re studying subjects like English or maths,” she says.

“When we look at a young child, we can see how movement plays such an integral part of their learning, but we tend to forget that as the learning process develops.”

A world of opportunity

Calver is a realist. While some of her students go on to study performance at a tertiary level and do well in the dance world, not all will become professional dancers.

However, even those who’ve followed other areas of further study tell Calver that the skills they learned in dance gave them “the confidence, strength, discipline and determination to continue on their pathways” in law, medicine and other professions.

She’s designed her dance program to impart highly transferrable skills, bringing in mentors and guest artists from a range of arts sectors as examples to show students the breadth of careers in the arts.

“It’s much more than competitive performance,” she says. At Darwin High School it’s a teaching tool in the classroom and an outreach to the broader community.

Students have created full-scale performances that highlight important social issues, such as under-age driving and drugs.

This year’s program, Secrets 2016, deals with ice addiction and was developed in consultation with recovering addicts, doctors from Royal Darwin Hospital and other health workers. Calver is looking for more support from the health sector and politicians so it can be staged at the Darwin Entertainment Centre and reach a bigger audience.

“The calibre of our students and the compelling nature of the story makes this an engaging way to educate young people about the impact of illicit drugs on themselves, their family and friends, and the wider community.

“It’s a powerful and confronting work and we’re hoping it will save some lives,” she says.

Calver received this year’s AEU NT Quality Educator Award for her outstanding contributions to student learning. ●

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.

WE ASK ...

Why do you teach?

We’d love to hear your best tips for engaging young minds. Email us at educator@hardiegrant.com.au if you’ve got something to share. You can provide a written piece or we’d be happy to interview you.
We do everything as if you are here

You work hard to support the community; we work hard to support you.

Your needs, your goals, your retirement.

You wouldn’t have it any other way. Neither would we.
Seeing how hard the school community worked to raise every dollar at our fete this year really made me think – as office manager, shouldn’t I be trying just as hard to get the most out of every dollar?

The thought played on my mind for weeks until the regular office supplies order was due.

Then I was all over it.

I took myself off autopilot and asked my Officeworks Business Specialist to come in.

He sat down with me and did a complete office supplies audit, suggesting ways we could save money. Who knew a 33 pack of writing essentials cost so much less than buying the same pens individually? Guess you never stop learning.