Campaign trail

Coordinators take Gonski funding fight into communities
SEA LIFE Aquariums offer guided lessons for your class with our expert staff, plus self-guided options.

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* 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 30 September 2015.
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The international community will add new impetus to the continuing struggle to ensure all children get a basic education.
Unions call for end to World Cup ‘slavery’ in Qatar

When former ACTU president Sharan Burrow appeared on Australian TV screens earlier this year, she was far from home in the dangerous and stinking conditions of the camps for workers employed to build 2022 World Cup infrastructure in Qatar.

Now general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Burrow has been visiting Qatar to document the workers’ conditions and their concerns about living under the system of ‘kafala’, a form of sponsorship that monitors and controls migrant labourers in the Middle East.

Workers are effectively bound to their employers, unable to leave them or leave the country without permission.

The ITUC has joined with Transparency International and Avaaz to launch the New FIFA Now campaign, to pressure the sport’s international governing body to undertake independent reform.

It’s hypocritical of FIFA’s sponsors, says Burrow, to give large sums of money to an unaccountable organisation when, in turn, it makes decisions directly contrary to their corporate values, she says.

The ITUC wants to see FIFA use its influence to demand positive change in Qatar.

“We call on sponsors to end the hypocrisy of supporting FIFA when it makes decisions directly contrary to their corporate values,” she says.

The ITUC wants to see FIFA use its influence to demand positive change in Qatar.

“That way everyone benefits—but especially the workers who are building the infrastructure and facilities for the 2022 World Cup under draconian and outdated labour laws that have no part in a 21st century economy,” Burrow says.

For more information go to newfifanow.org

New Sporting Schools program kicks off

More than 2,700 primary schools have registered to take part in the federal government’s Sporting Schools program.

The $100 million program is run before, during or after school hours, and is designed to get children active.

It offers sport to primary schools by creating links with more than 30 of the country’s leading national sporting organisations.

Australian Sports Commission CEO Simon Hollingsworth says Sporting Schools is about helping children to develop a lifelong love of sport.

“The strength of Sporting Schools is not just the flexibility around the before, during and after school hour schedules, but also the practical sporting sessions it provides,” he says.

“This program is about developing children’s commitment to sport for the longer term and to foster skills in leadership, teamwork, social inclusion and community spirit.”

To register your school go to sportingschools.gov.au

Students from Holbrook Primary School, NSW, enjoy their PlayNRL Sporting Schools program.
Vic program encourages women

A campaign is underway in Victoria to inspire women in public education to join the union.

The Unions Work for Women campaign, organised by the AEU Victorian branch, the AEU Victoria Women’s Program and the Rosemary Richards Scholarship, was launched to help in the fight against gender discrimination at work.

“As women, we are less likely to get promoted, less likely to be paid fairly and more likely to experience workplace harassment,” according to the campaign website, unionsworkforwomen.com.au

“In public schools, even though the majority of teachers are female, the majority of principals are male. Half of all Australian women experience workplace discrimination related to their pregnancy, across all sectors,” the website says.

Green activities for classes

Enviroweek, run annually by the not-for-profit organisation Cool Australia, is a national event for schools that aims to promote sustainability issues.

Cool Australia, which provides resources aligned to the curriculum in all subject areas for teachers and students, provided support to more than 26,000 teachers and 625,000 students in the last 12 months.

During Enviroweek – August 30 to September 5 – children can take action on waste, gardening, energy and health projects and see the immediate effect of positive everyday choices—for them, their school and our environment.

Cool Australia provides ‘how-to guides’ for action and inspiration for teachers.

For more information go to enviroweek.org

Cyber safety tool

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation has launched a new cyber safety tool that aims to protect children from cyberbullying and accessing inappropriate online content.

The eSmart Digital Licence will be made available to every grade 6 student in Australia this year.

It’s an online challenge that uses quizzes, videos and games to prepare Australian children (aged 10 and over) to be smart, safe and responsible digital citizens.

Teachers can sign up their students free of charge.

For more information go to digitallicence.com.au

Vale Joan Kirner

The AEU Victorian branch has paid tribute to the “significant contribution” made by the late Joan Kirner to public education. The former premier’s early career was in teaching before she became a parent and community advocate for public education and later a political leader.

“Joan Kirner made an enduring contribution to public education in Victoria,” says AEU deputy president Justin Mullaly.

“When she had the opportunity to push for reform, she seized it, whether on a parent committee or a parliamentary committee,” he says.

“She promoted equal access to education for all Victorian children, regardless of their parents’ income or their school’s location. “Joan Kirner worked to establish the Partnership in Education agreement with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated – a historic commitment to improve Indigenous educational opportunities in this state,” he adds.
Reading Australia

The best of Australia’s literature is now more available for teachers, librarians and readers.

Reading Australia, set up by the not-for-profit Copyright Agency, provides useful online teaching resources for books, plays and poetry from top Australian authors such as David Malouf, Tim Winton, Sonya Hartnett, Richard Flanagan, Jackie French and Nick Enright.

The agency’s research has found that Australian books are being taught less in schools, says chair Kim Williams.

“Some books were out of print but the main reason was the lack of easy-to-find, high-quality teaching resources linked to the curriculum. As an organisation for writers, artists and publishers, we want Australian children and young adults to develop literacy by experiencing homegrown stories.”

Teachers have developed the resources and leading authors, such as Germaine Greer, Malcolm Knox and Stephanie Dowrick, have written essays responding to many of the books.

Reading Australia has been developed in partnership with the Australian Association for the Teaching of English, the Primary English Teaching Association Australia, the Australian Literacy Educators Association and the Association for the Study of Australian Literature.

For more information go to readingaustralia.com.au

Unhealthy drawback to leaving school early

New research shows that not completing Year 12 is unhealthy.

The research, published in the scientific and medical journal *PLOS ONE* found that completion of high school leads to lower levels of mortality. And, it concluded, not finishing school “may be as deadly as smoking”, according to Save Our Schools convenor Trevor Cobbold.

The study, carried out in the United States using 10 years of data from more than a million people, estimated more than 145,000 adult deaths could be attributed to low levels of education.

The researchers found that education is a fundamental driver of health behaviour. Many of the deaths were caused by cardiovascular disease and cancer.

“This is comparable to the estimated number of deaths that could be averted if all current smokers had the mortality rates of former smokers,” says Cobbold.

A large proportion of Australian students do not complete Year 12, he says. A Productivity Commission report this year found just over a quarter of potential Year 12 students did not complete their studies. Among low socio-economic status students, 32 per cent did not complete the final year of school.
If teachers don't stand up for schools to be properly funded, then who will?

Our Gonski campaign for bi-partisan support

We know the difference that extra classroom support can make for students with different abilities, how an intensive literacy program can put a struggling child back on track, or how a speech pathologist can make a disengaged child blossom.

We know that needs-based Gonski funding is required to get all public schools up to a minimum resource standard and ensure all students receive a high-quality education.

Educators led the community campaign to get the Gonski agreements signed in 2013, and we succeeded. But now it's time for a new effort to get bi-partisan support for the needs-based funding that our disadvantaged schools and students need.

The AEU is not just talking about this, we are acting. We have employed full-time local coordinators in 18 marginal seats for the lead-up to the next federal election.

The coordinators are all educators who know schools, know the issues and are building strong relationships with school communities.

They are out in the community, working with principals, staff and parents, organising events and educating the community about the benefits Gonski funding is already delivering, and what it can do in the future.

Engaging with the community, and letting people know how important Gonski investment is for our schools and our kids, is the best way to build the support we need for politicians to act.

We are not a big corporation with the ear of the government. Our power lies in the passion and commitment of our members, the people who built public education.

Gonski is at a crossroads

The reason we are doing this is simple: Gonski is at a crossroads.

We have a federal government that wants to abandon the last two years of the Gonski agreements (2018 and 2019) when the majority of the extra funding is to be delivered. Only two states – New South Wales and South Australia – have committed to delivering the full six years of funding as it is supposed to be delivered, directly to individual schools.

I know from talking to principals and other staff in my home state of South Australia that public schools are already using this funding to improve results for students. They can see the benefits and know how important it is we get the full six years of funding.

In this issue we feature two schools with high numbers of Indigenous students that are using Gonski funding to close the gap in educational achievement.

Literacy and numeracy support, pastoral care and teaching of Indigenous languages are improving engagement and results for Indigenous students at these schools.

But I also know that principals in other states, such as Western Australia and Tasmania, are not seeing the benefits due to lack of action by their state governments.

We need to show politicians that Gonski has broad community support so that we can move towards bi-partisan support for the funding reforms our schools need.

Tony Abbott won’t budge on his plans to abandon the last two years of the Gonski agreements with the states.

While the Labor Party took a step forward with a vote in favour of Gonski at their national conference in July, they have not made a commitment to the full six years of funding we need.

I am highly optimistic that this campaign can make a difference. We have fought and won before when the original Gonski agreements were signed, and we were part of the successful effort to save Gonski when Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne tried to back out of the agreements in 2013.

This campaign is our way of trying to get you the resources your schools need to deliver a quality education to all students.

Correna Haythorpe

AEU FEDERAL PRESIDENT

I am highly optimistic that this campaign can make a difference. We have fought and won before...
Community campaigners ready to go

The AEU has stepped up the fight to make Gonski funding the election issue it needs to be.

Gonski funding is a once-in-a-generation chance to deliver proper, more equitable funding to public schools across Australia. But, if schools are to get the full six years of Gonski funding, it will have to be fought for.

At this critical stage in the fight, some states are delivering extra funding to schools, but others are cutting budgets. The Abbott government is refusing to honour the last two years of the Gonski agreements, when the bulk of the funding is to be delivered.

That’s why the AEU is employing local Gonski campaign coordinators in 18 marginal seats – the seats that will decide the next federal election, and where the major parties will be focusing their campaigns.

The coordinators will be out in schools, at P&C meetings and in the community, explaining why we need Gonski, and building networks of supporters who can get active and fight for needs-based funding.

Gonski has broad support in the community, but there is confusion, even among principals and teachers, about what it means and how it is being delivered.

The coordinators’ mission is to educate schools, parents and communities about the importance of Gonski as an investment in Australia’s future and why all political parties need to support it.

The AEU’s goal is to put pressure on political parties and to obtain bipartisan support for the full six years of Gonski funding.

Mixed progress

AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe says politicians will deliver the full six years of Gonski funding only if state and federal governments know Gonski has too much community support to ignore.

“Politicians from all parties need to hear that funding matters – to us, to parents and to students. They need to hear this as loudly and as often as possible,” says Haythorpe.

“This is not about one year’s funding or one program. It’s about re-imagining how schools are funded in Australia.

“We are putting people on the ground in marginal seats who are dedicated to doing one thing – campaigning for the full six years of Gonski funding that our students deserve.”

Gonski funding began in 2014, but the amount of money going to individual schools has varied from state to state. The ideal of extra funding going directly to schools based on the number of disadvantaged students has really only happened in NSW and South Australia.
We are putting people on the ground in marginal seats who are dedicated to doing one thing – campaigning for the full six years of Gonski funding that our students deserve.

Queensland is using its own system which isn’t wholly based on need. Victoria will begin delivering extra funding this year after a change of government. Western Australia and the Northern Territory aren’t increasing funding to schools, and Tasmania is actually cutting school budgets.

States have been able to do this because the Abbott government hasn’t held them accountable for how their Gonski money has been distributed. Add this to the fact that Tony Abbott and Education Minister Christopher Pyne won’t fund the last two years of the federal share of the agreements and you have a government that isn’t committed to equity in school funding.

Labor leader Bill Shorten has expressed support for Gonski in principle, but hasn’t made a firm commitment to delivering the full six years.

MPs and candidates have to be made more aware of the real passion in the community for needs-based Gonski funding and the call for bipartisan support.

The AEU has fought and won before, when grassroots support helped it get the original Gonski agreements signed in 2013. This is another battle it is determined to win.

Community connections

Michelle Barlow, 34, is a teacher who jumped at the chance to become the local coordinator for the NSW seat of Macquarie, based in the Blue Mountains where she grew up and began her teaching career.

“I’m really enjoying this opportunity to connect with my community and work to improve our schools,” says Barlow.

She’s all too aware of the resource shortages in schools and the differences they make to students.

“I started my teaching career in special education, which was a difficult introduction due to the lack of resources we had. We knew what programs could be effective, but didn’t always have the funding to do them. It is very difficult to prioritise the allocation of resources when the needs are so great.

“There were times when we were just managing behaviour, and one more body in the classroom could have made a huge difference. Resourcing affects everything you do as a teacher.”

Barlow has been working in the Macquarie electorate since April, talking to teachers, support staff and principals to find out how they’ve been spending their Gonski funding and getting them to tell their ‘Gonski story’.

“Schools in Macquarie started getting Gonski money directly in 2014 and are using it to meet the different needs of their school communities,” she says.

“There has been a big emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and increasing one-on-one time with students who are struggling. Professional learning has also been important, especially getting beginning teachers up to speed on how to teach children with higher needs.

“Some schools have employed additional specialist staff to support students, and a common theme throughout Macquarie has been about improving parental engagement with the school.

Making these stories known to the public will be a key part of the campaign.

“There’s awareness that Gonski is out there, but not as much awareness of what it means in the classroom or what it’s doing at individual schools.”

As the next federal election (due next year) draws closer, Barlow will be talking to P&Cs, working with the electorate’s 52 schools, and organising community events in support of Gonski.

“We need to make sure the community understands what a huge opportunity Gonski is for schools.”

Michelle Barlow

There has been a big emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and increasing one-on-one time with students who are struggling.

Michelle Barlow
INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS BOOST

Gonski funds are providing much-needed support for Indigenous students with more teachers, new programs and better resources.
When Evans River K-12 School principal Rob Walker ran into a former student, now living nearly three hours away in Brisbane, he was pleased to hear she was attending university, working part-time and in a happy relationship.

But, she told Walker, she’d be returning to live in Evans Head in New South Wales when she had a family, just so her children could attend her old school.

It’s a measure of the deep community connections forged by the NSW school. “Even though the school is just 15 years old, a significant number of parents are former students,” says Walker.

Indigenous students make up 13 per cent of the school’s population of 515. To help reflect that diversity, there’s been a big push in recent years to increase the number of Indigenous staff members. Today nine of the 85 staff identify as Indigenous including a head teacher and relieving head teacher, an assistant principal, a relieving assistant principal, two classroom teachers, an Aboriginal education officer and two tutors.

The school is a “significant beneficiary” of Gonski funding, says Walker. It receives loadings for its Indigenous students and because of the community’s socio-economic status.

“Where other communities might be able to make generous contributions to a school, our community is limited in what they can do. Gonski recognises that, which is why we get the funding we get. It’s helping the children here have the same opportunity to reach their potential as children who come from better socio-economic circumstances,” says Walker.

Many of the school’s existing offerings, such as literacy and numeracy development and individual tutoring support, will receive a welcome boost from the extra funds and there’s enough left for new programs as well.

The school is offering Aboriginal parents, students and community members the chance to have a say about the types of programs they’d like to see. “We’ve now got the funding for program recommendations they have and we can monitor the outcomes,” says Walker. He believes this collaboration will be one of the most successful efforts in improving students’ results in years to come.

Growing achievement

Another project with long-term results in mind is the Waratah Award, a personal development program for students from Year 2 to Year 10.

Still in the planning stages, the award will encourage qualities such as self-confidence, self-esteem and leadership as well as enhance students’ understanding of culture. Students will take part in various activities, some required and others optional, to achieve a set of competencies.

“The mandatory levels include outdoor education and expeditions, volunteering, environmental understanding, and academic and life organisation and there’s an expectation they’ll choose a minimum number of optional strands to add to their bows,” says Walker.

The students’ progress each year will be recognised with an award to be called the ‘Waratah Bud’, and they’ll receive the full...
Waratah Award when they conclude the program. Walker says staff have enthusiastically supported the award.

When he unveiled the idea at a staff meeting, Walker was "absolutely astounded" at the response.

"Every single staff member said they wanted to be involved in some aspect of delivering a program. It can't happen soon enough because the energy there is a really exciting thing to see."

While the details of the award are yet to be finalised, a number of activities that are already underway will be rolled into the program.

"If you look at a Waratah, you can see the complex design and the many petals that make up the flower. That's a nice metaphor for the different things that make up a person. The same with the growth—the Bud award being an early growth stage where you can see the flower starting to bloom," says Walker. "We want it to become a rite of passage."

The right note
Gonski funding is also to thank for the sounds of music around the school.

A music program, where students are tutored to develop skills in playing various instruments, had been struggling for lack of resources. But it's now "blossoming", with Gonski funds, says Walker.

"We're already starting to see some wonderful things," he says.

Walker says the music program is just one of the results that make him excited about the Gonski funding.

"Just because people come from a low socio-economic background, it doesn't mean they don't have creative talent and energy in a particular area. Many thousands of children in the public education sector have potential that's not being realised because the sector is not adequately resourced. "Gonski is putting the resources in the hands of the teachers who work with parents and children who see the best outcomes for the community," he says.

Proud history
At Le Fevre High School in Adelaide, where Indigenous students make up 20 per cent of the school population, the extra Gonski funds have helped to give existing programs a future and to give them a "kick start", says principal Rob Shepherd.

"It provides support for our whole package of pastoral care and staffing for Aboriginal programs," he says.

One of the oldest schools in South Australia, Le Fevre is steeped in Indigenous history. Former students include members of the stolen generation and Aboriginal luminaries such as Charlie Perkins and John Moriarty, who figured prominently in the Freedom Rides in the mid-60s, played international soccer, and were lifelong activists; Dr Gordon Briscoe,
the activist, academic and international soccer player; and Billy Espie who joined the NSW police force, retiring as a patrol commander. Harold Thomas, the man who designed the Aboriginal flag, also attended the school.

A major success for the school is the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience program, which is run in conjunction with the University of South Australia, and which exposes students to various uni courses in an intensive year-long program.

“It’s highly motivating and is an opportunity for children to feel supported, with Aboriginal adults accompanying them. They also meet Aboriginal people in those venues who are studying and are part of the delivery program,” says Shepherd.

Another program with a “very positive” effect on students is the teaching of the local Kaurna language.

“It’s important to have an environment where Aboriginal students can be really proud of who they are and their cultural links. There’s no doubt Indigenous language is a powerful self-esteem issue for Aboriginal people because the languages were not allowed to be spoken,” says Shepherd.

“It’s significant for this particular school community because of the many stolen generation Aboriginal people,” he adds.

Meanwhile, the contribution of extra Gonski funds to the staffing budget has allowed the creation of more flexible roles and the employment of extra teachers, including Indigenous teachers, and support staff for the language program. It’s allowed the school to release curriculum coordinators from year-level duties and there’s a new third assistant principal role covering “innovative programs and wellbeing”.

“It’s really reinforced the sense of cultural celebration and acknowledgement, as well as academic success. They’re very interlinked – wellbeing, self-esteem, being valued, having a voice, having a presence, being recognised and being an important part of a school community,” says Shepherd.

**Closing the gap**

Professor Peter Buckskin, dean of Indigenous scholarship, engagement and research at the University of South Australia, believes giving Indigenous students a chance is vital.

“为其主要贡献是澳大利亚土著学者、政治家和活动家；比利·埃斯皮，他加入新南威尔士州警察队伍，退休时是巡逻指挥官。哈罗德·托马斯，设计了澳大利亚土著旗帜的人，也参加了学校。

学校的一个重大成功是澳大利亚土著学者经验项目，该计划与南澳大利亚大学合作，使学生能够接触到各种大学课程，为期一年。

“它非常有激励作用，并为孩子们提供了机会，与土著成年人陪同他们。他们还遇到了学习这些课程和参与项目的人士。它提供了与大学环境互动的机会，确保土著学生能够以自豪的态度看待他们的文化联系。没有土著语言，对土著人来说是一个强大的自尊问题，因为这种语言在过去是不允许说的。”她说。

“它对这个特定学校社区有重大意义，因为有那么多的被盗的一代土著人。”他补充说。

同时，额外的贡斯基资金为预算提供了灵活性，并雇佣了额外的教师，包括土著教师和支持人员来实施语言项目。它使学校能够释放课程协调员的年段职责，并创建了新的第三助理校长职位，覆盖“创新项目和福祉”。

“它强化了文化庆祝和认可的意识，以及学术成就。它们非常相关——福祉，自尊，被认可，有发言权，有存在感，受到认可，并成为学校社区中的重要部分。”他说。

**接近差距**

澳大利亚土著学者、政治家和活动家彼得·巴克斯基教授认为，给土著学生提供机会是至关重要的。

“为土著学生提供机会是至关重要的。”他说。

“至关重要的是，有一个环境，让土著学生感到自豪，拥有他们的文化联系。毫无疑问，土著语言是一个强大的自尊问题，因为在过去，这种语言是不允许说的。”他说。

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Australia, says, “The learning needs of a culturally diverse student population will be better served by more culturally diverse education graduates and teaching workforce.”

However, most teachers’ backgrounds and cultures do not reflect the student population that they teach, Buckskin told a conference last year.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are significantly under-represented in Australian schools. Indigenous children rarely see their own people teaching in their school, let alone their classroom,” he said.

“The research suggests that workforce reform strategies will need to be rapidly accelerated to meet a Closing the Gap target to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and other Australians by 2018,” Buckskin said.

A 2014 study reported there was a total of 3,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australia – just 1.2 per cent of the school workforce. In 2013, 182,636 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attended school full-time in Australia, accounting for over 5 per cent of all full-time students.

Between 2007 and 2011, an average of 218 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people graduated from university in schools or education each year. An average of 44 per cent gained employment in a school.

Improving the lives of Indigenous Australians must start with education. Giving Indigenous students an equal chance to reach their potential will require a major investment in schools.

Gonski funding must continue

The key to improving Indigenous students’ education results is to invest resources in the schools they attend, says AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe.

“Indigenous students will suffer disproportionately from the Abbott government’s decision to abandon the last two years of Gonski funding agreements with the states,” she says.

The agreements would have delivered extra resources to the most disadvantaged schools in Australia including those with high Indigenous populations. It means hundreds of teachers, support staff, speech pathologists and other specialists, as well as literacy and numeracy programs, won’t be available to Indigenous students.

The 2015 Closing the Gap report found that between 2008 and 2014 there was ‘limited progress’ in Indigenous educational results, with significant declines in some areas.

“Improving the lives of Indigenous Australians must start with education. Giving Indigenous students an equal chance to reach their potential will require a major investment in schools,” says Haythorpe.

“The government must address this by implementing fully funded needs-based resourcing, including the last two years of Gonski school funding agreements.”
School support staff - the teacher assistants, lab technicians, librarians and receptionists - are the glue that holds a school together. Yet many are unfairly treated when it comes to job security and professional recognition. Meet some of the members giving a helping hand.

**Cracks in the foundation**

**Carol Jones**  
Secondary teacher assistant, Baden Powell College, Vic

“I’ve been an integration aide for about 16 years, and a secondary teacher assistant for the last five years. I was on contract all that time, but was lucky enough to get a seven-year contract as an education support person in the classroom and, within that, another contract as a secondary teacher assistant. That finished at the beginning of October last year and I got rolled back into another seven-year contract.

I recently took six months’ leave working with the AEU Victoria branch, visiting schools and signing up teachers and education support staff. I visited more than 100 schools working with the AEU and heard so many horror stories from people whose contracts start in February and finish in December, and the same thing happens the following year and the one after that.

It’s just a merry-go-round of applying for their positions. My heart goes out to them because they’re generally employed by the school council, not the education department, so they’re not accruing long-service leave or holiday pay, and if they have a sick day they don’t get paid. It’s just awful.

Some people I spoke to were looking to get a mortgage or car loan. They have regular employment, but it’s not permanent, so it’s really difficult to get finance for anything.

A seven-year contract alleviates some of those problems. While they don’t have the security of being permanent employees, at least they can see they’re there for a long haul.

I was lucky that when I returned to school this year I was told I’d be made ongoing [permanent]. I was almost doing backflips! In my new role I am doing more administrative work, and I enjoy it. Everyone else at the school wants my job because there is such variety.

I am hoping to work on more projects with AEU Victoria. Raising the profile of education support staff is my passion.”

**Phil Datson**  
Business manager, Nicolson Avenue Primary School, Whyalla SA

“In South Australia there are far too many school support officers (SSOs) on contracts. They should be made permanent.

It’s a school-based decision to make that happen, provided SSOs meet selection criteria for conversion to permanency. However, the Department [of Education] doesn’t fund that process, so schools need to.

It’s degrading for SSOs, who’ve been on contracts for many years, that their own employer doesn’t recognise they should be made permanent. At my site alone, some have been on contract for more than seven years. I’m permanent now, but for a long time I was in the same boat, not knowing if I had a job year in, year out.

Another worrying issue is the number of SSOs who’ve been on the same classification for years. That’s because reclassification is a tedious and complicated process, and the Department has made it that way.

I’d like to see more SSOs reclassified into the work they’re currently doing, which may be into a higher position. But the paperwork involved makes it quite daunting for them.

I’ve been involved in running reclass training workshops with AEU members and organisers. It’s presented in a way that’s easy to understand and SSOs who’ve attended say they’re more confident about applying. But there are still a lot of SSOs who haven’t attended.

I’d advise all SSOs interested in reclassifying to understand the job and person specification (JNP) for...
... but for a long time I was in the same boat, not knowing if I had a job year in, year out.

Phil Datson

their current level. If you don’t have one, request one from the Personnel Advisory Committee.

Then look at your current position information document (PID) so you can ensure you know what you need to be doing to be reclassified. Many SSOs may be surprised to find they’re already working at the next level.

Finally, whenever you do anything that involves your job, write it down. Having that list of items summarising what you do in your working week will help you put together the information you need for the reclassification.”

Mandy Jackson
Laboratory technician, Hellyer Secondary College, Burnie TAS; President, Support Staff Sector Council, AEU Tasmania.

“I’ve been a lab technician since I was 17, that’s 38 years, and I love it. We’ve got about 900 students at Hellyer, ranging from pre-tertiary to VET students, those in workplace readiness programs and special programs for kids who’ve disengaged from high school.

We run classes in physical science, physics, chemistry, environmental science, biology and life science. There are five labs and I’m the only technician.

AEU Tasmania recently introduced a policy of zero-tolerance to violence and aggression for all education workers in schools. The issue had been raised in the support staff sector council – teaching assistants were reporting frequent physical and emotional intimidation from students. There’s no excuse for anyone having to suffer abuse or harassment because of the work they do.

So in April we presented the branch council with a policy that included data on the types of abuse, and the rights education workers should expect from employers. It was passed unanimously.

The policy applies to students and other people who come into schools, and ensures a safe and secure physical environment, including appropriate facilities for alternate learning settings to cater for all students. Importantly, it encourages staff to report breaches – you can’t just accept it – and it reinforces the right for education workers to be treated with respect.

I don’t think there’s a lot of understanding or support for teacher assistants.

Mandy Jackson

I’m sure hundreds of things happen that people just deal with and accept as part of their day at work, but all the risks should be assessed and the policy and training put in place before children walk through the front gate.

I don’t think there’s a lot of understanding or support for teacher assistants. They’re paid a poor salary for doing an amazing job and basically they’re told ‘If you don’t like it, we’ll give the hours to someone else’. But dealing with violent behaviour shouldn’t be accepted as part of your job.”
Profiteers are trashing public education systems around the world, grabbing government dollars and fees from the poorest people to fill their pockets.

The urgent fight to save public education

Education is possibly the world’s most lucrative and sustainable untapped market. An assessment by Bank of America and Merrill Lynch values the potential global education business at somewhere between US$4.5 trillion and $5 trillion. By 2016/17 it is estimated to be worth between US$6 trillion and $7 trillion.

The rapid commercialisation and privatisation of education — what’s become known as edu-business — is largely driven by huge corporate players, motivated by the vast profits to be gained. And it’s supported by willing governments, looking to reduce their spending and beguiled by certain incentives and ideological motives and, in some cases, out-and-out corruption.

The invasion of for-profit companies into classrooms threatens “the greatest enterprise of our society: quality education”, says Education International (EI) President Susan Hopgood.

EI, the world’s largest federation of unions, representing 32 million educators in 170 countries and territories, recently announced plans to ramp up the fight to protect public education.

At its recent World Congress, 2000 delegates voted to mobilise support across the world against the private enterprise takeover of public schools, agreeing that it creates and exacerbates inequalities.

This global response will also focus on governments that are facilitating and encouraging the growth of the profiteers, says Angelo Gavrielatos, EI’s director of the global response project.

“They’re also making it possible for the edu-businesses to “reap uncontrolled profit” and use their influence to steer education policies in ways that may not align with international agreements and national priorities.

“This poses a risk not only for public education systems themselves, but also their ability to promote democracy, social cohesion and equity. Moreover, it raises fundamental questions about whose interests are being served,” says Gavrielatos.

“Now more than ever, the global political landscape and the growing influence and dominance of global corporate actors require us all to reach out and build community alliances.”

The companies spent more than US$20 million lobbying US state and federal governments in the five years to 2014.

According to the Washington Post.
Profit at every turn
The profiteering is taking place on a number of fronts. One is led by giant global corporations that establish for-profit low-fee schools as well as providing standardised testing systems and teaching resources.

Their approach is pure Marketing 101, says Gavrielatos.
“They create the problem and then offer themselves as the solution. In doing so, they seek to occupy every link in the education chain.
“In the US, for example, they’re part of the ‘education is in crisis’ brigade. They say: ‘We’ve analysed all the public data available and, based on our assessment, the crisis will continue’. They tell policy makers: ‘We can turn this around for you. But to turn it around we need to better understand what’s happening with your student performance, so we need to test them a bit more’.

“Then they offer to produce standardised tests, as well as the books and resources that go along with them. “And while we’re at it,’ they say ‘we can use the tests to evaluate teachers, and we’ve got a battery of teacher evaluation programs. And, we’ve established teacher education programs and we could fund a chain of low-fee schools.’

“That completes the supply chain.”

Nothing affordable about a fee
The corporations’ modus operandi is slightly different in the developing world, says Gavrielatos.
“They don’t need to take that approach because there are either no public education systems or no strong ones. They position themselves as offering the solution to getting every child into school—a social responsibility perspective of trying to get the poorest into schools,” he says.

But research shows that the approach hasn’t been successful because the schools tend to enrol children who were previously enrolled in other schools, rather than taking those who have never attended school.

In addition, the edu-businesses have introduced a new notion, replacing the concept of free education with ‘affordable education’.
“As soon as the word ‘affordable’ is embraced, it legitimises the profit motive through their low-fee schools, which either already operate on a for-profit basis, or will eventually operate on a for-profit basis, just as soon as governments provide further funding,” says Gavrielatos.

“It is morally repulsive. There’s nothing affordable about a fee that represents 20 or 30 per cent or more of the daily income of the world’s poorest. It is reprehensible, and in those circumstances parents are forced to either choose between schooling or clothing and feeding their children.”

Every dollar households spend on school fees is a dollar less to spend on health, clean water, food and shelter, says Professor Keith Lewin of Sussex University’s Centre for International Education.

“So, fee-paying private schools increase poverty directly,” he says.

In many sub-Saharan African countries, children take money to school each day not to buy their lunch, but to pay the fee to attend. In some schools if they can’t afford to pay on a particular day, they’re given a red armband to show they haven’t paid.

“This is how the poorest economies operate,” says Professor Bob Lingard.

It is morally repulsive. There’s nothing affordable about a fee that represents 20 or 30 per cent or more of the daily income of the world’s poorest.

Angelo Gavrielatos
Education International
from the University of Queensland’s School of Education.

One of the edu-business conglomerates, Pearson, recorded global revenue of US$7.9 billion in 2014, in what’s been described as a model of “philanthro-capitalism”, says Lingard.

“Their argument is: ‘we can make money through doing good; doing good can be profitable.’ They argue they’re doing this in the public interest.”

**Always earning**

Pearson’s motto is “Always learning”, which its detractors have rephrased as “Always earning”, says Lingard.

Meanwhile, Pearson chief executive John Fallon has been quoted as saying that “education is the new oil” and that it will be “the growth industry of the 21st century”.

This attempt to reshape public education for commercial profit interests has also infected education policymakers, says Lingard.

“I’ve interviewed policy makers across the world who all say Pearson has the ear of ministers and policymakers, much more than the profession does.”

The company is happy to admit to that, proudly pointing to “the global policy consensus we’re trying to forge” on its corporate social responsibility web page.

Pearson is named in a *Washington Post* report as one of the four companies that dominate the standardised testing market in the United States. The companies spent more than US$20 million lobbying state and federal governments in the five years to 2014.

“The four corporations spend millions of dollars lobbying state and federal officials — as well as sometimes hiring them — to persuade them to favour policies that include mandated student assessments, helping to fuel a nearly $2 billion annual testing business,” according to the report.

**The global response**

EI’s response to the profiteering of public education aims to demonstrate that privatisation destabilises the social cohesion that public education promotes. More importantly, its global campaign will unite the work of all of the unions around the world struggling against the insidious creep of the profit motive into the public sphere.

“The growth of commercialisation and privatisation puts at risk the very essence of quality public education for all children,” says Gavrielatos.

“There is no place for the profit motive dictating what’s in our schools, how it’s assessed, how it’s taught, nor how our schools are organised. Otherwise, children will be the victims. “And in the process, the profession is being weakened,” Gavrielatos says.

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Reducing class sizes... for a fee

Teacher union leaders from the Philippines, South Africa, New Zealand and the United Kingdom visited Australia this year, to share the experience of the privatisation and commercialisation of public education in their countries.

In the Philippines, the government is paying subsidies to private schools, claiming it’s to help reduce the pressure on public schools.

About 21.5 million children attend public schools with class sizes of around 50 to 60 students. More than 1.3 million students attend private schools.

Private school subsidies have increased by 10 times in a decade, says Francisca Castro, secretary general of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers.

Teachers in the Philippines have been campaigning for the government to increase support for public schools and to abide by the constitution’s requirement that education should be the highest priority, ahead of the military and debt servicing, according to Castro.

“Six per cent of GDP is the acceptable international standard for public education funding; our budget is about half that,” she says.

SA private schools grab 40 per cent of funding

In South Africa, where private schools in wealthy suburbs have existed for years, a new model has emerged: low-fee schools in townships run by a company listed on the stock exchange.

The schools receive large government subsidies while public schools languish with massive class sizes of up to 115, poorly paid teachers and inadequate resources and infrastructure.

About 40 per cent of the education budget goes to private schools, according to Mugwena Maluleke, general secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union.

“Public education is not performing because there are no facilities for it to perform,” he told Australian Educator.

“Dire outcomes” in NZ

New Zealand’s experiment with ‘charter schools’ has seen some “dire outcomes” so far, says Louise Green, president of the New Zealand Educational Institute.

The charter schools are operated by private businesses and trusts, and receive state funding and private donations. Like private schools, they are free to set their own curriculum, length of school year and teachers’ pay, and they can employ unqualified teachers. Nine charter schools opened in the past two years, with the NZ government setting aside $19 million to support their private owners in running them.

However, already one is in serious trouble; the principal was sacked, the school’s management team was removed, an audit exposed financial mismanagement and the education ministry recommended it be closed.

Instead, the minister has left the school open and poured more money into it. There’s no accountability for the “amazing amount” of money being poured into the charter schools, says Green.

The turmoil over charter schools and the “political embarrassment” suffered by the government means applications for new schools to open have been stalled until next year.

In effect, schools are selecting parents and pupils, rather than a child having the right to go to their local school.

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“It’s very early days for NZ, but we’re hoping our constant pressure will force them out of the playing field.”

An illusion of choice in the UK

The NZ charter school approach followed the UK’s model for so-called ‘academy schools’.

“In effect, schools are selecting parents and pupils, rather than a child having the right to go to their local school,” says Max Hyde, president of the UK’s National Union of Teachers.

Introduced by the previous Labour government, academy schools were at first planned for disadvantaged areas.

“The idea was that they would build beautiful, bright new schools for children who deserved better environments. The schools would in effect be private schools run with public money,” says Hyde.

But the coalition government that followed changed the rules to allow any school to be privatised.

“You can just ask to be an academy and they’ll make you one,” says Hyde.

“So we had schools that were doing really excellent jobs wanting to become academies. There was the usual sort of language that ‘this would increase innovation’ and ‘nothing will change for the local community’.”

The reality is different, says Hyde. The first thing that happens “without fail” is that the principal and senior management are given large pay rises.

Then, the public loses access to reliable information about the school so there’s less accountability, she says.

“There’s not much innovation either. ‘All the academic research shows that actually it’s an illusion of choice. Innovation is stifled because they’re still being judged by the same accountability measures. So they stay within the narrow boundaries, they teach to test.’

Max Hyde
UK’s National Union of Teachers
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Educators around Australia are in a unique position to be able to raise awareness and increase community support for the full implementation of needs-based school funding.

With a federal election likely in 2016, they know all too well the risks to their schools and students if the Abbott government is returned to office and refuses to fund the final two years of Gonski reforms.

The AEU is calling on members to get the word out during Gonski Week – 26 October to 1 November. This aims to strengthen bi-partisan commitment for funding to ensure schools, teachers and support staff have the resources they need to cater for their students.

The week coincides with World Teachers Day (30 October). “It’s a celebration of the valuable work teachers do, and the dedication and commitment they have to their students,” says AEU President Correna Haythorpe.

World Teachers Day will be used to promote the petition on the I Give a Gonski website calling on Tony Abbott to fully fund Gonski.

Making connections
Local and national events will focus on school communities and target politicians and candidates vying at the next federal election.

The campaign will reinforce the fact that Gonski is needed to ensure that teachers in every school are empowered, well trained, well supported and motivated.

Other unions and supportive organisations are also being invited to participate in Gonski Week and to ask their members to sign up to the campaign. There will be a strong focus on marginal seats (see story page 8), where most activities will take place.

AEU members can plan and participate in a range of activities, from hosting morning teas and organising community forums, to sharing stories with local journalists, wearing Gonski green and spreading the word on social media.

Since schools need tools to promote the need for more resources, a national Gonski video will be made available. Plus, the AEU will provide material tailored to each state to encourage members to recruit supporters among their friends, premiers and ministers and parents.

“Parents have a strong connection with their local school and we want to tap into their networks in the community so we can spread the word, and raise the profile of the need for needs-based funding,” says Haythorpe.

For more information about Gonski Week go to igiveagonski.com.au
Narragunnawali is an Aboriginal word with many positive meanings, making it an appropriate name for an important new reconciliation program for schools.

BY CYNDI TEBBEL

Reconciliation in action

It is widely accepted that the education system provides the best environment for fostering the understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture. It’s where stereotypes, ignorance and bigotry can be countered before they begin. The sector has no shortage of goodwill when it comes to support for reconciliation in the classroom, but many schools and teachers say they lack the knowledge, expert support and confidence to drive the conversation.

The new Reconciliation Australia (RA) program Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in School and Early Learning is aimed at changing that by providing curriculum resources, practical tools and professional development. Narragunnawali is a word from the language of the Ngunnawal people, traditional owners and custodians of the land on which RA’s Canberra office is located. It translates as ‘peace, alive, wellbeing, coming together’.

The program, wholly funded by BHP Billiton, has been developed over two years in consultation with governments and a range of Indigenous and education-based consultative bodies. It’s designed to be an all-inclusive platform to progress reconciliation in every Australian school and early learning service.
Program manager Alex Shain says it doesn’t matter if you’re a one-teacher remote school or a large urban campus. Narragunnawali provides educators with the quality resources that “enable them to help themselves and their students stretch their thinking and add value to their lessons”.

The program allows for a tailored approach because RA recognises that schools will have different goals and methods, says Shain.

**Fulfilling standards**
The program and resources available on the RA website are aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework and support teachers in fulfilling the National Quality Standards. The framework will address the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – specifically regarding Focus Area 2.4 – and the cross-curriculum priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

RA is also developing professional learning resources to help educators promote reconciliation between the wider community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Most of the program can be adapted for early learning settings and RA is creating resources geared specifically for that sector. In the meantime, the program links early learning educators with stories, music and film to support their goals.

“Our team has extensive experience in early learning, primary and secondary teaching, and we work hard to ensure the resources provided are evaluated as suitable in both a cultural and developmental sense,” says Shain.

An important feature of Narragunnawali is the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) developer. The user-friendly online tool is effectively a school’s formal statement of commitment to building relationships and respect with its Indigenous community.

“It’s nuanced with actions tailored for the early learning setting. We welcome feedback from educators on areas where we can tailor our resources even more.”

The Australian National University’s Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research will assess the effectiveness of Narragunnawali, gathering feedback to check whether any changes are needed.

RA has also worked with the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association and Foxtel to produce a series of short films that follow six exceptional young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as they engage with their communities, history and cultures. Shain says their unique journeys showcase music, politics, careers, histories, bush medicine, language and stories that span Indigenous cultures across the country.

“We’ve had positive feedback from teachers who are using them,” says Shain.

**Shared identity**
Of course, much work is already being done to foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in relation to Indigenous histories, cultures and contributions, and Narragunnawali is designed to complement it.

“The Australian Curriculum’s cross-curriculum priority presents a great opportunity for teachers and educators to engage in teaching activities around what is a very important part of our shared national identity,” says Shain.

“We’ll know it’s been a success when all Australian students grow up with a strong understanding, respect and sense of pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.”

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.
This conference focuses on two main themes:
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Learning in limbo

Refugee children in Indonesia risk growing up with little or no education because they are refused access to schools.

Amid a new refugee crisis in Indonesia — with thousands of Rohingya people escaping persecution in Burma and Bangladesh — Hazara refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan have been living in limbo in the country for several years, with no rights and no support. The Hazara people are said to make up the majority of the more than 11,000 refugees in Indonesia.

They wait for the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, to grant them refugee status and then for a country to accept them. Many are hoping to join friends and family in Australia.

In the meantime, concerned that the children were missing out on school, four Hazara men got together last year to open a 'learning centre' in the town of Cisarua, just south of Jakarta.

With the help of donors, they rented a small house, bought some basic school supplies and have organised more than 100 children into five classes.

Nine people from the community, few with any teacher training, are sharing what knowledge they have with the children.

**Australian teachers help with professional development**

The AEU’s International Trust Fund has stepped in to offer a helping hand, sending some teaching resources and equipment, as well as funding a two-week trip for two teachers to implement a professional development program.

Michelle Jones from Bonnyrigg Heights Primary School in NSW and Katherine Roberts from North Geelong Secondary College in Victoria travelled to Cisarua in April and will return for another visit before the end of the year.

Meanwhile, one of the founders of the learning centre, 18-year-old Khadim Dai, is attracting attention for his documentary skills, including an honourable mention in a UN-sponsored youth video festival, Plural+.

Khadim has been making short films of life in Indonesia and the founding of the school, all shot on his smartphone. You can see his films at facebook.com/whoareweanyway

Australian filmmakers — producer/director Jolyon Hoff and producer Graeme Isaac — are recording the experiences of the refugees, aiming to create a full-length feature film.

**Resources**

Watch a short documentary by Khadim Dai about the Cisarua Refugee Learning Centre at tinyurl.com/o8w5dpj

For more information about the centre visit facebook.com/cisarurefugeelearningcentre
The international community is about to add new impetus to the continuing struggle to ensure that all the world’s children get a basic education.

By NIC BARNARD

Resetting the global goals

The basic promise of education for all the world’s children was first made 25 years ago at a global summit in Jomtien, Thailand. In 2000 the aspiration was enshrined with fanfare in the United Nations’ eight Millennium Development Goals, with a target of a primary school education for all by 2015.

Today, education is a reality for many millions of children who would have missed out had it not been for such goals. But more than 58 million children still remain without schooling.

The global financial crisis gave wealthy nations an excuse to slash aid commitments, and conflicts and regional emergencies are growing disruptors of education targets.

By World Vision

The extension into secondary education – the fruits of consistent pressure from EI and its members – represent major breakthroughs.

Setting targets

A UN summit will finalise the goals draft in September before ratification by the General Assembly at the end of the year. The goals are backed by 169 targets, although this number may be reduced.

The draft goal for education is a commitment to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

It is supported by 10 wide-ranging targets, the first of which is to “ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”.

Other targets include access for all to “quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education”, equal access to “affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education”, and the provision of accessible and “safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments”.

The education goal and its targets are underpinned by work of the Education For All movement, which in May brought together 1,500 delegates at the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea. They included education ministers, teacher representatives from organisations including EI, non-government organisations and other stakeholders.
The Incheon Declaration reaffirmed education as a fundamental human right and the key to eradicating poverty. The delegates put flesh on the Sustainable Development Goal targets by committing to “12 years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education, of which at least nine years are compulsory”.

The declaration also implicitly highlighted potential pitfalls. It watered down the proposed education spending commitment from governments from 6 per cent of GDP to a slippery 4–6 per cent. “That means 4 per cent,” says Hopgood. And funding will be crucial.

Education For All’s Global Monitoring Report (GMR) warned this year that the annual cost of achieving universal quality education from preschool to upper secondary in low and lower-middle income countries will have more than doubled, to US$340 billion, by 2030. For the poorest countries, the cost will more than triple.

Driving the increase will be the costs of educating more students, upgrading and building new facilities, employing qualified, appropriately paid teachers, and addressing the marginalisation of disabled, indigenous and other vulnerable groups of students.

Aid will therefore become ever more critical. “Donor aid... will need to increase by at least six times,” says Hopgood, the GMR paper Pricing the Right to Education.

Adding to the challenge, a second GMR paper puts the number of children and adolescents out of school in conflict-affected countries at 34 million - 36 per cent of children in those countries, with the worst affected being the poorest children and girls.

“Conflicts are now lasting longer... Countries with long-term crises are receiving less than half the amount of development aid than others,” said the paper, Humanitarian Aid for Education. It put the cost of getting these children into school at just US$38 per child and US$113 per adolescent. At $2.3 billion, that amounts to 10 times what education currently receives through humanitarian aid.

The funds that do get through are often spent on emergency care. “In Sudan,” says the report, “school feeding took up 71 per cent of the funding it received for education in 2014.”

Rejecting profit

Hopgood says international funding for education has prompted some recipient governments to cut their own spending, while they continue to spend too much on their militaries.

There is also the lurking neoliberal agenda. An NGO declaration at Incheon warned that public education money must be spent on public provision, not on subsidising for-profit providers. It roundly rejected increasing commercialisation and privatisation in education systems.

Hopgood told the forum that teachers must be at the centre of reform, in education systems that “foster an open and collaborative culture”, if the new goals are to be met.

“[Systems] must promote wellbeing and continuous improvement instead of high stakes competition that creates winners and losers.”

India has increased the number of students in primary education by almost 32 million, or 28 per cent, over the past eight years, according to a UNESCO and UNICEF report.

Recruiting and training millions of new teachers will also be required. The Incheon Declaration pledges that educators will be “empowered, adequately recruited, well trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.” That’s not the case today. In too many countries, teachers are under-resourced and underpaid, or not paid at all.

The stakes are high. Education workers have helped change the terms of debate, but they can’t stop now. As Hopgood says: “We don’t want to roll up in 15 years and find ourselves telling the same story – that we failed the world’s children.”

Nic Barnard is a freelance writer

The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals are yet to be set in stone, which makes the united voice of educators, parents, students and communities more important than ever.

More than eight million people have already signed Up For School, the “world’s biggest petition”, demanding that governments keep the promise they made in 2000 to give every child the education they have a right to.

The petition is organised by A World At School, an international movement of more than 250 civil society, teacher and non-governmental organisations, including Education International.

Please sign the petition and share it widely.

aworldatschool.org/upforschool

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www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles
Education unions are calling on the Australian government to reveal its position on the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), a proposed international trade treaty. TiSA, which includes 23 countries, aims to free up trade in areas such as banking, health care and transport. And, if some countries get their way, education will be part of it.

The TiSA talks were proposed by Australia and the United States three years ago after World Trade Organisation negotiations stalled. Since then there’ve been 11 rounds of negotiations, all behind closed doors. The secrecy surrounding the talks is compounded by the fact that final details of any agreement struck will not be disclosed until five years after it is signed.

Alarmingly, a recently leaked document has revealed that Australia is one of four countries (along with Norway, Argentina, and New Zealand) pushing to include education as part of the TiSA agreements.

The AEU and the National Tertiary Education Union are calling on the Australian Government to join with countries such as Mexico, Switzerland, Korea, Taiwan and Japan that have all opposed the inclusion of education in the TiSA.

Including education as part of the trade deal is likely to restrict the way that governments provide education services to their own citizens.

Privatisation pressures
Education International president, Susan Hopgood, says trade rules are legally binding and can have the effect of locking in and intensifying pressures of commercialisation and privatisation.

For example, the agreements typically cover market access and that can limit the ability of countries to regulate operations of private and for-profit schools and institutions, says Hopgood, who is also AEU federal secretary.

Because the aim of TiSA is to ensure ‘competitive neutrality’ or a level playing field between public and private providers, governments could not treat public schools more favourably.

As such, by granting unfettered market access to all foreign education enterprises, governments could very well usher in a flood of providers of questionable quality, which Australia has already seen in the Vocational Education and Training sector.

AEU federal president, Correna Haythorpe, says all Australians should be concerned about the threat these secret negotiations pose to public education.

“Education is a right, not a commodity, and accessible public education must continue to be provided by governments. Australia must not put its world-class public education system at risk simply for the convenience of global corporations,” Haythorpe says.

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.

Resources
Read more about the effect on education of the world trade talks at tinyurl.com/nco603r
Skills to make it for real

The easiest way to appreciate how the Young ICT Explorers competition is inspiring students is to talk to a student who’s deeply immersed in it.

“Coding is really fun and I want to keep doing it,” says Finn Rees, 11, from Wahroonga Public School in Sydney, whose team was one of the joint winners in the Year 4 and 5 category in NSW last year. “It’s almost addictive when you make something amazing and see it work and pop up on the screen.

“In the future there are going to be loads of jobs using computers. They’ll take over, and we’ll have robots doing a lot of jobs, and many people will be needed to code.”

More than 2,000 primary and secondary school students have taken part in Young ICT Explorers since it began six years ago. Its availability has expanded to the point where it was offered in all state and territory capitals except Adelaide and Darwin this year.

Working outside class time, individually or in small teams, the students tackle innovative projects they initiate themselves and develop to prototype stage.

The competition is created by software multinational SAP and Digital Careers, which is funded by the federal Department of Communications, industry, universities and state governments.

The overriding aim is to give students a greater understanding of technology’s real-life applications and the associated career opportunities.

**Passion and knowledge**

Last year Finn and fellow students Jasper Avtarovski and Lachlan Hunt, both 11, built a website (raspberrypiguys.weebly.com) to allow players of the popular computer game Minecraft to build objects faster and learn the Python computer language.

Come judging time, they used a Raspberry Pi, a cheap computer about the size of a pack of cards, to show how Python snippets can change game players’ Minecraft worlds. They had to vouch for the project, its benefits, pitfalls and applications in front of three adult judges.

Their passion and knowledge helped give them the edge in the competition and they each won an iPod touch pocket computer.

“Most children love Minecraft,” says Finn, who’s now in Year 5 and working with Lachlan on another project for this year’s competition. It involves building a website to make Python code tutorials available to children in a more interactive way.

Finn works on the project for an hour each weekday and up to three hours on weekends.

Lachlan says he started coding only 12 months ago and is now encouraging others to do it, and to enter the competition in future.

“Coding helps me with maths. My scores in maths have increased over the past year.”

He adds that the highlight of last year’s competition was “getting to see everyone else’s projects”.

**Building on interests**

At Wahroonga Public School, ICT coordinator Edwin Tomlins is mentoring about 20 Year 3 to 6

Pictured from left: Jasper Avtarovski, Finn Rees and Lachlan Hunt
students who are working on projects for the competition. The mentoring is also outside class time, with the students showing up at his regular lunch-time sessions.

“They discuss their projects with me and I help focus their ideas, but they need to work on their projects independently,” says Tomlins.

Young ICT Explorers has a very broad brief, he says. “The program plays to the students’ existing interests and builds on them.”

Due to the levels of self-direction and commitment required, there is understandably some natural attrition, “but all students learn something new along the way”.

Some students are learning completely new technology. Tomlins cites one who used online tutorials to teach himself HTML coding so he could build a website about helicopters. Students may create websites using HTML or Google Sites, Wordpress or Weebly, or they may use an existing application in a novel way.

Last year a Wahroonga team was highly commended for using several available tools from Google’s Photosphere technology to systematically map the school grounds.

The students go well beyond playing with technology, says Tomlins. They reflect on what doesn’t work and make fixes, they’re resourceful in finding the hardware they need, and they design something new and functional.

“Students don’t just sit in a darkened room and do their coding after they get home from school. This program develops their projects from something they would do in isolation to something that has a broader application.”

For Jasper, who’s on a different team this year, computer coding is anything but isolated. Thanks to his father, who is also a computer programmer, Jasper has been coding since he was in Year 1 and he can now do it in seven computer languages.

Jasper even helps his sister, two years his junior, with coding. “Coding is fun and it helps you to learn if you are helping other people to learn it,” he says.

For this year’s Young ICT Explorers competition, Jasper’s team is creating a ‘mod’ (modification) for Minecraft in the more popular PC version of the game.

The competition judging will be in August and September.

Margaret Jakovac is a freelance writer and former primary school teacher.
Email scams are costing organisations of all sizes, including schools, time and serious money.

BY CLIVE HOPKINS

Demanding ransom

It may seem that recent high-profile data hacking attacks, such as those on the United States government’s Office of Personnel Management and Sony Pictures, have little to do with how individual schools protect the data they collect and hold.

But Mike Holm, operations manager at not-for-profit security group AusCERT, says that’s not the case. He worries that the high-end skills required for such ‘advanced persistent threats’ (APTs in industry jargon) are filtering down to the everyday hacker. And that means the data a school holds on students’ medical conditions, for example, could become as threatened as the sensitive information held by governments and major corporations.

The US government and Sony cases have demonstrated that even the most well-resourced and technologically savvy organisations aren’t immune from the attentions of determined hackers, says Holm, whose organisation gives data protection advice to its members, many of whom are in the education sector.

“I think the problem will get worse before it gets better,” he says.

So what can schools and teachers do to ensure their data is as secure as it can be, from accidental breaches to something more sinister?

“There are a mountain of technical tools you can throw at this problem and many companies will sell you a solution,” says Holm.

For example, there are applications that scan emails for key words and enable a system administrator to flag or block suspicious material. However, legitimate communications could also be blocked and systems made unwieldy.

Besides, says Holm, paid-for solutions like this may simply be avoiding the more general problem of poor security.

Hackers are known to target smaller, often poorly-resourced organisations guessing that their security won’t be up to scratch.

A typical security breach might see a hacker research the devices and software a school uses, then send an email, posing as a staff member. “If the receiver opens an attachment – perhaps a fake spreadsheet on teacher performance – this can be used to exploit a weakness in the software, and introduce a trojan into the system.”

This might allow the hacker to obtain a copy of all information the school principal receives opening up the possibility of publicly posting confidential data, or locking data and demanding ransom payments, using trojan code known as ransomware.

Holm says he knows this has occurred at a number of schools in Australia and his advice is to never pay a ransom. In 2012, a NSW school’s student records and accounts were seized by hackers who demanded payment in return for the files. The school refused and handed its locked hard drives over to police.

Email scams are constantly on the go around the world and Australia is attracting more attention than most, according to security firm, Websense. The firm claims Australia is receiving a huge 60 per cent of the worldwide attacks that attempt to plant ransomware in computers.

Two of the security threats widely reported this year include a scam email that appears to have been sent by the Australian Federal Police, demanding a fine be paid. The other – which makes a reference to the TV show, Breaking Bad – sends a zip file that appears to come from a major courier company. Once downloaded on the user’s machine, the ransomware locks the user’s files as well as any other drives on the network. It sends a message demanding $1,000 to unlock the files.

When checking email, says Holm, remain alert and a little suspicious. “Think before you click on an attachment, and if you’re not sure, then don’t.”

For more information or to report email scams go to scamwatch.gov.au or acorn.gov.au

Clive Hopkins is a freelance writer.
My best app

Spacecraft 3D
(android, iOS; free)
Students can see and rotate 3D images of different NASA spacecraft. They can see how a spacecraft moves, and learn about the engineering achievements. “With a printable target marker on a flat surface, you can hold an interactive 3D version of the Mars mission Curiosity Rover in your hand,” says Gesthuizen. Spacecraft 3D will be updated to include more spacecraft.

ESA Apps for Schools
(android, iOS; free)
Education Services Australia apps include games that test students’ knowledge and skills in a range of activities in English, science and maths, from linear forces and unit conversions to telling a story. Activities are graded according to year level. Gesthuizen uses this app for ideas. “There are more Australian resources here than you can poke a stick at and nearly all of them are carefully curated by Australian curriculum standards, topic and year level. One of the best-kept secrets is access to the community of educators (community.scootle.edu.au).”

dragonboxapp.com

Dragan Box
(android, iOS, Windows; from $6.50 to $11)
The app gradually works through a series of more difficult equation puzzles to feed a hungry dragon. “When you play with this game, it doesn’t even feel as if you are learning algebra. It is one of my more expensive apps but the motivation to play is great and the learning pedagogy sound. It is also great for parents who want to learn algebra to help their children.”

dragonboxapp.com

ROLAND GESTHUIZEN
eLearning Leader, Keysborough College, Victoria

App tips
Gesthuizen says... The trick to using apps successfully is to use them regularly. Take advantage of mobile devices and don’t just use apps in the classroom. Go outside, look at the stars, the mountains, and use apps to show students a window into another world.

worth a look ...

ABC Splash!
(android, iOS; free)
A suite of three apps from the ABC, mapped to the Australian Curriculum covering English, history, geography, the arts and STEM subjects. The first app is for primary students, grouped into topics such as Antarctica, the Wilderness, and National History. The second app, for secondary students to year 10, has subjects including Rights and Freedoms, Money and Finance. The third app, Gobbling Goblins, is a fun food maths game designed to motivate primary students to improve their arithmetic and numeracy skills and strategies.
splash.abc.net.au

Tinkerplay
(android, iOS, Windows; free)
Tinkerplay is a 3D design and printing app, but even if a school doesn’t have a 3D printer this app can be used to create 3D objects, such as characters and animals, using a library of modifiable parts that can be dragged and dropped into place. Students can play with a variety of surface textures and shapes, and there are character templates if they need help getting started.
123dapp.com/tinkerplay

SHARE YOUR SECRETS
Which apps do you find useful in the classroom? Let us know at educator@hardiegrant.com.au
For Indigenous students to succeed, teachers need a sincere understanding of their culture, and schools need to include their parents and community in their education.

By Krista Mogensen

Culture and community

Teachers need to become learners when their classroom includes Indigenous students, say Dr Thelma Perso and Professor Colleen Hayward.

Speaking to Australian Educator shortly before the launch of their new book Teaching Indigenous Students, Perso and Hayward highlighted the importance of cultural awareness and community connection.

They advocate that teachers undertake cultural awareness training three or four times a year. “We need to develop cultural awareness with sincerity and understand that Indigenous children are very highly educated in their own culture,” says Perso. “If we start from a strengths base and understand that our students know an awful lot and we’ve got a lot to learn from them, it changes our world view and approaches.”

By contrast, “deficit” thinking and perceptions – the belief that a student isn’t able to learn what is expected – can be self-fulfilling and contribute to low expectations and outcomes.

Fostering genuine links with Indigenous students’ families and communities is also critical, says Hayward. Building relationships and being respectful of and responsive to the needs of individual students, their families and communities underpins the learning journey.

On a practical note, it’s also about having common space in the school where Indigenous people can feel welcome and participate in the life of the school. “Indigenous people want to be partners in their children’s education, but often schools are so alienating for them,” says Perso.

Using and displaying Indigenous resources in the classroom helps students feel comfortable in western schools and encourages them to share their own knowledge. Many Indigenous children are strong visual learners, keen on digital technologies that allow cooperation and collaboration. These can be powerful learning tools, as long as they don’t lead to “busy work”, or “engagement without learning”.

“Engagement is necessary, but it’s not sufficient,” says Perso. “It’s important to be able to describe the goals, the learning outcome.”

In the book, which they describe as a practical how-to guide, the

Teaching Indigenous Students: Cultural awareness and classroom strategies for improving learning outcomes

By Thelma Perso and Colleen Hayward

Allen & Unwin, 2015, paperback, 304 pages, RRP $65

Dr Thelma Perso
Let us know what you think

Have you recently read a book that has inspired your teaching or your students? Tell us about it at educator@hardiegrant.com.au, on facebook.com/AEUfederal or on Twitter @AEUfederal.

authors aim to build teachers’ skills and confidence, and also face the realities of the 2015 classroom. While NAPLAN is problematic for many Indigenous students, for example, Perso and Hayward suggest teachers “deconstruct” the test questions through students working on one each day of the school year, thereby making the test “explicit” and known.

Although a 2013 Council of Australian Governments report suggested that Indigenous students’ school completion rates hadn’t improved since 2008, Perso and Hayward are optimistic about the future of Indigenous education. “A lot of schools are doing good things, and in many places local solutions are working.” Unfortunately this usually depends on individuals, if the good programs they’ve established continue after they’ve left, then schools improve. They have emphatic advice for new teachers. “Make no assumptions based on your own experience,” says Perso. “Assume your Indigenous students know a lot and it’s your job to find out what they know and ‘scaffold’ that to what they need to know.”

Krista Mogensen is a freelance writer.

These programs build aspirations in students who might not otherwise know the world of possibilities available to them.

Professor Colleen Hayward.

Steps to university

Programs that mentor Indigenous students, supporting them to finish school and aim for tertiary studies are effective and essential, say Dr Thelma Perso and Professor Colleen Hayward.

“These programs build aspirations in students who might not otherwise know the world of possibilities available to them,” says Hayward.

Hayward, who is head of the Kurongkurl Katitjin Centre for Indigenous Education and Research at Edith Cowan University (ECU), supports aspiration programs for Indigenous high school students. Mount Lawley Senior High School, for example, acts as a hub for Indigenous students in metropolitan secondary schools where there are too few Indigenous students for school-based programs. With the school adjacent to the ECU campus, access is easy and students are able to use all the university’s facilities to enhance their learning, including homework classes and specialised tutoring. “The students quickly come to feel at ease with universities as places where they are welcome and where they belong,” says Hayward. “We invite parents throughout the year to celebrate the students’ success as well as put them at ease with the program. The students flourish, achieve well at school and develop a view of their future.”

At ECU’s Bunbury campus in south-west WA, the UniChoice program enables Year 9 and 10 Indigenous students, and students from low SES backgrounds, to attend university one day a week over two terms. “Students gain a sense of purpose and see that university is a safe and accessible learning environment closely connected to country and feelings of belonging,” says program coordinator Tim Morris. Evaluations of the program – and feedback from students, once at risk of dropping out, and now aiming for tertiary studies – give it a big tick, he says.
**Teacher to teacher**

**Why I teach with unconditional positive regard**

**BENJI GERSH**

Unconditional positive regard (UPR) is the difference between “I love you, but hurry up and do the dishes”. And “I’ll only love you if you do the dishes”.

I was introduced to UPR when I was sitting with a group of the teachers whom I studied with. We were all in our first year of teaching and were sitting entranced at a seminar, listening to a very softly spoken but self-assured man describe the way he believed teachers should be interacting with students.

I usually slink out as early as I can in seminars, but something about what he had said resonated so strongly with me that I had to ask for more. I walked up to Brendan Murray – now my executive principal at Parkville College and Dumbo Feather profilee – and asked him what the hell he was talking about.

I don’t really remember his response, but I do remember feeling that it didn’t adequately satisfy my curiosity. University had taught me how to try to ‘manage’ student behaviour. Working in a school had taught me a variety of punitive measures to address misbehaviour. Brendan would eventually suggest that I get to know my students and think really highly of them. Teaching became a lot more attractive to me.

Unconditional positive regard is a mindset that is characterised by a feeling of warmth towards a person. It separates what a person has done in the past from the inherent value they possess. This separation allows a safe space for our inevitable failures, and creates part of the conditions for us to change and work towards succeeding.

Teaching students who have been incarcerated for serious crimes has provided me with the opportunity to look inwards and work on my own dispositions. It’s forced me to ask myself some serious questions about who I am and who I would like to be, which has been a source of rich personal growth. Unconditional positive regard is, by its very nature, something that must be cultivated in ourselves.

When I am faced with a student who has done some horrible things to others in their past, I am also faced with options as their teacher. I can decide they are a valuable person deserving of their human right to an education. Or I can focus on their past actions, and treat them as if what I have to offer is conditional upon them always doing the right thing. If I am to believe that the child sitting in front of me in class can ever be an adult contributing meaningfully to society, UPR is the only worthwhile option I have.

When one of my students tells me to “go fuck yourself”, and they frequently do, it is honestly much easier now to ask them if everything is OK rather than feel attacked. It wasn’t once, but now it is. The multiple, compounded traumas that will have been inflicted on them, for them to end up in our school, make it fairly easy to evoke empathy and to speak calmly and with a lot of regard for their perspective despite the outward show of hostility they are presenting.

What may come as a surprise is that, for me, having UPR for a disenfranchised, traumatised kid seems to be fairly easy. Genuinely feeling UPR for my colleagues, family and friends is much more difficult. Not only are they not society’s castoffs, they are paid/obliged/have chosen to be around me.

What I have learnt about UPR is that it is a constant effort, and well worth the investment.

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