

Australian Educator

Meet the activists

// Campaigning for public schools

How science works

// New Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources

Playing catch-up

// Call for commitment to early childhood funding

What's the angle?

// Inspired maths teachers share their tips



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ON THE COVER Correna Haythorpe, AEU federal president (seated), Susan Hopgood, federal secretary and Meredith Peace, AEU Victorian branch president with Fair Funding Now! supporters at the national launch of the federal election campaign outside the State Library in Melbourne.

PHOTOGRAPHY ANTHONY MCKEE



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www.aeufederal.org.au

Know your union

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Communities coming together

As the Fair Funding Now! vans take to the roads across Australia, the campaign continues to gain thousands of supporters who are standing up for public education.

Elections are a time of new beginnings, of rebirth, of a sense of hope and optimism about what may lay just over the horizon. For public school supporters, this year's federal election is a chance to correct the funding mistakes of the past and set a course for a brighter future.

Call me crazy, but I am so excited about this election campaign!

As Fair Funding Now! gathers momentum in the lead-up to the federal election, now is a good moment to consider the difference between a successful public movement and one that merely ticks the boxes.

A campaign can have great messaging, enthusiastic volunteers and a clear goal, but if communities do not take it to heart, then it will struggle to be successful. For change to occur, for a movement to make a difference, it is vital that a campaign becomes a part of the community itself.

I have been extremely impressed by the energy and grassroots support at the heart of the Fair Funding Now! campaign's success. Like so many of you, I have been doorknocking, distributing leaflets and making phone calls. I am confident our message is cutting through where it counts - with those who care about our children's future.

Right now, in thousands of public schools across Australia, there are parents, families and school staff who understand the importance of fair funding. There are parents who have to fundraise money to pay for capital works such as air conditioners or computers for their public schools. There are parents, principals and teachers who are experiencing the realities of funding shortages in terms of learning programs for their children and students.



Our van tour campaign teams will visit communities in marginal electorates across Australia to inform parents and voters of the multi-billion dollar public-school funding cuts that the prime minister has left future governments to fix.

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These are the parents, educators and school communities that have joined us in our campaign for fair funding for public schools. These people have been at the forefront of the public school funding fight for years. These are the people who hand out campaign brochures, knock on doors in their local communities, and talk to parents about school resourcing issues outside the school gate.

These parents and school staff believe that our public schools should be resourced to offer a high-quality education for all children. These communities are truly engaged, and are prepared to devote their time to building an ever-stronger and more vibrant public school system.

In the light of this overwhelming community support it is shameful that the Morrison government still feels it is acceptable to cut \$14 billion from public school budgets over the next decade. Its school funding legislation will leave 99 per cent of public schools below the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) over the next five years and beyond.

The Morrison government is denying today's public school students the resources they need to fully develop to their potential. It is ignoring the passion, potential and belief in fairness of opportunity that public school parents and school staff are willing to share.

These resources should be in our public schools right now. They should not be delayed for years on end simply due to the policy of the Morrison government. Our 2.5 million public school students can't wait. Their schools need that funding now.

That's why we welcome Labor's announcement to restore \$14.1 billion into public school funding over the next decade if it wins government. Labor's

The true strength of a movement is in its people. If your heart is with the fair funding of public schools then don't wait – we need you.

”

commitment to an immediate injection of \$3.3 billion into public schools in the first three years of government is especially welcome, and a game changer for schools that have been waiting for these funds.

We need all political parties to put public schools first. We welcome the Greens' commitment to ensure that all schools reach 100 per cent of the SRS, as well as Labor's commitment to work with state and territory governments to bring SRS funding for public schools up to 100 per cent.

Our public school communities are the heart of the Fair Funding Now! campaign. These people have stood up for public schools and reached out to help. Fair Funding Now! is reaching back. It is these parents and school staff that my colleagues and I are looking forward to meeting as we head out across the nation on our Fair Funding Now! van tour.

From this week our van tour campaign teams will visit communities in marginal electorates across Australia to inform parents and voters of the multi-billion-dollar public-school funding cuts that the prime minister has left future governments to fix.

We already know that public school funding is a key consideration for parents and their voting intentions. In a recent AEU poll held in six marginal electorates, more than eight in 10 respondents said education will be an important factor in deciding who they will vote for at the upcoming federal election.

Our teams will engage with communities in marginal electorates across Australia to make this federal election the 'education election'. We will inform people about the clear choice between Scott Morrison's cuts to public schools and Bill Shorten's investment in public schools. It is time to



elect a government that will put public schools first.

Our campaign teams will make sure that school communities across the country know their concerns are being heard, and help them understand how they can join our campaign and channel their passion and motivation into making a real difference for public schools everywhere.

However, don't feel you have to wait for our vans to visit your community. Now is the time to engage with the issue and join Fair Funding Now! If you haven't already signed up, then go to fairfundingnow.org.au and join the thousands of campaign

supporters who have already committed to standing shoulder to shoulder in the fight for public school funding.

The true strength of a movement is in its people. If your heart is with the fair funding of public schools then don't wait – we need to hear from you.

We will win this campaign because we are fighting for our children. That gives us all the courage to stand up against public school funding injustice, and to fight for a better future for our schools and their students.

Correna Haythorpe AEU federal president.

Action for change

AEU members with “fire in the belly” are negotiating new enterprise bargaining agreements.



In Tasmania, South Australia and the ACT, teachers are continuing to pressure governments to agree on a level of funding and resources that will support their profession to deliver quality education.

TASMANIA

While the Hodgman government dreams about Tasmania as the “education state”, its teachers are the lowest paid in Australia and the government has progressively cut funding to public schools.

Tasmanian educators ran a Quality Education campaign that led into the state election last March. They’ve since joined other public sector workers to call for an end to a two per cent cap on wage rises that has been in place since 2011. Negotiations over a new enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) began late last year.

AEU Tasmania president Helen Richardson says that in addition to pay, workload for teachers, support staff and principals is “unsustainable”.

“And, we don’t have enough professional support staff in schools. The Australian Psychological Society recommends one school psychologist to 500 students. We’ve got about one to 1,200. We’ve got waiting lists of over a year for children to see a speech therapist, let alone get the help that they need,” she says.

Industrial action late last year attracted a lot of media attention and Richardson can’t remember when there was such “fire in the belly” of members.

“The goodwill has run out and they want something done about it,” she says.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Teachers in the ACT are making progress at the bargaining table in negotiations for their new EBA, says AEU ACT secretary Glenn Fowler.

He says there’s agreement in principle on key issues, including moderating the effect of digital communications, respecting educators’ leave, and occupational violence.

Fowler is positive about an enhanced annual process for workload reduction in schools and movement towards converting temporary teachers to permanent arrangements. “So, the days of eight successive one-year contracts are over,” he says.

Salaries are potentially a stumbling block. An offer of 2.7 per cent a year “is unlikely to be acceptable to our members and is not good enough,” Fowler says.

Another is the union’s demand to reduce face-to-face hours for classroom teachers from 21.5 to 20.5 per week.

Members in the ACT are also lobbying for extra funding to support school principals.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A March 2018 state election got in the way of any significant bargaining, delaying meaningful negotiations on the AEU’s 7 Point Plan for Education until later in the year.

The South Australian Branch is campaigning on the theme of respect for the education profession. Members are demanding reasonable workloads, better remuneration for all classifications, secure employment, more teachers to reduce class size, improved provisions to attract and retain staff to country locations, addressing gender inequality and domestic violence conditions, and fair treatment at work.

About 106 proposals were put to the government when bargaining began in last May; by October 100 had been dismissed or rejected. On World Teachers Day on 26 October the union scheduled an after-hours rally.

AEU SA president Howard Spreadbury says the government has also proposed the removal of a previous commitment for a range of funding matters in a new agreement.

“They said they wanted more flexibility and less regulation, and obviously members were very alarmed and concerned about not having these funding measures guaranteed into the future,” he says.

The result was a half-day stop work in November and a series of rallies across the state. The rallies were well attended by members and sent a clear message to government that members wanted them to seriously negotiate securing current levels of funding as well as providing additional resources to alleviate workload.

Spreadbury says more industrial action is an option if negotiations are not fruitful.

The goodwill has run out and they want something done about it.



Helen Richardson
AEU Tasmania president

News in brief



Balance for better

International Women's Day on March 8 provides an opportunity to educate and inspire students about the role of women in society. This year's theme is #BalanceforBetter.

Many resources are available online, including materials and videos for students. You can find them at: internationalwomensday.com/school-resources

Posters featuring inspirational Aboriginal and Torres Islander Strait role models can be downloaded from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies website at aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/international-womens-day-posters

Best seats in the house

More than 60,000 remote and regional school students across Australia now have a chance to experience free theatre.

The Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) has launched a theatre-streaming platform to provide free access to students who are geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged.

ATYP On Demand provides primary schools, secondary schools and children's hospitals with access to a range of productions at any time. Live theatre will be streamed in real time.

Interactive learning resources are provided for teachers, including curriculum-linked lesson plans and behind-the-scenes interviews.

ATYP artistic director Fraser Corfield says an involvement in the creative arts at a young age can improve cognitive abilities and sees young people more likely to volunteer, vote and connect with their communities.

"Research has found that youth theatre can positively impact mental wellbeing, reduce anxiety, build resilience and skills," Corfield says.

Stand out from the crowd

A year-long university research project aims to increase the number of girls in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects with an intense program in 30 Victorian schools.

Swinburne University of Technology researchers are targeting 20 urban and 10 rural secondary schools with the Standing out from the Crowd project, which creates educational resources and trains teachers to deliver them effectively.

The aim is to inspire an interest in STEM subjects by showing

practical applications.

Associate Professor Naomi Birdthistle says there's an increasing trend towards teaching enterprise skills such as problem solving, communication and presentation, digital literacy, teamwork, critical thinking, creativity and financial literacy in STEM subject matter.

She says that, for some students, STEM content-matter can be more palatable when experienced this way because they can see the application of STEM content in the real world.

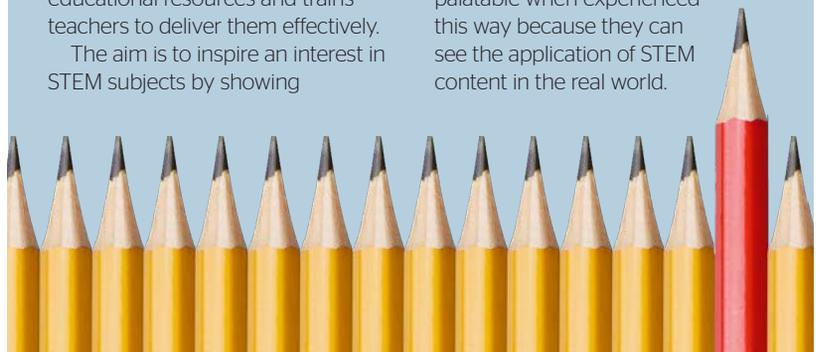


ILLUSTRATION OSLO DAVIS



ASD TRAINING BRINGS RESULTS

Research has found that special training for teachers can bring improved results for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). A three-year study in 60 schools in the US found that when teachers received specialised training about ASD, their ASD students' class engagement and learning improved.

Completed by researchers at Florida State University and Emory University, the study was published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

Resources and suggestions: onethingforautism.com.au

Information about training: amaze.org.au



EVENTS

8

March

International Women's Day

2

April

World Autism Awareness Day

16

May

Education Support Personnel Day

17

May

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia

23

May

National Public Education Day

5

June

World Environment Day

12

June

World Day Against Child Labour



ELECTING FOR CHANGE



In a make-or-break year for public education, electing a government that puts public education first is more important than ever.



The future of our public school funding will be determined at the ballot box at this year's federal election. Will the Coalition government's devastating funding cuts impact public schools for decades, or can voters be persuaded that a quality education for all students is the priority?

With the election looming, the Fair Funding Now! campaign is at a critical point, says AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe.

The union's campaign is aimed at restoring public school funding the Coalition government has cut since 2017, and ensuring all public schools are funded to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

"Scott Morrison's government introduced legislation that has denied public schools the resourcing they need," says Haythorpe.

The legislation set a 20 per cent cap on the Commonwealth contribution to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). Then at the end of 2018, Haythorpe says the government "behaved appallingly" by coercing state and territory governments into signing bilateral agreements, with a threat to withhold funding unless they did so.

"This has made the situation far worse, with only 1.3 per cent of public schools set to reach 100 per cent of the SRS by 2023."

The cuts have left public schools out of pocket by \$1.9 billion in 2018 and 2019, and by \$14 billion over the next 10 years.

"It will have a devastating effect on public school funding over the next decade. We're calling on the government to reverse its cuts and to ensure all public schools are funded to 100 per cent of the SRS.

At the same time the Morrison government has shown its clear preference for private schools with

a \$4.6 billion special deal for private schools and not a single extra cent for public schools. Almost all private schools will be at or above their SRS by 2023.

"We also want the government to commit to funding capital works in public schools, as recommended in the Gonski review, and to reverse its cuts to funding for students with disabilities and review future funding for these students."

CAMPAIGN ON THE MOVE

The public response to the government's attempt to compromise quality education has been overwhelming. The Fair Funding Now! campaign has placed public school funding on the national agenda, ensuring it is a key issue in the election campaign, says Haythorpe.

Educators, parents and others in school communities have put their hands up to get the message out ahead of the election, particularly in marginal electorates.

A fleet of branded Fair Funding Now! vans is visiting school communities across the country with campaign teams talking about why we need a government that puts public education first. The vans can be tracked on fairfundingnow.org.au as they head towards Canberra in the lead-up to the federal election. "It's time to remind the government of its responsibility to reverse the cuts to public schools - just as they've done with private schools," notes Haythorpe.

Under the Morrison government only 1.3 per cent of public schools will be funded to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2023. However, nearly 99 per cent of private schools will be funded at, or in excess of, the SRS by 2023.

FUNDING PROMISES

The hard work that AEU members and other volunteers have put into the campaign is paying off. Tens of thousands of supporters have signed up, the media regularly covers the issue, and Labor and the Greens have come to the party with promises to restore the Morrison government's cuts.

Labor has promised an extra \$14.1 billion for public schools over the next 10 years, including \$3.3 billion in the first three years.

"It's a significant announcement that would transform public education," says Haythorpe.

Importantly, Labor and the Greens have publicly stated the importance that all schools reach 100 per cent of the SRS.

The Greens have also promised public schools \$320 million a year, or 80 per cent of the capital grants fund, in a move that would turn around the inequity in capital works funding.

Meanwhile, AEU polling indicates strong opposition among voters to the Morrison government's public school funding cuts.

"The public aren't fooled. Parents understand the importance of investing in our schools," says Haythorpe. "And they know they have a clear choice when the time comes to vote."

Govt has failed to deliver for students with disabilities

School funding cuts for students with disabilities must be reversed now, says the AEU.

An overwhelming majority of public school principals surveyed by the AEU have reported inadequate funding for students with disabilities.

In the AEU's recent *State of Our Schools* survey, 88 per cent of the almost 700 principals surveyed said that government funding for students with disabilities was not enough to adequately educate and support them.

In the lead-up to the federal election, all political parties need to spell out how they will address this underfunding, says AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe.

"Despite the Coalition government's big promises in relation to the disability loading, it failed to deliver the funds needed to teach students with disability," she says.

Nearly one in five school students receive an "educational adjustment" due to disability, according to the Education Council's Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability. Almost 75 per cent of students with disabilities attend public schools.

Providing appropriate specialists, health and wellbeing support, staffing and access for students with disabilities costs extra, and schools must receive enough funding to cover these costs, says Haythorpe.

"Every child must have the chance to receive a high-quality education. This is critically important for students with disabilities, who face challenges that others don't, and who may be impacted by other types of educational disadvantage."

Under the Morrison government's 2017 school funding legislative changes, federal funding for students with disabilities was standardised across all states. According to the formula, a base amount is provided for each student, along with additional funding for any of the three levels of additional support needed: supplementary, substantive or extensive.

But this was actually a smokescreen for major funding cuts, says Haythorpe. Commonwealth funding for students with disabilities was cut for five states and territories in 2018. Worst hit were Tasmania (a 46 per cent cut, from \$18 million to \$9.7 million) and the Northern Territory (36 per cent, from \$26.7 million to \$17.2 million).

"The funding cuts must be urgently reversed, and the new system of disability loading reviewed. All political parties must understand the vital need for proper funding for students with disabilities," Haythorpe says.

STAND UP. SPEAK OUT. CREATE CHANGE.

Go to fairfundingnow.org.au to join the campaign.

Break the divide

A strong support network and a policy of inclusion helps students to thrive at this Brisbane school.



Educators at Marsden State High School outside Brisbane in Queensland are demonstrating the benefits of an inclusive learning environment.

The Special Education Program (SEP) at the school of 2,250 students includes those with disabilities, plus specialist behaviour management support and a large learning support unit.

Funding has helped support the school's Special Education Program (SEP). Here students participate in a cooking class led by teacher Martha Hockings.

About 130 students are verified under the Adjustment Information Management System (AIMS) and qualify for extra resources. But there are many more students in need of support who don't meet the criteria.

Fortunately, the extra Gonski funding over the past few years helped to provide a strong student support services network, which includes three youth support coordinators, an industry liaison officer, a careers engagement

IN SHORT

// Marsden State High School offers a Special Education Program (SEP).

// Teachers switch between teaching mainstream and SEP classes.

// The result is more shared understanding and a commitment to work together.

and SEP transitions officer, a nurse, a school-based police officer, a wellbeing coordinator, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education unit, guidance officers, SEP case managers and learning support staff.

Executive principal Andrew Peach says a more inclusive approach involving students and staff in the SEP department began about two years ago and the results are already evident. One initiative has seen SEP teachers teach some mainstream classes and vice versa.

"We're trying to break the divide between SEP and the rest of the school and it was very successful for us last year. In fact, we'll take it a bit further this year," Peach says.

The head of special education services, Brad Tavelardis, is also the deputy principal in charge of Year 11 and the mixing of roles between SEP and mainstream classes brought about the idea for improving inclusion.

Tavelardis established study rooms and resources for the Year 11 students in what was traditionally known as the SEP area.

"About halfway through the year we noticed that it was becoming normal for the Year 11s to spend time down there. It was also becoming normal for our SEP kids to be all across the school, so it was a nice little manoeuvre that, to be fair, we hadn't strategically planned at the start of the year," says Peach.

He says the change has helped to remove any perceived stigma from the SEP area and teachers have collaborated at a higher level, too.

"That's been really successful; the shared understanding and the commitment to work with each other was really strong throughout the year. And that's had a massive impact on



our staff's understanding of each other's responsibilities, their engagement in what they're doing and also their professional development."

Importantly, there's been a marked effect on the students. Engagement among SEP students has improved, behavioural referrals have dropped and there has been a big reduction in suspensions.

Academically, SEP students are thriving, Peach says.

For the past three years, all Year 12 SEP students have graduated with either a

Queensland Certificate of Education or a Queensland Certificate of Individual Attainment, a significant shift from the days when SEP students would finish school with no certificate.

"One of the things we're most proud of is that the results really do indicate that it's money well spent.

"It's not money that's sitting there waiting for a rainy day or to build another swimming pool. It's used to employ real people to make a real difference with our kids," Peach says.



SPREADING

THE W



Educators, parents and community supporters across Australia are working tirelessly on the Fair Funding Now! campaign. Five activists tell us what drives them.





HENRY CROFTS

Primary teacher, Oberon Primary School, Belmont, VIC

HENRY Crofts has been active in the AEU since he joined as a graduate in 2008. He was dismayed by what he saw while teaching in the United Kingdom for three years and is worried Australia is headed down the same path.

"I've worked predominantly in schools with lower socioeconomic demographics, in which existing funding models punish the children through a general lack of funding.

"There's still a discrepancy between the haves and the have nots, which creates an inequitable playing field for students who are victims of circumstance. They don't get to choose how much money their parents earn, or the postcodes that they live in.

"Through the Fair Funding Now! campaign I've been involved in a lot of activities, from chatting on local radio to travelling to Canberra to lobby our local Federal MP Sarah Henderson, the Liberal member for Corangamite. She refused to meet us, but Adam Bandt, the Greens member for Melbourne, was quite receptive.

"At the local level, I talk about the Change the Rules and Fair Funding Now! campaigns to parents out the front of the school, or chat to people at train stations. I do door-knocking as well, when I've got time.

"It pays to be as active as possible because you meet like-minded people. Teachers tend to be passive and avoid conflict, because they're nurturing sorts

of people. And as a profession, they put up with a lot and just seem to take it on the chin.

"But any little conversations I can have about investing in education makes a difference. And being an active union member is about trying to protect the enjoyment of my employment because the job gets more demanding every year, and you're expected to do more with less.

"At my school, for example, the equity funding we received last year was used for speech pathology and early literacy intervention. It makes a difference to children with learning difficulties or those who fall between the gaps and sometimes need extra support, because they're more literate by the time they get to the older year levels.

"With projected funding we could employ two more people to provide literacy intervention or speech pathology services for incoming preps. But cuts mean we've had to halve (and halve again) access to those services. It's now at a point where I can't offer students the support they need. It's so valuable, and it's heartbreaking to tell a parent that the service their child had last year isn't available anymore."

It pays to be as active as possible because you meet like-minded people.



ORD



DAVID REYNOLDS

HSIE teacher, Moruya High School,
Moruya, NSW

DAVID Reynolds advocates for the Fair Funding Now! campaign with his colleagues every Saturday at a stall in the local town market, taking what he calls a “soft-sell” approach.

“I’m the NSW Teachers Federation representative at my school and they needed someone to fill in at the market, so I put my hand up.

“It’s our main activity and we get great engagement from the local community. We invite people to talk with us and hand out information – letters and brochures. Our latest material outlines how much funding each local school will lose or is losing under the current arrangement, compared to how it would be under Labor.

“It’s a very soft-sell approach, because

we have to be sensitive to the market – people shopping don’t want us getting in their faces. And we’re aware that by just being there, we’re an advertisement for the teaching profession.

“When they ask what we’re selling, we jokingly say: Edutopia, the educational dream. But it’s just a fantasy.

“Another part of my advocacy is being president of the Moruya Teachers’ Association, which includes Moruya High School, Moruya Public School and Broulee Public School. Those schools could all do with more funding, particularly for more support staff.

“We have a lot of kids, and half are in the disability area. They require a lot of support, and if funding gets cut, they really suffer.

“This year we’re going to the markets each month, especially once the election is called. I’m really committed to it because just by being there I’m basically a talking billboard. If people want to ask a question they can.”

We invite people to talk with us and hand out information – letters and brochures. Our latest material outlines how much funding each school will lose.



CHRIS GUINANE

Primary teacher, Eastern Ranges
School, Ferntree Gully, VIC

CHRIS Guinane has been a union rep since graduating. He became heavily involved in the Fair Funding Now! campaign last year and joined the AEU Victorian branch council.

“As well as being a member of the AEU, I’m a member of the Labor Party, and this is my first experience being part of a broader campaign. I wanted to get a taste for campaigning that’s not as party-based.

“The issue that drove me most to join a political party was education and funding for state schools. Last year I took part in the Fair Funding Now! campaign by attending meetings and speaking at a campaign launch, where I ran through what my school missed out on with Gonski 2.0.

“I’ve spoken to community groups and to the school council about getting involved. It’s all well and good for teachers to become more active with campaigns, but we need to get parents and other community members engaged as well.

“Special education is the sector I’m most familiar with and I know that any cuts in funding really affect our staffing numbers.

“Additional funding would allow us to put in more staff where they’re most needed and broaden access to auxiliary staff such as speech pathologists and occupational therapists. It would help us build a more successful program for kids struggling to get through their education.

“The funny thing is, a lot of our complaints about schools go back to not having the money to do what we want to do for the kids.

“That’s my pitch: the money is there. It’s just not being given to public schools purely because of ideologically driven governments.”

Last year I took part in the Fair Funding Now! campaign by attending meetings and speaking at a campaign launch.



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VIVIENNE BOCHENEK

Special education teacher, Bomaderry High School, Bomaderry, NSW

VIVIENNE Bochenek became involved in campaigning last year at Nowra High School. She'll continue her advocacy at her new school in Bomaderry,

"I've been going to monthly NSW Teachers Federation meetings, but mostly I've been leaflet dropping and being annoying on Facebook, posting correct information about the education department, fair funding, teaching - all those things.

"My message is that everyone should be able to access a good education no matter what their postcode or how much money their parents earn. More broadly, I find great inequity in schools and the gap is widening.

"In special education we lack resources. In 2017, my classroom budget was \$200 for textbooks and other resources. But when students don't come to school with food, you can't expect their parents to purchase pens and paper.

"Those resources usually came out of my pocket, and last year I spent almost \$500 that wasn't reimbursed by the school. That didn't include purchasing food every day for kids who haven't had anything to eat.

"Because sometimes the only way you can get through a morning is to make sure that you've got bread and cheese and butter, probably the only food they'll have all day. Even if I'm only spending \$20 a week on food and stuff for these kids, it's a lot over a year. And you can't claim that back on your tax.

"Funding makes a difference to kids in special education. They often end up in a



My message is that everyone should be able to access a good education no matter what their postcode or how much money their parents earn.



demountable in the middle of a field and yet they're expected to feel valued within the school environment.

"When I was at Nowra High School there were demountables that had been on campus for at least 12 years, and they can be quite dangerous. Inadequate or non-existent air-conditioning is common, as are leaks that produce toxic mould and send water running down through the light switches and power sockets.

"But you never see a demountable at the wealthiest private schools. It reminds me of a great comment from a speaker at a Fair Funding Now! meeting: 'If you give a million dollars to a private school it will fund their second swimming pool, but if you give a million dollars to a public school it will pay for extra teachers, equipment, computer labs - all the things they don't have access to now.'

"When you look at the additional millions being given to private schools by the government, no wonder they're far ahead of the game. It's unfair and it makes me angry."



Call for 2019 nominations

Rosemary Richards Scholarship

Rosemary Richards was a proud feminist, unionist and educator. A trailblazing leader, she was committed to advancing gender equality across the AEU. In her memory, the Rosemary Richards Scholarship continues her legacy by building the capacity of women as activist and leaders.

This is an opportunity for an AEU woman member with an idea for an innovative project, research or study experience that will increase her skills and experience in the union's work at state/territory, national or international level. By extension, it should also support the AEU's women members.

The Scholarship is valued at \$10,000 and is intended to cover all project expenses including, but not limited to, travel, attendance at conferences, workplace visits, training and developmental opportunities, work-shadowing, research, project design and implementation.

All women AEU Branch or Associated Body members are strongly encouraged to apply. Contact your local Women's Officer for more information.

Application forms and **further information** is available on the AEU website: aeufederal.org.au/our-work/women/rosemary-richards-scholarship-2019

The **submission deadline** for application forms is 3 May 2019.



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TRACEY HOPGOOD

Parent, McClelland College,
Frankston, VIC

TRACEY Hopgood became an active member of the school council a few years ago when she realised that as a parent, she wasn't always aware of everything going on.

"I found being on the school council eye-opening. It taught me a lot more about how schools run, how they have to deal with their budget and where money comes from.

"Then, around the middle of last year, a representative from the teachers' union came along and explained they were going to Canberra to rally for the Fair Funding Now! campaign. They were looking for parent representatives and I thought, 'Well, I'm quite interested in that'.

"It was about broadening my understanding of what I could do to help my school, in particular, and hopefully lots of other schools. I'm not the type of person to sit back and say, 'I'd like this, can you all sort that out for me?'

"I believe that if you want positive change, you need to be part of that change.

"The crux of the whole campaign – the idea of fair funding – we're seeing that on the ground. It was hard not to get emotional in Canberra, because Frankston is quite a diverse area with million-dollar houses and commission houses crammed together. So, some schools have tennis courts and inground pools, and others have students without decent shoes, who can't afford books or excursions, and who haven't eaten.

"I'm one of many parent representatives

on our school council, and I think we have more now than in previous years. While other schools have an enormous amount of luxury, we're wondering how we can help get breakfast for kids. But we have managed to fund an extra school bus, which makes excursions cheaper.

"My second child is at the end of her schooling now, so any positive change that comes from my activism won't really affect her. But I know what the schools need, I've got a better idea of what the kids need and how fair funding will affect the children coming through. That matters to me.

"I was happy with the results of the recent election in Victoria because the government is spending money in all of the schools, whereas the opposition party was focusing on schools that already have a lot of money. As a parent, that doesn't make sense. All of our children are important, not just a handful."

I'm not the type of person to sit back and say 'I'd like this, can you all sort that out for me?' I believe if you want positive change, you need to be part of that change.



Playing catch-up

Improving Australia's poor form in funding preschool education.

BY **CHRISTINE LONG**

The Morrison government's failure to commit to ongoing funding for four-year-old preschool beyond 2019 has left parents and those working in early childhood education in a state of uncertainty. Australia is one of the only Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries without two years of funded preschool and ranks 24th out of 26 countries for investment in early childhood education. Despite the nation's wealth, it lags behind most developed nations, ignoring the overwhelming evidence that three- and four-year-old preschool attendance is vitally important for a child's education, wellbeing and self-esteem. It sets the foundations for cognitive, physical, emotional, social and language development, and benefits a child's lifelong learning potential.

But change is afoot. In line with the AEU's Early Childhood Campaign, the Australian Labor Party has announced its commitment to ongoing funding of 15 hours of preschool for three- and four-year-old children, should it win government in 2019. In addition, four states and territories have agreed to support education for three-year-old children.

The federal coalition government, along with the Queensland, South Australian, West Australian and Northern Territory governments, is yet to commit to permanent preschool education funding.



International studies show children who have two years of preschool tend to achieve better test results in maths and English.

REFORM WITH IMPACT

A shift to recognising the importance of preschool education will bring Australia in line with international standards and is welcomed by researchers and teachers.

Mounting evidence shows that two years of quality preschool helps children thrive in school and later in life, says Megan O'Connell, director of Victoria University's Mitchell Institute.

"Some of the flow-on benefits of

IN SHORT

// The AEU is championing the Early Childhood Campaign.

// The Labor Party has committed to ongoing funding for three- and four-year-olds.

// Australia is one of the only OECD countries without two years of funded preschool.

Some of the flow-on benefits of quality preschool include increased school attendance for disadvantaged learners and improved reading and communication skills.



Megan O'Connell
Victoria University's Mitchell Institute

quality preschool include increased school attendance for disadvantaged learners and improved reading and communication skills, which help young people forge successful careers," O'Connell says.

The *Lifting Our Game* report, an independent review published in 2017 and updated in 2018, identified extending early childhood education to all three-year-olds as the "single, most impactful reform Australia could undertake, with international comparisons highlighting it as the biggest gap in the current system".

The United Kingdom's experience confirms the benefits, says O'Connell. "You can see that children who have had two years of preschool tend to start school settling better and have better test results in some of the international testing in maths and English."

She says preschool also helps children to develop social and emotional skills, including emotional regulation, which are vital as precursors to learning.

"Between three and four [children] slowly learn how to play with their peers and we know that, for the future, teamwork skills are really important. They also get exposed to a wide range of language, which is why their language skills are so much better when they start school."

EARLY BENEFITS

While all children benefit from an extra year of preschool, it can be particularly transformative for vulnerable children.

"Each year about 60,000 Australian children - one in five - start school behind, and nearly half of these children starting behind, stay behind," says O'Connell.

Some children begin school with social and emotional challenges, and are not yet ready to sit and listen and learn, says O'Connell.

"Some children don't have that attention span ... they might have unresolved anger issues. They may also have some fine and gross motor-skill problems, and simply holding a crayon or a pencil might be quite challenging.

"Vulnerable children often have a multiplicity of barriers."

For children who receive at least one year of preschool, the risk of being developmentally vulnerable falls by at least a quarter, says O'Connell. While the full effect of two years of preschool is not known, O'Connell says studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children show positive effects.

"What we know, particularly from some smaller Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, is that one year of preschool gets children attending school about 20 days a year more, so we imagine that two years of preschool will be even more powerful for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

"It gets children into a habit of attending an educational setting and does maximise what they then gain from their first year of school."

Cassandra Brown is a preschool teacher at Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory looking after 68 young students, some aged three.

She sees enormous benefits from



Each
year
about

60,000
Australian
children

or
1 IN 5

start
school
behind

half
of these children
starting behind,
stay behind.

early preschool attendance. "You can see a change," she says. New students typically show improved speech, independence and social skills.

The comparison with children who do not attend preschool has been stark. Brown recalls a five-year-old child in the transition class who had no early childhood education experience. "She felt caged and every couple of minutes she'd want to run outside."

EARLY INTERVENTION

If children start preschool at the age of three, teachers can identify issues earlier and implement interventions including extra support, speech pathology or physiotherapy, says O'Connell.

"We [then] have several more years to provide them with the help they need, to make sure they can start school alongside their peers."

Christine Long is a
freelance writer.



Science works

A wealth of new resources will help teachers demonstrate and study Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander science.

BY KRISTA MOGENSEN

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has released 95 new science “elaborations” - practical examples that support teachers to use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge to explain scientific concepts.

They’re optional resources that have been developed in response to feedback from teachers looking for ways to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority in STEM subjects.

One elaboration, for example, explains how students can learn about chemical sciences, and the different types of chemical reactions that are used to produce a range of products, by investigating the methods employed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to convert toxic plants into edible food products.

GAME CHANGER

To develop the elaborations, the existing curriculum was “mapped” for opportunities to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander science perspectives, says Joe Sambono, a Jingili man, zoologist and curriculum specialist with ACARA.

It will allow teachers and students to understand ... that there are different ways of seeing a particular phenomenon.



Adriano Truscott
Wiluna Remote Community School, WA

The ACARA advisory team then undertook the complex task of developing culturally appropriate background information that navigated the sensitivities and protocols of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups.

“We needed to ensure the content was non-secret and non-sacred,” says Sambono. “And we wanted to reduce the fear and anxiety that non-Indigenous educators have raised with us about not offending people and ‘doing the right thing.’”

The benefits will be two-fold: build the nation’s awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories

and cultures, and increase school engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, says Sambono.

“By providing culturally relevant material for our students through these ‘mirrors and windows’ into the curriculum, we hope this translates into greater achievement, including joining the STEM economy. This will be a game changer.”

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, says Sambono. “The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are so happy to see our mobs being recognised in this way.

“And educators want more, and soon. They tell us: ‘It’s about time this was done.’”

PROOF OF ENGAGEMENT

At the Wiluna Remote Community School in Western Australia, the goal is to apply a culturally responsive and relevant ‘mindset’ across the whole school, says Adriano Truscott who was principal up to the end of last year.

The school fosters “two-way science” in which children learn about western scientific knowledge and inquiry by first developing their own traditional knowledge systems through on-country learning, supported by Elders, families and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rangers.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

Examples that can be used by teachers to incorporate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures.

Resource:
australiancurriculum.edu.au



Year 3

Students can learn about changes of state in materials used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, such as beeswax and resins.



Year 5

Students can recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ knowledge of solids, liquids and gases and their different properties.



Year 6

Students learn how the growth and survival of living things are affected by the physical conditions of their environment.



Resources

ACARA's new science elaborations

tinyurl.com/ybog9bc8
tinyurl.com/yasn4bps

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curricula Project

tinyurl.com/y7v6bd8l

Its programs support the intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge, as well as the demands of the future workplace. A new STEM project, for example, sees local female rangers work with female students and scientists on STEM activities.

This multigenerational approach is paying off, with strong engagement by students and the wider community, recognised by awards in 2018 including the WA Premier's Excellence in Aboriginal Education and the CSIRO National Indigenous Science Award.

Truscott welcomes use of the new ACARA science elaborations as a way to enrich learning.

"It will allow teachers and students to understand that knowledge can be deeper and broader than what it seems in the curriculum; that there are different ways of seeing a particular phenomenon.

"In a world where you want greater respect, reconciliation and collaboration, these elaborations communicate a strong message that there are other knowledge systems that add enormous value to our collective humanity and a sustainable world," says Truscott.

Krista Mogensen is a freelance writer.



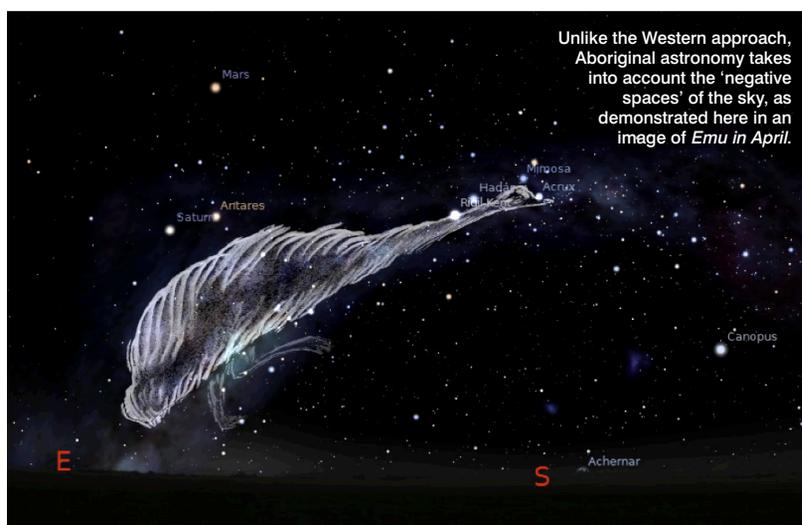
Year 9

Students learn how scientific understanding is refined over time through review by the scientific community.



Year 10

Students learn how different types of chemical reactions are used to produce a range of products.



Of stars, fire and water

Another set of resources for teachers – developed as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curricula Project – focuses on astronomy, fire and water.

The project was developed by the University of Melbourne in consultation with teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around Australia and funded by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The teacher toolkits are aimed at students in Years 5 to 10 and cover seven of the eight learning areas of the Australian curriculum. Project lead Professor Marcia Langton says they can be adapted for all school years and include background explanations, classroom activities and are centred on inquiry-based learning.

"Our people have 65,000 years of sophisticated knowledge based on observing the skies, using fire and finding water," she says.

The goal is for all Australian children to grow up with an appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultures. It also supports inclusion and "brings to life" the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority.

"These materials build teachers' confidence to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems into the classroom," says Professor Langton. "Teachers and students find this content fascinating."

The developers are seeing teacher feedback on these resources. Visit tinyurl.com/y7v6bd8l to view the resources and provide feedback.



A BLOOMING SENSATION

The popularity of kitchen gardens in primary schools is creating demand for a new curriculum-integrated model in secondary schools.

BY CYNDI TEBBEL



Students from Years 7 to 12 at Narre Warren South P-12 College are in the second year of a life-changing three-year pilot project. They are busy testing the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program in a secondary setting.

The school, on the outskirts of Melbourne, has a well-established kitchen garden for its primary students and now the philosophy of teaching “positive food habits through fun” is being made available to everyone.

Narre Warren South is one of 13 secondary schools across Australia taking part in the pilot. More than 1300 students now have the opportunity to study all aspects of gardening from planning, design and construction, to tilling, sowing, harvesting, cooking and sharing their own produce.

The efforts and experiences of the students and their teachers will contribute to the establishment of a kitchen garden program model that can integrate into the secondary curriculum and be flexible enough to suit a variety of schools.

For Josephene Duffy, CEO of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, the dream is to see the program running behind every subject taught in schools.

Stephanie Alexander introduced the program in 2001 at Collingwood College in Melbourne. Within a few years schools around the country had signed up to the food-education model and established their own gardens.



IN SHORT

// 1300 students are involved in a pilot program.

// The program includes garden planning, design, harvesting and cooking.

// Gardening can be integrated into the curriculum.



"We'd love to see the gardens used for cross-curricular, interdisciplinary, project-based, inquiry-led learning," Duffy says. "Not as an extra or an add on, but a teaching tool that brings together educators from all subject areas to reinforce the curriculum they're already teaching."

SERIOUS FUN

At Narre Warren South, students from teacher Chris Phelan's Year 9 landscaping, construction and horticulture classes worked as a team to complete a 500 square metre garden in about four weeks.

"They want to get their hands dirty and learn, to pick up some tools and build stuff," Phelan says. "And the garden creates a simulation of the real world that's hard to translate in a classroom."

The skills and strategies learned

as part of this practical education will pay off when students enter the workforce.

"Once you leave school, if you've run out of time to get something done, you can't say it's tomorrow's problem," says Phelan. "You've got to stay back until it's finished."

Students got the message and then some, with Phelan frequently finding them working in the garden after school hours. "They really take it seriously," he says.

And they have serious fun. Part of the paddock-to-plate mentality involves not only tending rows of veggies, fruits and herbs but also sharing the harvest.

The garden's design features external seating with umbrellas where students get together to eat lunch and socialise. An on-site pizza oven and café provide further opportunities for students

Year 9 students at Narre Warren South P-12 College in Victoria built the garden over four weeks. It serves as an area in which to relax, as well as a practical learning space.

to pick up skills that can lead to future employment.

"We want to encourage conversations about where food comes from and be part of that journey with the kids," Detta Gordon, the school's assistant principal for wellbeing and engagement says. "To sit together and share a meal and bring that community feeling back to the classroom."

RIPE FOR THE PICKING

Now in its second year, Gordon says the school hasn't fully integrated the garden into every aspect of the secondary curriculum. However, it is proving a great way to engage students who aren't necessarily connected through their textbooks.

Hands-on experiences with the kitchen garden program and its offshoots are providing scope



We want to encourage conversations about where food comes from and be part of that journey with the kids.



Detta Gordon
Narre Warren South P-12 College

for myriad vocational opportunities: landscape gardening, horticulture, construction, food preparation, cooking and hospitality.

One unexpected advantage is the therapeutic nature of the garden, especially for students who are disengaged or struggling to connect with other people. Gordon recalls a student new to the school who had trouble adjusting until he was introduced to the garden.

“He helped build it and being in a space so beautiful improved his personal wellbeing,” she says. “As an educator, it’s heartwarming to know that programs you’re initiating are making a difference to the kids.”

At the end of the pilot in 2020, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program expects to have resources to share with schools that want to join the program.

“We want to come up with a strong

learning and engagement tool for the students and families around the school,” says Duffy.

“We’ll have done all the work for them in the background - collaborating with secondary educators - so it will be a really flexible and adaptable model that will fit schools’ unique community needs.”

The Kitchen Garden Foundation doesn’t fund schools, but it can help them connect with likely supporters.

Gordon says different curriculum subject areas such as landscaping, building and construction “have allocated money from their budgets to build the garden”.

“It is a commitment that needs time and money,” says Gordon. “But it returns rewards and they increase really quickly.”

Cyndi Tebbel is a freelance writer.



Educating on the frontline of a crisis

For millions of young refugees and migrants around the world, the provision of good teaching is critical to their recovery from displacement and trauma.



Rohingya refugee children attend an open air Arabic school in Kutupalang Refugee Camp in Bangladesh.

**Resources****Education International toolkit for educators who work with refugees and migrant children**

education4refugees.org

UNHCR's Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis tells the stories of some of the 7.4 million refugee children of school age

unhcr.org

UNESCO's 2019 Global Education Monitoring report

en.unesco.org/gem-report

There is a desperate need for teachers to be given autonomy and support in educating the groundswell of refugee and migrant students around the world, says the global teacher union federation, Education International (EI).

The prospect of walking into a classroom to teach more than 100 children is tough enough. Now picture that classroom being a tent in a hot, dusty, noisy refugee camp. The children are hungry, they may speak several different languages or dialects, and they may be illiterate. There are no desks and few resources.

Yet, thousands of teachers around the world are doing their best in these types of conditions on a daily basis.

This experience needs to be taken into account when it comes to working out policies for educating refugee and migrant children, and educators and their unions should be given centre stage in the process, says EI general secretary David Edwards.

"Educators and school staff are on the frontlines of the so-called refugee crisis," he says. "They are dealing daily with the mental and physical challenges of educating children affected by migration and displacement, and they are developing on-the-spot solutions."

Edwards says his visits to teachers working in vast refugee camps in northern Kenya and northern Uganda have been "mind-blowing". In Lebanon, he talked to teachers running double shifts in schools to try to cater for the numbers of students flooding in.

"I visited a school for refugees in Beirut where the children suffer from huge trauma and have a lot of needs. But the teachers don't have the resources they need, and they don't get paid on time

Educators and school staff are on the frontlines of the so-called refugee crisis. They are dealing with the mental and physical challenges of educating children affected by migration and displacement.



David Edwards
Education International

and have to go on strike repeatedly."

Worldwide, the number of migrant and refugee school-age children has grown by 26 per cent since 2000 and could fill half a million classrooms, says UNESCO's 2019 *Global Education Monitoring report*.

Many of the children don't have a classroom or teacher. An estimated four million refugee children are not in school. That's more than half of the 7.4 million refugee children of school age.

The situation is even worse in developing countries, which are hosting 92 per cent of the world's school-age refugees.

EXPLORING SOLUTIONS

Amid a dire shortage of political will and funds to build classrooms, hundreds of thousands of well-trained teachers are needed, backed by appropriate support and resources.

UNESCO estimates that Germany would need 42,000 new teachers, Turkey 80,000 and Uganda 7,000 to

provide quality education to the refugees they are hosting.

EI has been working with teachers and school communities to develop training for educators, classroom activities and school-wide approaches to inclusion. It launched a toolkit late last year to expand support for educators, interactive training will be introduced shortly, and it plans to create workshop-delivered training modules.

"We want unions and teachers around the world to brainstorm and explore solutions that best fit their local context, reflecting on what others have been doing, the lessons they've learnt and the expertise they've developed," says Edwards.

PROFITEERS APPEARING

The dearth of teachers and resources has created an opportunity for private operators to step into the breach. For example, a 2017 EI study found there had been a surge of private sector involvement in the Middle East since 2015.

The private players tend to argue that the scale of the problem requires a technology solution, says Edwards.

"Instead of investing in teachers and resources on the ground, their solution is to hand iPads to a bunch of refugees in a tent who are 'taught' online by a teacher sitting in a comfortable living room in an industrialised country.

"We have to make sure the opportunists don't short-change these kids out of their rights. You can't reduce a school to iPad instruction and say a child is somehow getting a quality education. That's absurd."

EI is focused on safeguarding education from the profiteers in these countries by working with local unions, which keep an eye on any moves towards privatisation, Edwards says.

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Sowing the seeds of hope and survival

Refugee and migrant students who make it to Australia benefit from a wealth of ongoing research and rich approaches to teaching those from other countries.

Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre in Sydney has a speedy turnover of students – but that’s a good thing.

The public school’s job is to teach enough English for the students to survive in a regular high school. It means students might stay for as little as one term, and sometimes a few terms more, depending on their level of need.

It might not seem much time for EALD (English as another language or dialect) students to pick up the language, but deputy principal Michael Harmey says most students advance quickly.

“You see really wonderful young people who can make incredible progress due to their efforts and resilience. They thrive on encouragement and some specialised teaching,” he says.

Enrolment at Beverly Hills, one of 14 Intensive English Centres in NSW, fluctuates between 110 and 250 students, from between 20 to 30 language backgrounds.

The school is supported by academics from two universities who provide evidence-backed approaches to teaching EALD students and also research ways of improving progress.

You see really wonderful young people who can make incredible progress due to their efforts and resilience. They thrive on encouragement and some specialised teaching.

”

Michael Harmey

Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre

“We have various projects with universities to look at language learning and pedagogical matters. But the really important thing we can do at a school like this is to give the students the tools make them self-sufficient in learning in English when they go to high school,” says Harmey.

Of course, refugee and migrant students often need more than language training. Many arrive with medical conditions that can hinder their progress, so the school works closely with South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, including the Refugee Health Service, and employs a nurse who screens new students.

The program encompasses preventative physical and mental health measures and launched a research project to study the development of obesity among students and find ways to change patterns of behaviour.

A project that encourages mindfulness practice among Arab speakers is also underway, with the help of the local health service.

“Mindfulness is not a common approach among Arabic-speaking refugee people, but it can have a positive impact on the way they deal with trauma and other issues,” says Harmey.

Beverly Hills also employs a full-time counsellor and multilingual learning support officers. Classes are limited to 18 students and can be as small as 10 for those with special needs or no literacy in their first language.

“We’re quite generously staffed with teachers and learning support officers. It’s a very good model and we get outstanding progression for the students in the short time we have them.

“I’ve just graduated an 18-year-old boy who had been running a shop in a refugee camp since he was seven because his father damaged his back in a car accident and couldn’t work. The boy had no education in Arabic and when he left here he was able to very coherently address an audience about his experience as a refugee, and he could read and write in English. He’s gone off to a high school with hopes for his future.”



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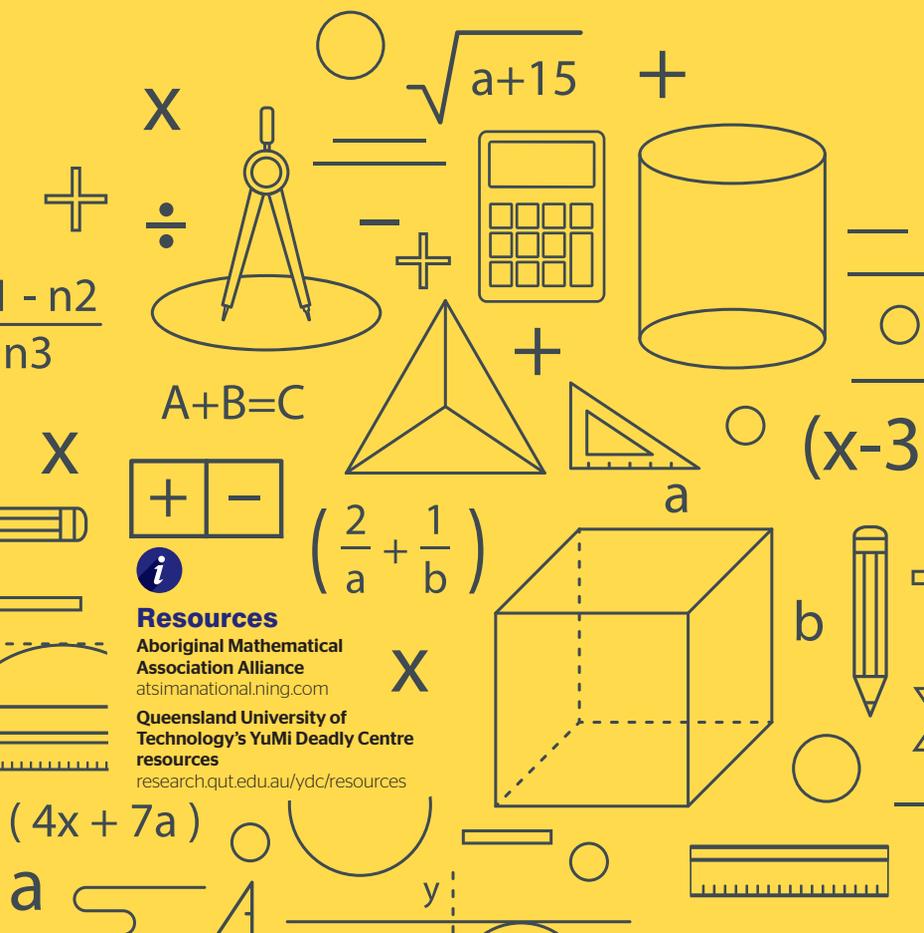
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Thanks to teachers like YouTube sensation Eddie Woo, maths is gaining an exciting reputation. *Australian Educator* hit the road to find out how other teachers are bringing maths alive for their students.

INSPIRED MATHS TEACHERS SHARE THEIR TIPS

BY MARGARET PATON



SHOW AND TEACH

Adelaide teacher Dr Matthew Verdon believes the best way to explain abstract concepts is by demonstrating.

If you see him “picking up a bunch of rulers and waving them around in the air” when talking, chances are he’ll be explaining vectors to his year 10, 11 and 12 students.

“It sounds simple but, for some students, that’s really powerful and the penny can drop. Students sometimes have ideas and ask, ‘Is it like this?’, and I say, ‘Try it’. Those questions and collaborative interactions help really drive the lesson forward,” says Verdon, who’s in his fifth year of teaching at the Australian Science and Mathematics School at Flinders University in Adelaide.

Verdon and his teaching team aim to focus on getting to know the students and their interests to “find those little hooks” that connect them better to the material. He says it’s important to show students that teachers are always willing to learn too.

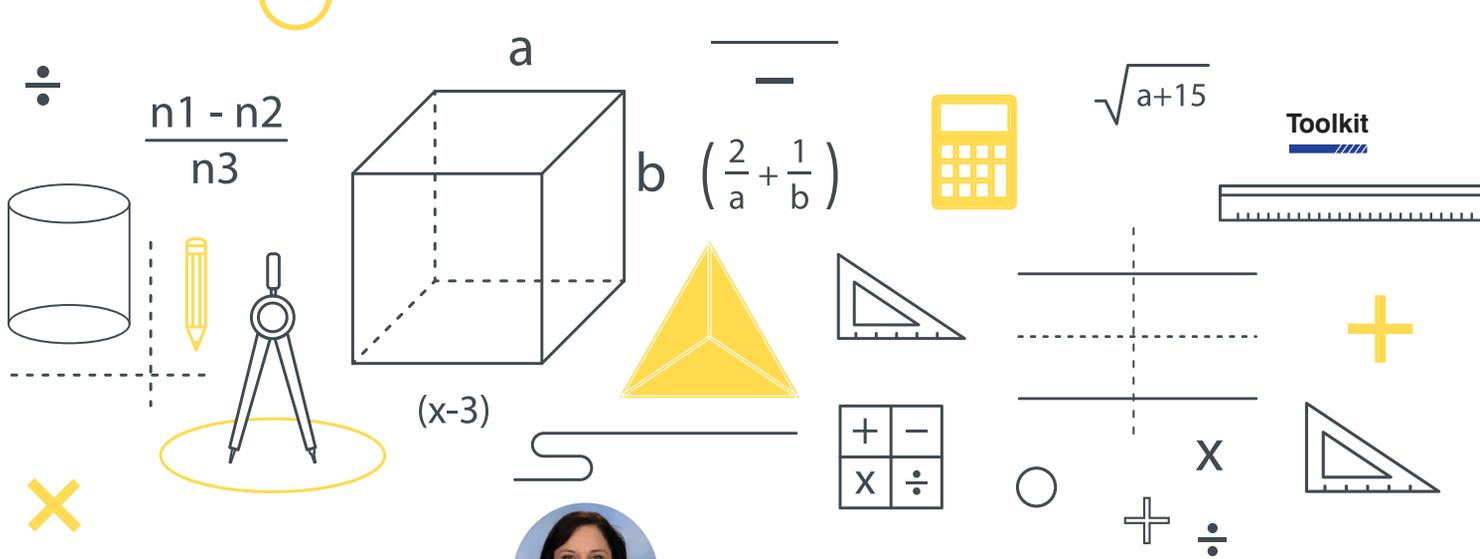
ENGAGED AND INSPIRED

Maths teachers play an important role in developing society’s future problem solvers, says Stephanie Mee, who heads the maths department at Kelvin Grove State College in Queensland.

“The study of mathematics isn’t just about learning rules to solve routine problems. So it’s important to students in challenging real-life mathematics problems,” says Mee, who’s been teaching for almost 20 years.

Mee and her team have been inspired by Dr Jo Boaler of Stanford University in the US and her YouCubed website. In response, they have set an overarching theme of being “involved, engaged and inspired” to flavour their teaching plans.

“Through that, we introduced a week of inspirational maths where we put the



textbooks and worksheets aside to solely focus on the development of our students' capacity to problem-solve.

"Activities can be differentiated and stretched to extend students, and it challenges them to experience mathematics beyond what's on the next test," says Mee.

THE ROLE OF COLOUR

Colour and patience feature in Lachlan Hillier's maths teaching.

"Well-structured whiteboard work is a teacher's best friend," says Hillier from Essendon Keilor College's Essendon Campus in Melbourne.

Hillier, who is in his fourth year of teaching, uses different colours for headings and important formulas, and always writes out step-by-step answers for students who struggle.

"You're providing that additional help without singling them out," he says.

"Patience is key, trying to work with students who might not be able to complete a maths problem the first, second or third attempt; it's all about positive reinforcement to help them progress and using different explanations."

As his school's science co-ordinator, Hillier often uses technology for extra resources.

"I'll record a video of myself working through test solutions, so they see how I would go through a test," he says.

"We also run certain topics via an online flipped classroom, so students watch the videos about the topic at their own pace before we introduce it into the classroom. It allows them to feel in control of their own learning environment."



Stephanie Mee
Kelvin Grove State College, QLD



Lachlan Hillier
Essendon Keilor College, VIC



Dr Chris Matthews
ATSIMA, QLD

Connecting with culture

Teaching maths through dance and story helps to engage students who find the subject challenging, says Aboriginal maths teacher Dr Chris Matthews.

Matthews, who has a PhD in applied mathematics, is passionate about connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures with mathematics.

The Noonuccal man from the Quandamooka First Nation at Moreton Bay chairs the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA).

"I started as a research mathematician but got disillusioned with the maths community as an Aboriginal person, so I decided to move into maths education for Indigenous students," says Matthews.

He's been recognised for his innovative method of teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to bring maths to life by crafting stories in which characters take actions that add, subtract or divide.

Known as the Goompi Model, it's a culturally responsible pedagogical approach to maths teaching.

The "chalk and talk" approach to teaching maths disadvantages many students, says Matthews.

"Aboriginal perspectives are about understanding how all things in the world are interconnected through patterning but we're not teaching kids how to recognise the connection between these patterns and mathematics.

"For example, there's a big cognitive jump between a student constructing a pattern from a linear equation to them seeing the connection in their world," he says.

One key aspect of the Goompi Model is creativity. The Maths as Storytelling approach allows students to understand maths expressions as a story connected to their world to build an "understanding of arithmetic symbolism".

Students construct their own symbols for their story and share them, giving multiple representations of a particular maths concept. Teachers can then draw meaning and connections to the conventional arithmetic symbolism. This has also been extended to Aboriginal dance where students perform their stories and learn about connections to Aboriginal symbolism.

"It gives students an opportunity to express who they are in teaching and learning maths. Students explore connections and that's where the deep learning comes from," Matthews says.

Margaret Paton is a freelance writer and casual K-12 teacher.



A labour of love

James Matysek was enticed into a teaching degree when he spotted a poster by chance. He quickly became a passionate and committed educator serving one of Australia's most remote areas.

BY KRISTA MOGENSEN



Children get it when someone from their own mob is telling them that it is possible.



James Matysek
Northern Peninsula Area State College, QLD

In 1990, aged 18, senior teacher and union activist James Matysek was living in Bamaga in Far North Queensland, stacking shelves at the local store, when he saw a James Cook University poster calling for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to undertake teacher training.

The photographs of black students at the university made a profound impression. "If these people are studying at a university [I thought] maybe I really could do that," he says.

Matysek returned to Bamaga as a qualified teacher, with a strong sense of wanting to repay the community for his education. His plan to stay for five years became 20, and he is now head of student services across the Northern Peninsula Area State College's three campuses and a member of the union's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocacy forum Gandu Jarjum.

In 2014, Matysek was named Torres Strait NAIDOC Person of the Year for his contribution to his people and community in education.

In his school role, Matysek heads up the engagement team, working with families to help make education a priority. "We work with families whose kids aren't coming to school, where there are behaviour issues, and try to work out why they're not coming to school."

Matysek's wish list for improvements includes increased funding and resources, and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum but, most of all, it includes having local and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers as role models. "Children get it when

someone from their own mob is telling them that it is possible," he says.

The quick fixes offered by Canberra or Brisbane, such as short-term teacher appointments or yet another program or "data hunt", frustrate him. "Our context is very different here," he says.

Being a member of the union has been the "one constant, reassuring comfort since the beginning of my career" and it gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators a voice, Matysek says.

"We unite to deliver our issues, our ideas and, most importantly, our solutions to government. It is simply a labour of love working together to bring about meaningful change, especially for Indigenous students and staff."

Matysek wants to see all politicians and education departments better acknowledge women's roles in leadership and their right to equitable pay and superannuation, aligning with NAIDOC's 2018 theme Because of Her We Can. "I look back at all the major influences that I've had from women. [These] strong Indigenous women have stepped up and been leaders for us."

Why do you teach?

We'd love to hear your best tips for engaging young minds. Email us at educator@hardiegrant.com if you have something to share. You can provide a written piece or we'd be happy to interview you.

Krista Mogensen
is a freelance writer.



A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair hugging a young child from behind. The woman has a serious, determined expression. The child is wearing a white t-shirt with colorful illustrations of pizza and a cupcake. The background is dark and out of focus.

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