



independent

# ie

education

Issue 1 | Vol 48 | 2018

**“AI is not able  
to fulfill the role  
of a human  
teacher.” *P10***

the professional voice of the Independent Education Union of Australia

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# Editorial

## Welcome to the first edition of IE for 2018.

Throughout Australia, teachers and support staff demand to be heard in the ever changing world of education.

In this edition you'll read about human markers vs robot markers for NAPLAN, and the IEUA's position on the future of automation in marking tests (p10).

Despite the early promise of the internet as a forum for increased democracy, it seems that inequality and injustice is becoming entrenched. Education unions are finding that their work in the 21st century is examining and challenging edu-business and edu-preneurialism. Read about the way education unions are responding, and the way teachers need to be vigilant and engaged (p14).

Emily Rotta of Transitional Support writes about high achievers and burnout and the development of emotional intelligence to the reduce the risk of compassion fatigue (p12).

Girls need to be involved in decision making about uniform policies and choices - this case is put forward by Girls' Uniform Agenda, and it's good reading (p24).

There are a range of teaching resources reviewed here too, from new interactive websites about Stolen Generations to improving working memory and attention through Memory Mates (p16).

Kirsty Costa offers a world of helpful resources available to help school staff bring to life the environment, sustainability, environmental sciences and English (p26).

IEUA VicTas shares invaluable findings on the Branch's survey that focused on support staff and building employee skills capacity (p22).

In this edition, Kaleidoscope features the remarkable story of Professor Marie Bashir, who from her notable roles in health, education, the arts and politics has changed lives for many in Australia and throughout the world. Professor Bashir talks of the teachers and mentors who shaped her thinking and her life (p6).

As we go to print, the 2018 Australian Principals Health and Wellbeing Survey Report is being compiled. See our next edition of IE for a summary and analysis.

John Quessy  
iemagazine@ieu.asn.au

# AUSWIDE

## Victoria

### Child protection focus continues

At the time of writing, the Victorian Government has proposed further legislative changes related to child protection to take effect next year. The raft of legislative changes over the last two years has added further layers of compliance requirements to schools and early childhood centres and created challenges as new schemes are implemented. IE readers may recall in the last edition the outline of a new Reportable Conduct Scheme managed under the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) which followed the introduction of the Child Safe Standards incorporated into school registration requirements.

The most recent legislative amendments are proposed to align the registration of teachers under the *Education and Training Reform Act* with the *Working With Children (WWC) Act*. Unlike other states and territories, registered teachers will continue to be exempted from having to obtain a WWCC if they are engaged in the child related work that would normally require a person to have a WWCC.

However, a number of changes are required to bring the requirements of the two acts into consistency. The registration process will be amended to include a number of additional crimes under which either automatic refusal of an application for registration or renewal of registration will occur, or other vetting processes invoked. There will be financial penalties for the non provision of certain information such as change of employer, change of address and the like. Registered teachers will now be required to notify the WWC unit of their non school work with children (paid or voluntary) and financial penalty will now apply for non notification.

IEUA VicTas has been in consultation over the proposed changes. While the changes will align the two schemes, and registered teachers will continue to be able to rely on their teacher registration, there needs to be a clear support structure in place to assist registered teachers to be aware and understand the differences that will now apply, particularly in respect to changes in the obligations which have applied for more than a decade under the current registration scheme.

## Queensland

### Employers must support staff throughout NDIS rollout

Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) commenced on a trial basis in North Queensland in 2016 and the complete statewide rollout is expected by 2019. Introduction of the NDIS marks a fundamental change in the way schools will receive funding to support inclusion of students with additional needs.

This has the potential to significantly alter expectations of teachers, particularly given the lack of clarity around the relationship between intervention (funded by the NDIS) and education (not funded by the NDIS).

IEUA-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said our Union recognises the importance and value of inclusive schools and gives in-principle support to the inclusion of students with additional needs in Queensland schools.

"Our Union also believes that quality inclusion in an educational setting depends on provision of adequate support and resources for teachers, inclusion support staff and students," Mr Burke said.

To assist teachers in managing inclusion of students with additional needs, employers must establish a process through which staff members can raise concerns if they believe the inclusion of special needs students in their classes:

- is not being adequately resourced, and/or
- is significantly impacting on the classroom environment.

"The additional resources required for the inclusion of all students



must be provided by the employer so that individual teachers do not face additional stress or larger workloads as a result of inclusion.

"Over time, we will seek to modify collective agreements to incorporate explicit clauses relating to inclusion of students with additional needs," Mr Burke said.

## **New South Wales**

### **Accreditation of pre-2004 teachers**

The majority of pre-2004 teachers should have received a kit from NESA, containing a certificate deeming them proficient, an accreditation map and details of how to maintain accreditation.

However NESA has had technology issues which have impacted on a small number of members, including exchange teachers and teachers moving to NSW from interstate. Members attempting to pay their \$100 fee have also encountered difficulties.

It is important to note that the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch has been instrumental in refining the requirements of maintaining accreditation, which are as follows:

- The requirements to submit a Maintenance of Accreditation Report at the end of each cycle has been dispensed with. The TAA (a system of schools or an individual school) will determine if a teacher's practice continues to meet the standards. These processes have a multiplicity of names.
- Teachers will be required to complete at least 100 hours of professional learning in their maintenance period (five years for a full time teacher and seven years for casuals or part timers). Principals will no longer have to verify teacher identified professional learning.
- Teachers will no longer have to address all seven standards and all standard descriptors from Standard 6. This frees teachers to shape their own professional needs.
- Importantly – a teacher has to declare in the final three months of their maintenance period that they have maintained the Standards for Proficient Teachers. After the completion of the declaration, a Teacher Accreditation Authority must attest that the teacher has maintained their practice against the Standards. The activities and practices that form the basis of this attestation will be comprised of processes that are in place in the school/service, and will not generate additional requirements for the teacher.

## **Tasmania**

### **Industrial bargaining in the spotlight**

Industrial bargaining is a key focus of activity for 2018 in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Catholic Education Single Employer Enterprise Agreement 2015 passed its nominal expiry date in July 2017. Following an extensive process (including surveys, member meetings and reviews by workplace reps) the IEUA Committee of Management approved a log of claims for a new agreement which was served on employers in August.

The Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO) and the IEUA VicTas Branch have hardly drawn breath since 2015. The 2015 enterprise agreement introduced major reform to working conditions for members. A number of the schools are still, two years later, fully implementing the agreement. In 2016 the Union negotiated changes to the support staff structure, including higher rates of pay and an immediate wage increase. Before that is fully resolved, the parties are back at the table for the next agreement. The employer tabled their claims on 19 December last year.

Bargaining in Tasmanian independent schools also continues apace. Last year the negotiation of a number of EBAs was concluded at several large schools and are

currently awaiting approval at the Fair Work Commission. Several other schools are in the process of negotiation of EBAs covering teachers and support staff.

## **South Australia**

### **Transgender people and education**

Last year IEUA SA Branch had the opportunity to contribute to a new book *Transgender People and Education*, by Clare Bartholomaeus and Damien Riggs of Flinders University. The book provides a comprehensive account of the educational experiences of students, parents, and educators – transgender and cisgender – in the context of current debates about the inclusion of transgender people in schools. Available online from Palgrave Macmillan. <http://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781349953080>

## **Northern Territory**

### **Anti-Discrimination Act and exemptions for religious bodies**

IEUA-QNT Branch has welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the Northern Territory Government's Discussion Paper Modernisation of the Anti-Discrimination Act September 2017 – particularly noting our Union's support of the removal of automatic religious exemptions.

Our submission argues in favour of a system where religious organisations would need to apply for an exemption on a case by case basis.

IEUA-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said in requiring religious organisations to formulate the case for exemption, the process would also be challenging the organisation in question to confront their true purpose in seeking an exemption. This can only serve to reduce instances of discriminatory practice.

"Faith based schools do accept enrolments from students who are not practising members of the nominated religion. Many schools also enrol children who identify as LGBTI or are children of same sex couples or annulled divorcees.

"Therefore, if current religious exemptions have any significance for schools, it is only to provide a degree of legal protection for a range of discriminatory practices.

"The same can be said of religious exemptions being used as grounds for dismissal of school staff. Some employees of religious schools may be living in circumstances that are incompatible with the strictest requirements of their faith. Employing authorities do not, in a majority of these cases, dismiss these members of staff.

"Given that religious exemptions are generally deployed only when extenuating circumstances emerge, religious exemptions, in most cases, operate as a convenient escape clause rather than a means of protecting deeply felt religious sentiments.

"Under the circumstances, requiring an employer to apply for an exemption on a case-by-case basis should prove effective in ensuring that exemptions are deployed only in the most limited circumstances," Mr Burke said.

## **Australian Capital Territory**

### **Recent practice required for registration**

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch is reminding members they need to fulfill the requirements of the ACT *Education Act* this year.

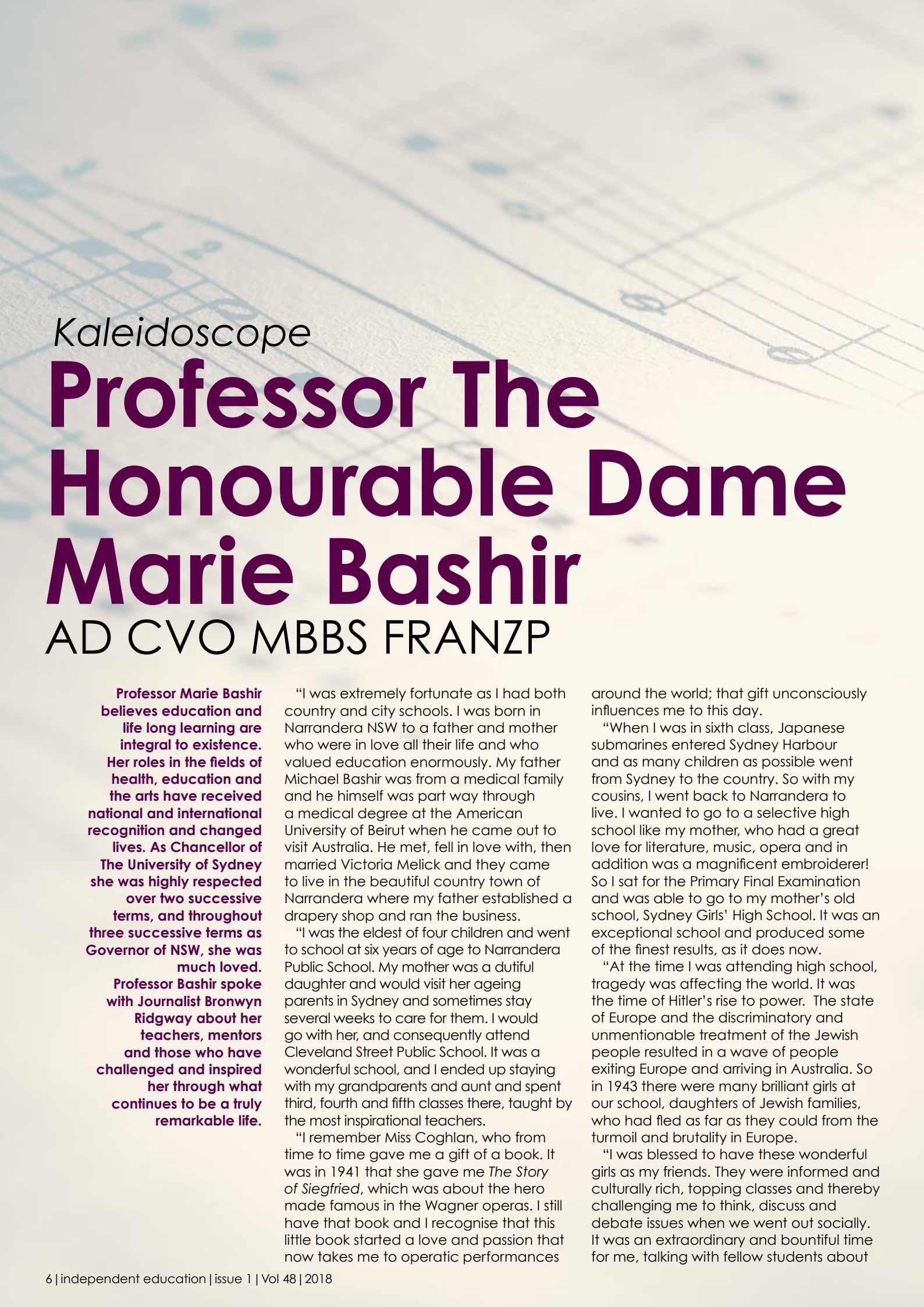
During the 2017 registration renewal period, the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) notified teachers with full registration about the new 'recency of practice' requirement.

Teachers were advised that they need to complete 20 days of professional practice in the year preceding their registration renewal.

Those who cannot meet the annual requirement have the flexibility to complete 100 days over a five year period.

For details see [www.tqi.act.edu.au](http://www.tqi.act.edu.au).





Kaleidoscope

# Professor The Honourable Dame Marie Bashir

AD CVO MBBS FRANZP

**Professor Marie Bashir believes education and life long learning are integral to existence. Her roles in the fields of health, education and the arts have received national and international recognition and changed lives. As Chancellor of The University of Sydney she was highly respected over two successive terms, and throughout three successive terms as Governor of NSW, she was much loved. Professor Bashir spoke with Journalist Bronwyn Ridgway about her teachers, mentors and those who have challenged and inspired her through what continues to be a truly remarkable life.**

"I was extremely fortunate as I had both country and city schools. I was born in Narrandera NSW to a father and mother who were in love all their life and who valued education enormously. My father Michael Bashir was from a medical family and he himself was part way through a medical degree at the American University of Beirut when he came out to visit Australia. He met, fell in love with, then married Victoria Melick and they came to live in the beautiful country town of Narrandera where my father established a drapery shop and ran the business.

"I was the eldest of four children and went to school at six years of age to Narrandera Public School. My mother was a dutiful daughter and would visit her ageing parents in Sydney and sometimes stay several weeks to care for them. I would go with her, and consequently attend Cleveland Street Public School. It was a wonderful school, and I ended up staying with my grandparents and aunt and spent third, fourth and fifth classes there, taught by the most inspirational teachers.

"I remember Miss Coghlan, who from time to time gave me a gift of a book. It was in 1941 that she gave me *The Story of Siegfried*, which was about the hero made famous in the Wagner operas. I still have that book and I recognise that this little book started a love and passion that now takes me to operatic performances

around the world; that gift unconsciously influences me to this day.

"When I was in sixth class, Japanese submarines entered Sydney Harbour and as many children as possible went from Sydney to the country. So with my cousins, I went back to Narrandera to live. I wanted to go to a selective high school like my mother, who had a great love for literature, music, opera and in addition was a magnificent embroiderer! So I sat for the Primary Final Examination and was able to go to my mother's old school, Sydney Girls' High School. It was an exceptional school and produced some of the finest results, as it does now.

"At the time I was attending high school, tragedy was affecting the world. It was the time of Hitler's rise to power. The state of Europe and the discriminatory and unmentionable treatment of the Jewish people resulted in a wave of people exiting Europe and arriving in Australia. So in 1943 there were many brilliant girls at our school, daughters of Jewish families, who had fled as far as they could from the turmoil and brutality in Europe.

"I was blessed to have these wonderful girls as my friends. They were informed and culturally rich, topping classes and thereby challenging me to think, discuss and debate issues when we went out socially. It was an extraordinary and bountiful time for me, talking with fellow students about



Goethe, Schiller and Mozart during our lunch times.

"School was such a stimulating environment; there was no discrimination, I was Christian and many of my friends were Jewish, students were of different faiths, and I believe we were happy together. We made great friendships that have lasted to this day.

"Some of the teachers at our school were absolutely superb. I'll never forget my French teacher, Miss Bessie Mitchell who was a former Old Girl. She was kind and inspirational; she expected nothing but the best that each of us could offer, and this succeeded in bringing out the very best in every one of us. I believe it made each student rise to the occasion and fulfill our potential and that meant the whole class achieved remarkable results.

"With this encouragement and expectation, we became life long learners; wherever we eventuated – in the city, the country, as professionals or

business people. From my love of music I studied violin at The NSW Conservatorium of Music where I played in the student orchestra. I went to The University of Sydney and studied medicine. Some of my male cousins also studied medicine, my sister became a doctor, an immunologist, and one of my brothers a pharmacist.

"While at The University of Sydney I lived on campus at The Women's College. The college principal was from England and had an academic background. During the Second World War she had served in the Royal Navy. After discharge from the Navy, she came to Australia – Miss Betty Archdale. She knew everything about the students and remembered detail. She too became a mentor, inspirational in an incredible way. Later she went on to be an impressive Headmistress at Abbotsleigh.

"On completion of my degree, I was very fortunate to be allocated to St Vincent's independent education | issue 1 | Vol 48 | 2018 | 7



“  
Education  
is the most  
powerful  
weapon  
which you  
can use  
to change  
the world.

- Nelson Mandela

”

Hospital in Darlinghurst – all the young male doctors wanted to work at this hospital because of the opportunities to do surgery. You saw and treated everyone; the poor and the homeless from King's Cross and those experiencing life's difficulties. As doctors, it was a time of full commitment; it was dramatic, and in fact hard to leave at the end of a shift. I later went on to work at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children in Camperdown, with extraordinary paediatric mentors such as the Sir Lorimer Dods.

“While I was at university I met a well known rugby player, the Australian Wallabies Captain Nicholas Shehadie who had just returned from playing with the Australian team in South Africa. I had no interest in sport. South Africa then was the heart of apartheid, and thus I had a political view on the tour. However three years later we married. I went to work in general practice and I had three children.

“My interest in treatment and concern about the use of high doses of tranquillisers, particularly for young people suffering from mental ill health, led me to study psychiatry. After completing this post graduate course, I was asked to open an Adolescent Unit at Broughton Hall Clinic Rozelle, where we had wonderful teachers for young people, so that they could keep up their education and associated interests during treatment. The teachers in that unit were special and caring.

“Years later, when my husband became Lord Mayor of Sydney, we were hosting guests from the then Soviet Union. Travelling along the Parramatta River on our way to Rosehill Races, our guest enquired about a magnificent building, which we had passed on our way. I said I didn't know about its function but would investigate. I then discovered it was the Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital in Concord and it was closing down. A Japanese investor was looking to purchase it because it was adjacent to a golf course. I thought that we desperately needed such a fine location as a school

for children with special needs and with depression. It was an excellent location where we could nurse them back to health. I felt it was important to have education and health care together in one unit. We acquired the building, it became Rivendell, a name the children drew from their reading of *The Hobbit*.

“I believe teachers are in a privileged position and can positively influence their students by being warm, believable, trustworthy and kind but also have expectations that students do their very best. With caring support, it can bring about great results. Children need to talk about all the issues that concern them, for example about traumatic news they've seen on television or the Internet, issues about pollution and their future, guns and shootings. Encouragement can lift children's confidence especially if they think they are 'dumb at maths' or 'not able to understand science'. We need to talk about these things and together we can overcome those perceptions.

“I think about Nelson Mandela, whom I consider to be one of the finest leaders ever. He said: 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'.

“I applaud our education system both in government and non government schools, including the increased cultural richness, music, drama, literature and the arts, that has been infused into our students' education in Australia. I observe my six grandchildren, one is already a teacher and another in his final year of education; they effuse warmth, trust and knowledge and I can see they have the essence of fine teachers.

“I believe that no matter where we are working, or whatever we do, we all have a responsibility to teach and nurture young people so that we can help them realise their potential and go on to make a contribution.”

## Professional appointments

- 1972 - 1987** Foundation Director Rivendell Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Child Adolescent and Family Service (Thomas Walker House, Concord)
- 1987 - 1993** Area Director, Community Health Services, Central Sydney Area Health Service, New South Wales Department of Health - Sydney
- 1993 - 2000** Consultant Psychiatrist to New South Wales Juvenile Justice Facilities
- 1993 - 2001** Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Department of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney, Senior Specialist in Child, Adolescent and Family Psychiatry
- 1994 - 2001** Area Director Mental Health Services, Central Sydney Area Health Service, New South Wales Department of Health - Sydney
- 1996 - 2001** Senior Consultant Psychiatrist - Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern
- 1996 - 2001** Senior Consultant Psychiatrist - Aboriginal Medical Service, Kempsey
- 2001 - 2014** Governor of New South Wales

For a full list of appointments, honours and awards see [www.bit.ly/2C6UuHm](http://www.bit.ly/2C6UuHm)



# Using honey, not the hammer



**John Blair describes himself as an interpreter of Aboriginal culture. He has a passion for promoting a better understanding of his people and their long history with the general community, but his approach is always about empathy rather than anger, he tells Journalist Sue Osborne.**

Named Public School Parent of the Year in 2015 for his work at his own children's school, Canterbury South Public School, John runs a Culture School and has shared his work with a number of schools and other organisations, including the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch. His favoured approach is to simply sit down to have a chat with people and answer their questions.

"I'm an interpretive worker, as we're operating in a western culture which is very different to Aboriginal culture," John said.

"So I have to interpret the Aboriginal way of seeing the world in a way that people from a western culture can understand and relate to."

John uses words like 'religion' and 'spirituality', but he said these words do not adequately describe the Aboriginal way of seeing the world.

"I talk about 11 tall ships turning up at the Opera House and ask people what it would feel like if 11 UFOs turned up right now."

"There are smoking ceremonies in use by the Catholic church so I try to compare our smoking ceremonies with that."

"I talk about 'spiritual emails' – that sense of connectivity between people. I talk about the sense of reverence you might get visiting a cemetery, and how there are no obvious Aboriginal cemeteries, and yet they are still there. That sense of reverence for place that Aboriginal people feel, even when it's a farmer's field that they are no longer allowed to step on – I try to explain it in that way."

During his sessions in schools with teachers and students, John divides people into groups and asks them to draw on butcher's paper the symbols for their clan: their family, home, pets, favourite places, mobile phones etc.

He then removes items from that clan in the guise of Governor Philip.

"I let them sit on that for a while. There was resentment about losing their things. It gave them an idea of what that sense of loss feels like."

John aims for "emotional" learning and creating a sense of empathy.

"I've seen people say, 'I'm from the stolen generation and I'm angry' and I've watched others run away from them, scared."

"Rather than anger I like a gentle approach, explaining slowly and aiming for that empathy. I like the expression 'you get more rewards with honey than the hammer'."

John's Welcome to Country at the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch 2017 Environment Conference was praised by delegates for its warmth and vision.

John encourages schools that want more Aboriginal culture to make connections with Aboriginal people in their area.

"You don't usually have men running a women's group," he said.

But while Aboriginal students attending a school could provide connections with community, they should not be used as a 'resource'.

"They are students there to learn like any other. Often they are under pressure, especially boarders away from their country and family, so using them as a resource is not a good idea."

"If they are happy to talk about their culture and make connections with family, fine. But asking them lots of questions they may not know the answers to is unfair. Get an adult in."

# Is robotic marking a threat to the profession?

Although it has moved away from its position of introducing automated scoring of NAPLAN persuasive writing tests this year, the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is still in favour of automation in the future. While the IEUA acknowledges that automation of simple tests such as multiple choice may be helpful, it has grave concerns about the introduction of robotic marking for more complex written responses, Journalist Sue Osborne writes.

The push for automation because it is cheaper, and the link to increased corporate influence, such as by Pearson Education and Pearson Knowledge Technologies, over the education sector, is of concern.

In 2015 ACARA produced a report *An Evaluation of Automated Scoring of NAPLAN Persuasive Writing*, which explained that "automated scoring of writing uses computer algorithms designed to emulate human scoring. This is achieved by extracting linguistic features from essays and then using machine learning and modelling to establish a correspondence between these features and essay scores based on a sample of essays that have been scored by human markers".

University of Melbourne Professor and Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) board chair John Hattie told *ABC Fact Checker* that automated marking was "stunningly successful" with computers five or six times more accurate than humans, and cheaper.

The report concluded that the marking system "provided satisfactory (equivalent or better) results relative to human marking" and that the "transition to online delivery will provide a better targeted assessment, more precise measurements and a faster turnaround of results to students and schools".

## Human markers

ACARA had planned to use 'human markers' to back up the automated marking this year, with the aim of full automation by 2020.

Four companies were engaged to score NAPLAN persuasive essays: Measurement Incorporated, Pearson, Pacific Metrics and Meta Metrics.

The algorithms used are the companies' intellectual property, and not available for public examination.

According to the BBC, Pearson is testing the use of a robot teacher called 'Jill Watson' and looking at a digital education project that combines an interactive textbook, online course and automated tutor.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary John Quessy said the IEUA was concerned about the growing commercial influence of companies such as Pearson Australia on education, and the domination of NAPLAN on educational planning.

He said teachers have never been consulted about automated marking.

The NSW Teachers Federation commissioned its own report by MIT Professor Les Perelman, who described the ACARA report as "so methodologically flawed and so massively incomplete that it cannot justify any uses of automated essay scoring in scoring of NAPLAN essays".

## Criticism ignored

Dr Perelman reported in *Automated Essay Scoring and NAPLAN: A Summary Report*, that the ACARA report ignored a "significant body of scholarship critical of various applications of automated essay scoring".

He wrote "because automated essay scoring is solely mathematical, it cannot assess the most important elements of a text". He quoted Pearson's own report which said "assessment of creativity, poetry, irony or other more artistic uses of writing is beyond such systems. They are also not good at assessing rhetorical voice, the logic of an argument, the extent to which particular concepts are accurately described, or whether specific ideas presented in the essay are well founded. Some of these limitations arise from the fact that human scoring of complex processes like essay writing depend, in part, on 'holistic' judgements involving multivariate and highly interacting factors".

Dr Perelman also reported that automated essay scoring could be biased against certain ethnic groups.

For instance, a study found African Americans, particularly males, were given significantly lower marks by an e-rater than they were by a human marker. This could be because their different verb construction could be easily identified by the machine, and over counted in comparison to a response from a human marker.

He concluded that automated marking "cannot assess high level traits such as quality and clarity of ideas". Dr Perelman said "teachers, to protect themselves and their schools, could spend significant time teaching students ways to game the machine with strategies that will improve their scores but make their writing less effective".

## Expert teachers

Quessy said "students and parents would have a reasonable expectation that a trained human – a teacher – would mark their written responses".

He said the current NSW HSC marking system was a model for how all marking



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should be done. The HSC has been developed over 50 years and is always double marked by two expert teachers.

“ACARA is undermining tried and tested educational practices which rely on the experience, judgment and professionalism of trained teachers, in favour of a machine marking,” Quessy said.

In *Future Frontiers, Education for an AI World*, University College London Professor of Learning with Digital Technologies Rose Luckin writes that “no AI has the human capability for metacognitive awareness. We must ensure that we use AI wisely to do what it does best: the routine cognitive and mechanical skills . . . The full spectrum of skills and abilities required of teachers is broad and complex . . . AI is not (yet) able to fulfill the entire role of a human teacher.”

In a joint statement late last year, parent, principal and teacher organisations called on the NSW Minister for Education to be informed by a unanimous and firmly held position:

“That the implementation of NAPLAN Online be delayed until at least 2020 so that the issues and concerns identified by parents, principals and teachers may be addressed over the next two years.

“That robot marking of student writing in NAPLAN not be implemented, either solely or in conjunction with teacher marking, in either a whole NAPLAN assessment or as part of a trial or partial NAPLAN assessment.

“Due to the inequities and irregularities that arise from running two systems of NAPLAN testing it is proposed that the opt in provision for NAPLAN Online not be proceeded with as the results cannot be regarded as valid or reliable”.

In January, the Chair of the Education Council, Susan Close MP, said: “Over the past few years education systems have been working with students, teachers and school communities to transition NAPLAN from a pen and paper test to an online environment.

“Education Ministers are committed to this transition over the coming years and welcome the many benefits that online testing can deliver to students, their parents and teachers through improved diagnostics and the faster turnaround of NAPLAN results.

“In transitioning to NAPLAN Online, education systems have been considering the appropriateness of utilising certain technologies, including automated essay scoring. Automated essay

scoring allows for writing scripts to be assessed using sophisticated computer programming.

“In December 2017, the Education Council determined that automated essay scoring will not be used for the marking of NAPLAN writing scripts. Any change to this position in the future will be informed by further research into automated essay scoring, and be made as a decision of the Education Council.”

The Union will remain vigilant in ensuring that robust marking is used appropriately and technology is not used in lieu of teacher judgement.

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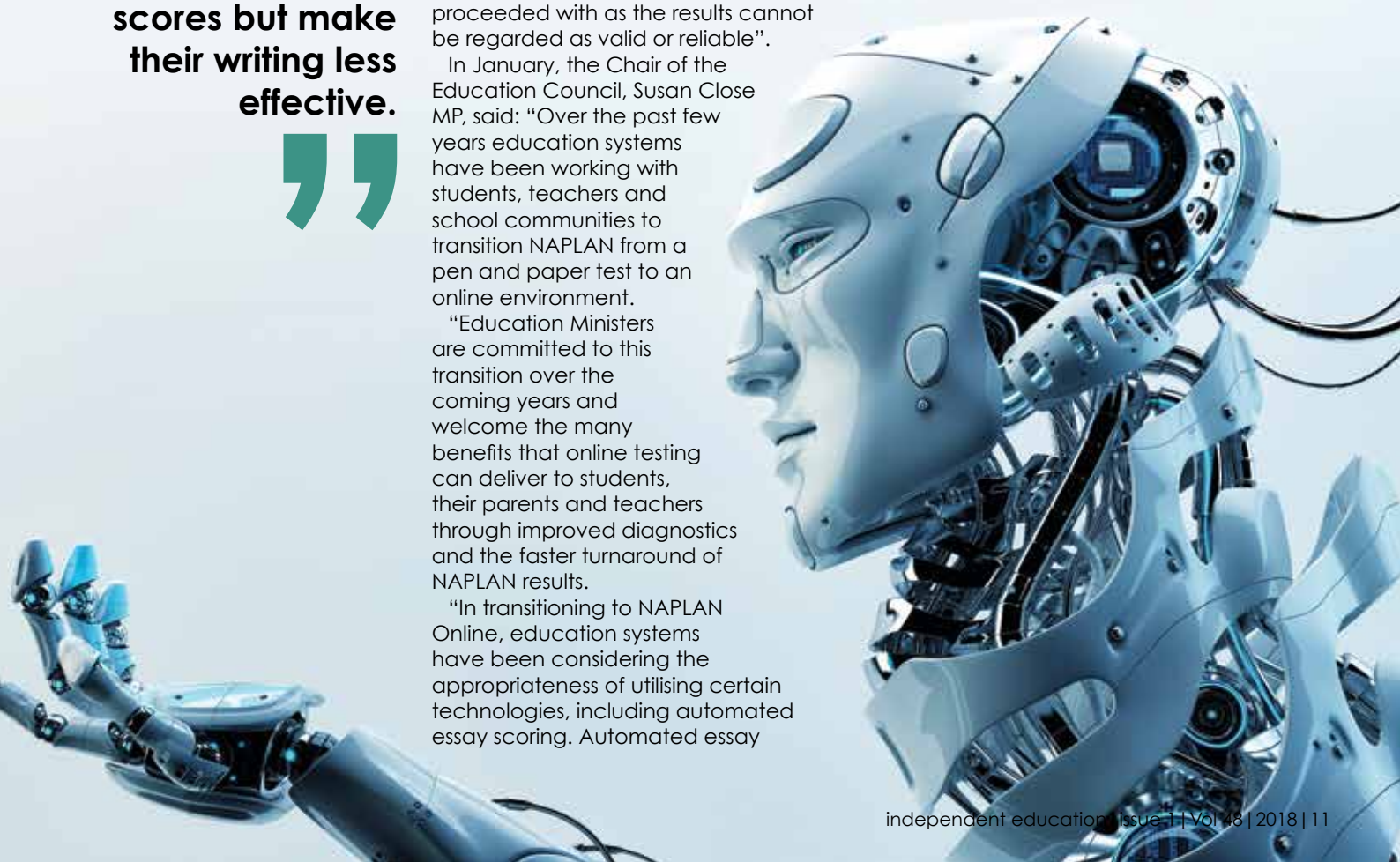
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# Burnout: a dirty word

**High achievers – including professionals, workaholics, students and athletes – often set mammoth tasks to achieve their goals, Emily Rotta of Transitional Support writes.**

High achievers are task orientated – generally on a quest to succeed and to be their best. They strive to complete many tasks throughout the day and often spread themselves thin while trying to multitask. They can be very hard on themselves – endlessly pushing and driving themselves to succeed.

Burnout is not often discussed openly. Burnout is a dirty word to the high achiever who may be unwilling to admit or be unable to understand the impact of burnout or identify if they are at risk.

## **What is burnout?**

Burnout is a term used when your body, mind and soul slow down due to overworking and high levels of prolonged stress. People suffering from burnout may experience physical or mental collapse and fatigue. Common signs and symptoms of burnout include:

- no longer having the energy to complete tasks
- feeling run down and drained of physical or emotional energy
- hearing yourself saying 'I don't have the time'
- losing interest in your goals
- feeling frequently tired and fatigued
- feeling overwhelmed
- increase in stress levels
- becoming easily irritated by small problems
- isolating yourself from friends and family
- feeling that you have no one to talk to
- feeling under an immense amount of pressure to succeed
- no longer believing you can juggle all the demands expected of you
- feeling that you are achieving less than you should be
- finding it hard to unwind and having difficulty sleeping
- working or training long hours, and
- taking work home.

If you can relate to the above situations and symptoms or you have experienced

many of them frequently, you may be at risk of burnout, which also increases your risk of serious physical and mental illness. It can cause disengagement from your workplace and family – particularly if you are feeling unsupported by your employer, manager or trainer.

Burnout can impact anyone – affecting around 27% of Australians – and is a global issue. In fact, burnout statistics are inaccurate as many people feel ashamed to seek support. People in professions that are centred around helping others are at greater risk of burnout, which can lead to what is called compassion fatigue.

## **Burnout v compassion fatigue**

Compassion fatigue is defined as the emotional residue stemming from the exposure of working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events. The prolonged exposure of listening to traumatic stories makes you susceptible to compassion fatigue and is not always easily identifiable.

However, burnout is about being 'worn out' and can affect any profession. The impacts of burnout gradually emerge over time and are directly linked to stressors within one's working and personal life. Things that inspire passion, drive and enthusiasm are stripped away as tedious, unpleasant thoughts take over.

As professionals, teachers and school councillors are susceptible to developing compassion fatigue – particularly as they seek to help students deal with traumatic events. What is becoming increasingly apparent is that in providing help to their students, teachers and school support staff are neglecting themselves.

## **Emotional intelligence reduces risk**

Developing your emotional intelligence (EQ) can reduce your risk of burnout and compassion fatigue. Increasing your self awareness and learning how to manage your emotions and reactions by checking in with yourself, your feelings, your responses to situations and your wellbeing



**“As professionals, teachers and school councillors are susceptible to developing compassion fatigue – particularly as they seek to help students deal with traumatic events.”**

is the pathway to developing your EQ.

Ongoing development of your EQ improves your personal and social competence, increases your social awareness and self-awareness, while enhancing your ability to self manage your emotions and responses. EQ growth not only reduces the risk of burnout and compassion fatigue but also increases your resilience, strength and ability to bounce back during adverse times. Additionally, it reduces your susceptibility to major stress disorders including chronic fatigue and depression.

#### **What is emotional intelligence (EQ)?**

EQ is taking the time to think before reacting – a critical skill to have when we are time poor due to the numerous emails, telephone calls and meetings requiring our immediate attention. Using your self awareness skills to notice your feelings and identify your needs, helps you to decide if your needs are being met.

EQ is a pathway to cultivating personal relationships with people. Fostering your relationships and social awareness skills helps you better appreciate the needs and feelings of those around you, which, in turn, cultivates rewarding interactions and connections with others. Creating a network of like-minded and supportive people further strengthens your ability to cope and manage challenging situations, both personal and professional, and improves your motivation and focus.

#### **Developing your EQ skills**

The only way to understand your emotions and which EQ skills need developing is by spending time thinking about them and reflecting on them. Do this by keeping a journal on your feelings, your responses to situations, and your triggers, to help you to better understand yourself. Self reflection is the first step to improving your EQ skills.

Development of your EQ is one of the many characteristics Transitional Support assesses to help you to create a shift in your life.

In providing guidance and advice to members of IEUA-QNT through professional development sessions, it is clear that burnout is a burden we as professionals share collectively. It is therefore important that, as a collective, teachers and school support staff make it clear that burnout needs to be addressed organisationally at a school level.

#### **Workplace burnout prevention**

Implementing and facilitating self awareness, self care and self management education into existing organisational structures is the most effective way of reducing the risk of stress related disorders such as compassion fatigue and burnout.

The benefits of a workplace program and ongoing professional development

into self awareness and management increases early identification, increases staff retention, promotes active self care and decreases absenteeism among staff.

Transitional Support helps organisations to identify and implement ongoing workplace wellbeing programs.

Increasing workplace EQ enhances employees' self awareness and their ability to manage their emotions by taking responsibility for their behaviour and reactions to situations – thus improving workplace relationships and work satisfaction.

Wellbeing and workplace EQ programs help employees to feel supported within the organisation – especially in high risk, high demand professions.

Employer supported wellbeing programs increase morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and decrease negative responses and emotions, blame of others and avoidance of change. Emotions are contagious, and wellbeing programs create a workplace atmosphere that leaves staff feeling supported and more optimistic towards their employer and their profession, while also developing a collegial, supportive team environment among colleagues.

Find out more about Transitional Support at [www.transitionalsupport.com.au](http://www.transitionalsupport.com.au).



**Emily Rotta is a Blue Knot Trauma Informed Practitioner, ACA Professional Supervisor, Level 4 Counsellor and CDAA Careers Practitioner. Having previously worked as a Guidance Officer at Catholic and Education Queensland schools – as well as a Senior Teacher in secondary schools – Emily provides professional advice and guidance through regular presentations and Professional Development sessions at IEUA-QNT.**

# Reclaiming the narrative in a changing world:

## The work of unions in the 21st century

**While there is much wealth to be gained from changes, it is becoming apparent that this wealth is not being shared equitably among workers and, despite the early promise of the internet as a forum for increased democracy, it appears that inequality and injustice is becoming entrenched. IEUA NSW/ACT Organiser Keith Heggart writes.**

In Australia and around the world, there is low growth in real wages, increasing competition from national and international businesses and a startling rise in the number of industries that now employ workers in precarious forms of employment: the most obvious example being the rise of the 'gig economy' as typified by companies like Uber, which promote neoliberal values of individualism and choice while undercutting workers' rights and democratic ideals of altruism and collectivism.

Young people, in particular, have been a focus of these attacks. In schools and after joining the workforce, they are increasingly described with deficit models – they are lacking the 21st century skills, or knowledge about their communities, or the motivation to succeed. Such models often ignore the heterogeneous nature of young people and the specific knowledges they do possess. Another area of criticism has been that young people, in particular, are apathetic and disinterested in politics or social movements. The declining numbers of young people joining organisations like trade unions or political parties is often used to illustrate this.

### Challenges facing education

The challenges of globalisation have been felt in education too. The rise of 'edu-business' and 'edu-preneurialism' is based on an increasing understanding that education is ripe for investment and profiteering, especially in the areas of assessment and educational technology.

The work that companies like Apple, Microsoft and Pearson (as well as a host of smaller, less well known companies) are doing in schools in Australia and around the world illustrate a combination

of neoliberal policy-making and new managerialistic practices that treat education more and more like a business and less like a public good.

These approaches can be linked directly to the increasingly narrow approaches to curriculum (an emphasis on literacy and numeracy at the expense of the arts); the involvement of industry in determining curriculum, for example via STEM; more uses of high stakes and standardised testing and schools being run less like communities and more like business. For example, there are Charter schools in the US, who now terminate the employment of 10% of their teaching staff each year as a matter of principle. While all of this is going on, teachers are facing increasing workloads, pressure from managers and parents and more demands on their time and resources – often coming at their own expense.

### Where to now for teaching unions?

In the face of this, it is natural to question the role of the union movement, and especially teachers' unions like the IEUA. How can the IEUA respond in a way that looks after the interests of members in such a challenging environment? Any response needs to begin with the recognition that the union movement in Australia is, as a whole, facing its own troubles with declining membership, an increasingly regulated industrial relations context and a punitive approach from government.

Fortunately, there has been some work done to explore how unions might change in order to address these challenges – most notably the work by Nina Bascia and Howard Stevenson (2017). In *Organising teaching: Developing the power of the profession*, based on their work with a number of teaching unions around the world, Bascia and Stevenson have





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 ”

suggested that there are seven avenues for unions to follow if they are to reinvigorate the union movement. These are:

- reframing the narrative
- connecting the industrial and professional
- working with and against employers
- building at the base
- building democratic engagement
- connecting the profession, and
- working within and beyond the union to create broader alliances.

Recognising the applicability of these themes, the IEUA has begun to explore ways in which we can integrate these ideas into our work. Currently, a working group has begun to consider how we might challenge the dominant neoliberal discourse in education. Bascia and Stevenson suggest that the attacks on teachers' working conditions are located within a broader ideological attack on public education. Bascia and Stevenson suggest that it is necessary for unions to 'change the conversation,' or reframe the narrative, to challenge the 'private good, public bad' discourse articulated by powerful corporate interests. (p56)

In order to do this, unions need to develop simple, clear and powerful messages that explain why education is a public good, and that such education depends heavily on the skill and dedication of highly qualified professional

educators. The IEUA is currently examining ideas around how we might craft these messages to communicate the important work that teachers and support staff do, both within the education system and more widely in the community. The next step is equally important: we need to mobilise around the narrative.

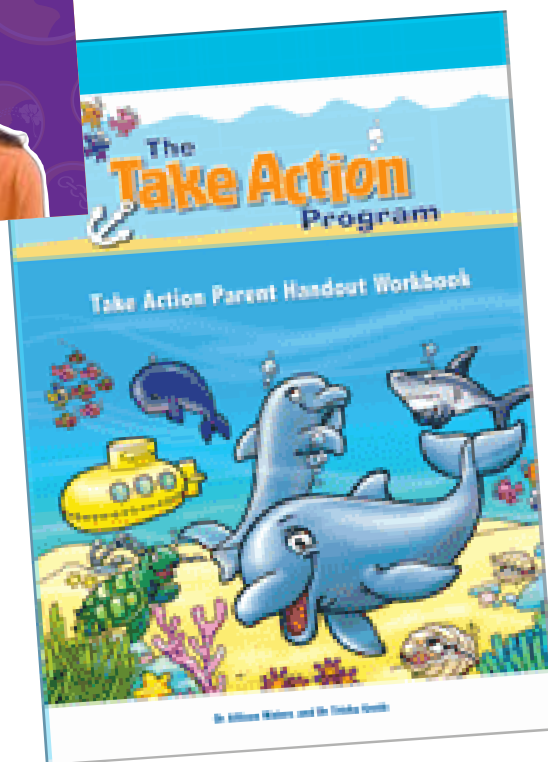
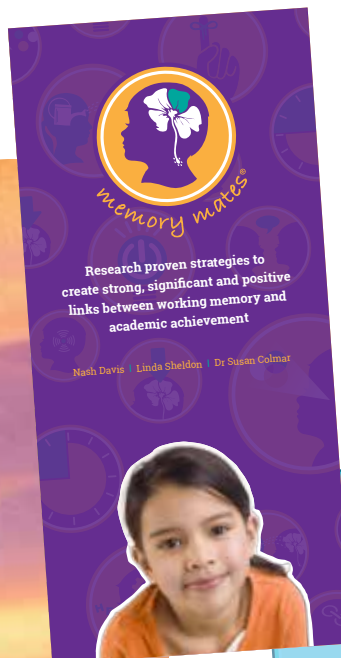
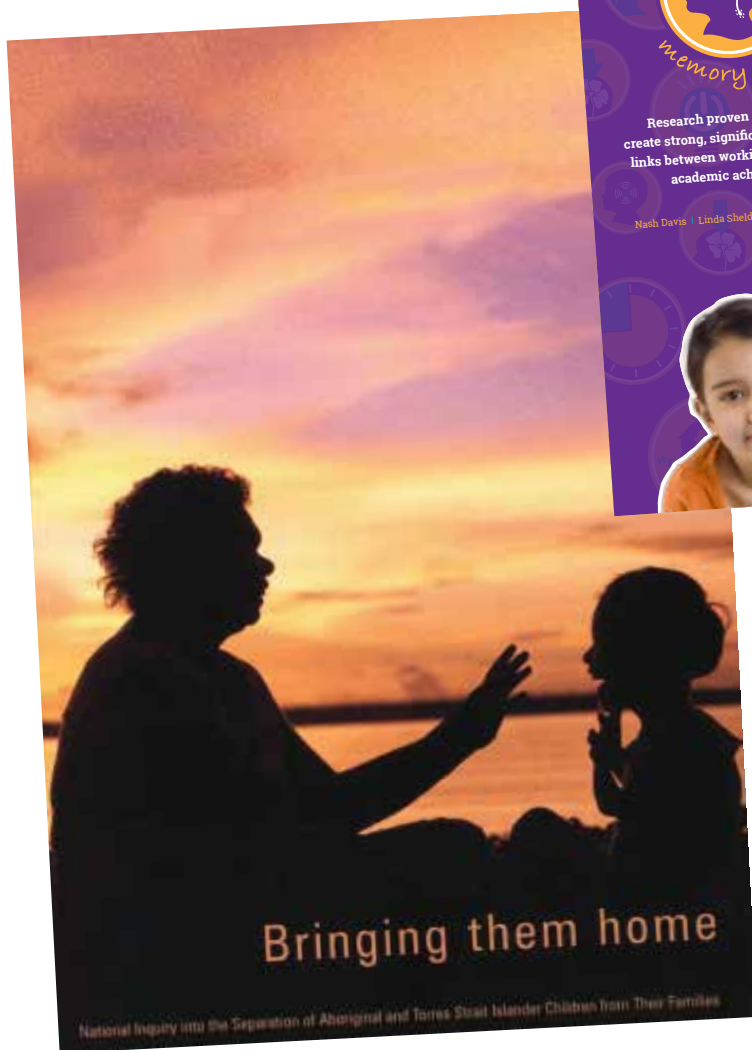
This means that IEUA must communicate what it stands for, as well as what it stands against. Bascia and Stevenson encapsulate this neatly:

"Within this research project are numerous examples of unions mobilising teachers around ideas and counter-narratives. Unions connected immediate issues with wider narratives. Only by doing this can teacher unions connect what they are against with what they are for. Being against something, and tapping into a popular grievance, can often provide the spark that generates member involvement in the union. Being for something is what is required if momentary interest is to develop into long term engagement and commitment." (p56).

While still only in the early stages, the working group is looking forward to reporting back to members our work in this area.

#### Reference

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# New resources

**The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar hopes a new interactive website about the Stolen Generations will be a critical resource in classrooms around the country. Journalist Sue Osborne writes about new resources now available.**

"As we know, teaching Indigenous content in schools is particularly important, not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who need to see their culture respected and valued in the classroom; but equally for all children to learn the true history of this country," Commissioner Oscar said.

"It is through telling these stories that our families might begin to heal, and that all Australians might begin to understand how our past is so intimately connected to our future," she said.

"The website features information about the *Bringing them Home* report and personal stories from members of the Stolen Generations and their families in an engaging and accessible way."

The new website is at <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/>

## Improving working memory and attention

Memory Mates is a new program for primary schools that helps children

who experience working memory and attention difficulties.

A University of Sydney and NSW Department of Education program to improve primary school children's attention and memory, the program has produced significant improvements in maths and spelling, according to an evaluation of a pilot program in 13 classes across six schools.

Students with low working memory can feel overloaded with instructions and information, reducing their ability to cope in class.

The University's Associate Professor Susan Colmar collaborated with NSW Department of Education Senior Psychologists Nash Davis and Linda Sheldon to develop the *Memory Mates* program, which trains teachers to support primary school children to adopt and use 10 attention and working memory strategies.

Resources from the *Memory*



“  
**Cyberbullying  
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under the age  
of 18 reporting  
that they have  
experienced  
online bullying in  
any one year...**  
”

Mates program have been made available for free on a website launched at the University of Sydney: [www.memorymates.education](http://www.memorymates.education)

### Tackling cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a deeply embedded problem in society, with one in five young people under the age of 18 reporting that they have experienced online bullying in any one year, but schools cannot solve the problem alone.

*Reducing Cyberbullying in Schools* focuses on international evidenced based strategies for preventing cyberbullying.

Professor Campbell spent two decades as a teacher, before becoming a registered psychologist and then moving into educational research. *Reducing Cyberbullying in Schools: International Evidence-Based Best Practices* provides an accessible blend of academic rigour and practical application for mental health professionals, school administrators and educators, giving them a vital tool in stemming the problem of cyberbullying in school settings.

Marilyn Campbell and Sheri Bauman (eds). (2017). *Reducing Cyberbullying in Schools: International Evidence-Based Best Practices*, Academic Press, eBook ISBN: 9780128114247, Paperback ISBN: 9780128114230

<https://www.elsevier.com/books/reducing-cyberbullying-in-schools/campbell/978-0-12-811423-0>

### iEngage

University of Sydney researchers won a Diabetes NSW & ACT and Diabetes Australia grant to develop iEngage, a child friendly, user centred educational health program that allows students to monitor daily movements and nutrition choices via wearable devices.

iEngage is designed for the 80% of 5–17 year olds who don't meet the recommended physical activity levels, and consume excessive amounts of food containing added sugar.

In the school context, the program is best suited to students in Years 5 and 6. iEngage is made up of 10 modules, each 50 minutes long. Each module is structured around a variety of fun activities such as quizzes, physical activity and peer learning.

Wearing activity sensors and using the iEngage App, students learn how to monitor their own activity, reflect on their sedentary behaviour, and assess their achievements.

iEngage teaches students what being physically active means and guides them to establish their own goals. The physical activities included in the program aim to build both confidence and physical skills.

iEngage was successfully run in 2017 in a Sydney primary school with Year 5 and 6 students.

Teachers reported that students actively participated in all aspects of the program, and rated it very highly. The program is credited with helping students understand the links between good health, physical activity and reduced sugar.

For more information on trialling iEngage visit <https://sydney.edu.au/research/opportunities/opportunities/2084>.

### Dealing with child anxiety disorders

*Take Action* is a child anxiety treatment designed for both individual and group use.

In the hands of an experienced school counsellor or psychologist, this program helps to prevent the development of chronic anxiety in children that can lead to depression and dangerous self harming behaviour.

*Take Action*, developed in Australia by psychologists for primary school aged children, uses 'cognitive behavioural therapy' (CBT) approaches to help anxious children cope better both socially and scholastically and prevent the future development of chronic anxiety and possible clinical depression.

*Take Action* provides qualified staff with module based instructions and materials in an \$85 manual to conduct a range of treatment measures from anxiety management skills training to a complete 10 week CBT group therapy program. [www.takeactionprogram.com](http://www.takeactionprogram.com)

### Young and eSafe

Last year, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner launched the Young & eSafe platform, designed to offer practical advice for young people by young people, equipping them with skills to embody respectful and responsible online behaviours. Lesson plans are now available for teachers to open a dialogue with students about these important online behaviours, suitable for Years 9 and 10. <https://esafety.gov.au/youngandesafe/>



**In 2017 the Independent Education Union of Australia committed to nurture and develop women in our Union through a leadership program, Marit Clayton writes.**

# BOLD

## for change – getting women into leadership

This is in line with goals expressed in the broader union movement and succession planning, looking towards the future of our movement and of the IEUA. With women making up around 70% of our membership, the goal is for the IEUA leadership profile to reflect this by connecting women with professional development opportunities and activities. This was the birth of the program IEUA BOLD: Building Our Leadership Development.

### What is leadership?

Leadership is the capacity to integrate, motivate and mobilise others. It is not simply positional. It is behavioural. Women can be leaders in different aspects of their lives. Women are leaders in our Union structures, in schools and in our communities. They are leaders in both their personal and professional lives. Drawing on the feedback from the conference and from the survey, the IEUA developed a BOLD Program to assist women in recognising and developing their leadership skills and further enhancing these abilities. Standing together, women can support each other to be bold leaders.

### Women and leadership conference

A national conference was held in Canberra in March 2017 bringing together over 100 IEUA women from across the country. Participants focused on exploring the knowledge and skills needed to exercise leadership at various levels of union engagement – workplace, community and beyond.

As well as hearing from several significant political, social and union female leaders, participants were able to discuss strategies which will champion

women in leadership and develop BOLD ideas, BOLD actions and BOLD steps. Here is what some of the participants said about the conference:

"I was reminded you don't need to be at the top to lead; a leader can be wherever you are and whatever you do. Such sound advice!"

"From a number of speakers the message was clear: take the initiative, be active in what you do wherever you are."

"I was reminded that leadership is not about simply a title or a position. It is about doing."

"I am even more impassioned about finding the next generation of young women to get involved."

"At the beginning I felt like an imposter being there, like I was not the right person to attend. By the end of the conference I felt like there was a reason for all of us to be there."

### Women in leadership survey

In conjunction with the conference a survey was also conducted last year to find out what IEUA women want and need to be BOLD. Here are some of the things they said they want:

- networks
- mentoring programs
- recruitment plans for getting more women members
- targeted PD for women in our workplaces
- IEUA women's committees
- personal development plans
- a women's charter for our Union
- improved representation of women in our Union structures, and
- women's progress groups in our workplaces.





**“ I was reminded you don't need to be at the top to lead; a leader can be wherever you are and whatever you do. Such sound advice! ”**

### **A BOLD action plan**

Essential to BOLD union women's leadership development is an action plan. The IEUA Women and Equity Committee developed a guide to help women construct their own BOLD action plan towards leadership goals. The guide contains a series of questions and actions which aim to assist women to assess their strengths, their interests and to provide a step by step approach to the development of leadership goals. Importantly the guide is designed to be shared with colleagues who are also developing action plans.

### **IEUA BOLD Facebook group**

One of the greatest successes of the year was the development of the IEUA Women and Leadership Facebook group, which brought BOLD women together to share ideas and articles. It was exciting to see so many women embrace this space and initiate leadership discussions and share their BOLD actions (and those of other women around the world) through articles and posts.

### **IEUA BOLD webinars**

The IEUA BOLD program is excited by our partnership with the TLN (Teacher Learning Network). IEUA BOLD women came together through TLN to discuss leading and leadership in work and in life. Lisa Heap from the Victorian Trades Hall led a lively discussion on leadership vs management. Participants were challenged to identify how they were already leaders and the ways they could utilise their leadership skills and practices to enhance and lead social change. The webinar format enabled participants from all over the country to come together, and those who were not able to participate could access the webinar at their leisure.

What were the kinds of things that participants committed to change in their practices after this session?

"I will actively pursue opportunities in my current role to demonstrate and develop leadership models."

"I am more aware of the need to keep in contact with colleagues."

"I need to create my own leadership

philosophy to help me maintain focus and direction."

"I need to take the initiative more without fear."

### **IEUA BOLD Women in Action**

Already there are a number of great goals being achieved by IEUA women who have taken steps to develop and enhance their leadership potential. Some of our members share theirs with IE.

"I committed to going on a trek through Nepal to raise money for UN Women and their work in ensuring that all women and girls, no matter where they live, have opportunity, equal access to education, fair and decent employment, are empowered within their community and live free from the fear of violence. Doing this trek is a massive commitment – not only do I have to raise a substantial amount of money, I also have to work to ensure I am fit enough to be able to achieve the trek!"

**Caryl, Queensland**

"I have enrolled in a Masters in Educational Leadership. It is a long time since I did any study and the prospect of working full time and studying is daunting. However, the support of my colleagues, family and friends and the confidence I have gained through my connection with other BOLD women mean I know I can achieve this."

**Susan, South Australia**

"I attended the IEUA 2017 Women's Forum and heard NSW Supreme Court Justice Julia Lonergan and IEUA member and Giants AFLW captain Amanda Farrugia speak about their experiences as leaders and role models. Such inspiration and so great to be with other BOLD women at this event."

**Giselle, Western Sydney**

"I joined the BOLD Facebook group and connected with a fantastic group of BOLD women. We have been sharing photos of ourselves undertaking 'bold' actions. I posted a photo of myself with some of the student leaders from the girls' school where I work, planning International Women's Day. They came up with some fantastic and inspirational ideas. How great to be working with and nurturing the next generation of bold women!"

**Kate, Victoria**

IEUA members who are interested in finding out more about the BOLD program and activities in their state should contact their state branch office of the IEUA.

**Marit Clayton is an Officer of the IEUA VicTas Branch and is part of the BOLD program in Victoria and Tasmania.**

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# Year 1 standardised testing diminishes teachers' professional standing

**The Federal Government's proposal of a national Year 1 literacy and numeracy check poses a threat to the professionalism of teachers. Developed by a panel appointed by the Minister for Education, the proposal raises some serious concerns for the profession, Journalist Sara El Sayed writes.**

When the prospective test was first announced in early 2017, our Union raised concerns as to the potential for the test to erode the professionalism of teachers: particularly questioning if proper considerations had been made regarding teachers' existing operations in the classroom, their current workloads, and their available resources.

According to the Department of Education and Training, the intention of the test is to be part of an early intervention strategy that would identify children who are behind in their schooling and ensure they are supported.

The assessment would occur as a one-on-one interview between teacher and child. The literacy test particularly would be based on the phonics screening check used in the UK since 2012.

The current proposal, however, seems to be unreliable in regard to its inception and the practicality of its implementation.

## **Teachers already assessing their students' abilities**

Year 1 teacher and IEUA-QNT member Sandie Wands said teachers are already conducting checks of their students' abilities regarding phonics, sight words, writing and reading.

"There is no doubt that the assessments we already conduct are more telling of a student's ability and progress.

"Our current assessments are synthesised over a period of time and through various means to form a complete picture of each child's level of achievement.

"One of the most disturbing things about being part of the education system at this point in time is that policy makers have lost sight of the fact that we are dealing with human beings, and very tiny ones at that.

"Everybody performs better on some days than others and children are no different.

"They don't like testing and it causes them a tremendous amount of stress.

"So many children – and teachers – are displaying signs of anxiety as they struggle to keep up with the demands of the Australian Curriculum and constant data collection.

"If you measure a plant every day of its life, it does not make it grow. It needs feeding and nurturing. Excessive assessment diminishes opportunities to teach and therefore learn," Ms Wands said.

## **Professional judgement under attack**

Professor Beryl Exley, National President of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association, said while she supports the



**“One of the most disturbing things about being part of the education system at this point in time is that policy makers have lost sight of the fact that we are dealing with human beings, and very tiny ones at that.”**

teaching of phonics as one part of a multi-part strategy for developing accurate, fluent and critical readers, what she doesn't support is the public devaluing of the professionalism of teachers to make decisions about the form and timing of literacy assessments.

“Teachers are in the best position to know where their students are up to and which assessment needs to be called upon at which point in time for the students.

“When teachers are then made to conduct an imposed check at an imposed point in time, their professionalism is devalued.

“Systems are already in place to provide the tests for early literacy.

“Early years teachers have a very comprehensive battery of assessment items available that focus on early literacy acquisition,” Professor Exley said.

The check would involve children reading various nonsense words such as ‘yune’ and ‘thrand’ to assess their ability to understand phonics.

“We also know that a lot of young children, as they become readers, actually become very efficient fluent readers without actually having an apprenticeship in alien nonsense words,” Professor Exley said.

#### **Flaws in the proposal**

Professor Exley pointed to evidence from research, by UK Emeritus Professor Margaret M Clark OBE, developed specifically to help inform Australian teachers and system administrators about the UK experience with the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check.

“None of her work to date, or the critiques she calls on, were included in the Federal Minister for Education’s appointed expert panel report,” Professor Exley said.

Professor Exley said the contents of the report were not reflective of sentiments held by those working in the profession.

“The literacy experts on the panel were not representative of the voices of industry and nor were they representative of different schools of thought around early literacy acquisitions.

IEUA-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke also noted that there were no union representatives on the panel.

“Our Union, as the voice of the profession, was not included in, or given the opportunity to contribute to the findings of, the panel,” Mr Burke said.

Professor Exley said that the expert panel was set up to prove a particular viewpoint.

“The panel focussed on a check of synthetic phonics rather than literacy, with the view that a check of synthetic phonics was the only appropriate strategy.”

The expert panel was established by the Federal Government to not only advise of the development of the check, but also its implementation and rollout.

“When there’s a remit that has a fait

accompli – the fact that the phonics check will happen – it’s appropriate to ask some serious questions about what the intentions of the panel are to begin with: to consider if such a test is appropriate in the current education system, or to advise the Minister as to how to roll out a test with the assumption that it should go forward,” Professor Exley said.

#### **Ways teachers could be better supported**

Mr Burke said if the Federal Government was genuinely seeking to support students who are struggling in Year 1, they should listen to teachers, and contribute to their support of their students.

“Our teachers are the real experts,” Mr Burke said.

Professor Exley noted the cost of implementing such a test.

“This phonics check is going to consume an awful lot of money that could be best spent elsewhere,” Professor Exley said.

“Resources could be better directed at professional development opportunities for teachers.

“The teaching of young children is a very complex field indeed and we can always have better professional development within those areas.

Ms Wands said teachers still need additional resources to address individual needs.

“In the absence of specific learning needs, this translates to more school officer (teacher aide) time.

“In the presence of specific learning needs, this translates to more access to specialists such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists.

“The money it would take to implement this testing could be better spent on these types of support mechanisms and resources,” Ms Wands said.

Mr Burke said what teachers need is for their profession to be respected.

“Just as a medical professional’s judgement is trusted and acknowledged when they assess a patient, an education professional’s judgement should be respected and acknowledged when they make an informed assessment of their students.

“A Federal Government that lacks such faith in the Australian labour force is a Federal Government that is wilfully ignorant of the calibre of teachers we have in this country.

“Such checks of students’ progress is an insult to a teachers’ ability to do their job; an ignorance of the nature of early-primary learning; and an added burden which does not support the operations of teachers, but adds to the workload of a demographic of teachers already at high risk of burnout.

“Our students should not be reduced to a test score, and our teachers’ professional standing should not be diminished,” Mr Burke said.

# Building employee skills capacity – focusing on support staff

**One of the corner stones of effective capacity building in organisations is the provision of quality and timely staff training which is tailored as far as possible to the employee's individual needs in their role. IEUA VicTas Assistant Secretary Cathy Hickey explores how schools fare here, and who is being provided with training opportunities.**

There has quite rightly been a significant focus in the last decade on building leadership skills in education – of both principals and the broader leadership team, and an improving focus on more distributive forms of leadership. The requirement for greater knowledge and capacity to manage the growing legal obligations on schools – legal liability, negligence, compliance, child protection legislation – presents one of the largest areas of professional development focus for this group.

Teachers have been subject to rising expectation to deliver greater student focussed learning, particularly 'individualised'. Behaviour management and building knowledge and skills in disability and other special needs areas, such as in autism, are still top areas of professional demand. Building ICT skills has also been an ongoing area of focus.

## **But what of our school support staff?**

The growth in numbers of support staff has been a key demographic change in staffing in Australian schools over the last

decade. The numbers of learning support staff in primary schools, for example, has been growing steadily, and the diversity of roles and actual numbers of staff in secondary school has almost doubled. The growth in independent schools is particularly significant.

Classification structures for school support staff – be they developed through enterprise bargaining agreements, or those relying simply on the modern award for general education employees – are under constant focus, with unions seeking to modernise them and ensure a fairer and more accurate valuing of the work of this growing sector of the education workforce.

Classification structures for school support staff need to both reflect the duties, capacities, judgement and decision making responsibilities, qualifications and experience of employees. A classification structure that is clear and based on the jobs people are actually doing can assist in the provision of better career path opportunities and assist with professional development focus.





**“  
For learning  
support staff  
there is a  
clear cry for  
much greater  
professional  
development  
in special  
education.”**

### Quality training opportunities

The provision of training opportunities for support staff forms a very patchy picture – not just across schools, but across occupational groups in the support staff area.

Like its counterparts in the other states and territories, IEUA VicTas has been focusing on enhancing its own training opportunities for school support members of the Union. To get a better understanding of the training needs of this group of school staff and the training opportunities they access in their schools, the Union ran a survey focused specifically on this area.

### Training needs survey

The IEUA VicTas ran the survey of its education support staff members in Victorian and Tasmanian Catholic and independent schools to obtain a detailed picture of their training experiences and needs.

Approximately 350 members responded to the survey across all occupational groupings, including learning support, clerical and administration, laboratory and library staff. One of the positive results was that the survey revealed a significant majority of members had participated in some employer provided training over the last three years (learning support respondents 84%, clerical 71%, library 71% and lab 100%). However, while almost 80% of that group of lab and library members receive some training each year, only 59% of clerical and 63% of learning support staff participate in some training each year. Of concern to the Union was the significant percentage of those who had requested training over the last three years but had been refused. While some of those who had not accessed training opportunities had not requested training, for a range of reasons, approximately half of the learning support and clerical members, and 40% of library members in the 'no training' category had requested training and been refused. Ensuring that all staff have access to quality training opportunities is a very important aspect of schools maintaining quality service provision. All staff in Victorian Catholic schools, for example, should be having

their Annual Review Meetings (ARMs) which have the express aim of identifying training needs, and schools should be providing access to quality training opportunities every year. The Tasmanian Catholic Agreement, for example, has a specific entitlement for education support staff to 'regular, relevant and negotiated professional development'. Independent schools should be providing at least the same opportunities for their staff.

While the quality of the training received was identified as sufficient by approximately 80% across all groupings, the percentage identifying the training as sufficient for their needs was much lower (learning support 51%, clerical 63%, library 48%, and lab 57%).

### Types of training needs identified

The survey asked members to identify their top training needs, and this is broken down by percentage in the table below. It comes as no surprise that the highest area of need is in the job specific area, but the results show some interesting differences as well.

For learning support staff there is a clear cry for much greater professional development in special education – autism, intellectual disability, severe language disorder, and also in student-related learning skills. Working with challenging student behaviours and numeracy and literacy were also highly ranked.

For clerical staff, the survey highlights the incredible diversity of roles that come under this grouping – finance, VCAL/ VET areas, marketing, human resources including compliance, legal liability and staff management responsibilities, high level publication and communication roles, and responsibilities in other key areas of management support.

The survey has assisted the Union to refresh the range of training activities for its education support members based on their identified needs, including preferred modes of delivery, etc. The Union encourages non government employers to do the same for their staff to ensure all staff have access to training that meets their professional needs.

Type of training needs identified	Learning Support	Clerical	Lab	Library
Job specific	77%	88%	76%	76.5
Student behaviour	84%	9%	9.5%	41%
Occupational health and safety	11%	16%	52%	12%
Personal wellbeing	35%	41%	33%	30%
Managing difficult conversations	32%	46%	33%	38%
Employment rights	21%	32%	33%	35%
Reclassification	18%	31%	33%	41%
Time management	7%	21%	9%	15%

# Girls need more than skirts and dresses

**Uniform policies at many schools in Australia require girls to wear skirts or dresses as the only option for their formal day uniform, and lack options for female students who would prefer to wear shorts or trousers in situations other than during sporting activities. Journalist Sara El Sayed explores the implications of not offering girls alternative school uniform options.**

According to co-founder of Girls' Uniform Agenda, Dr Amanda Mergler, very few schools in the non government sector either currently allow shorts and pants for girls or are making the change.

With the agenda having been in operation since February 2017, Dr Mergler said the past months had seen successes for government schools in some states, but more was needed.

"We don't want individuals to have to fight this fight every time they see the need for change.

"We want the overarching bodies that govern and work with those systems to put policies in place that mean schools must offer girls a range of suitable choices."

Girls' Uniform Agenda is committed to supporting parents and girls who seek to have uniform policy changes implemented in their schools.

They encourage school leaders to recognise that girls should be offered a range of suitable formal and informal uniform options, including shorts and long pants. They work with uniform suppliers to increase the range of girls' shorts and pants options and campaign for legislative and policy change in this area.

Dr Mergler said a key mandate of any school principal was to prepare students for their future – that includes preparing students for the world of work.

"In most industries we see that women are choosing to wear shorts and pants to work."

"As we are preparing young people for their futures, we need to be considering the clothing that we are forcing them to wear."

## Teachers can play a role

Girls are not just missing out on sport and physical activity because of restrictive clothing, their classroom learning is also being inhibited.

Simple tasks such as plugging in a computer charger underneath a desk can be a hassle for girls who don't feel confident or comfortable in skirts.

When students feel uncomfortable, they are less likely to pay attention to their lessons and less likely to want to be in the school environment.

Teacher and IEUA-QNT Equity Committee convenor Louise Lenzo said the impact of not having uniform options was present both in the playground and in the classroom.

"It is common for young children to sit on a carpet area with their legs crossed during class time.

"Teachers need to constantly remind girls to place their dress or skirt over their knees with their hands in their laps.

"As the children move from the carpet to their desks, they need to be conscious of how they get up off the floor – a consideration boys wearing trousers or

shorts need not make.

"When a range of uniform options are provided, it seems that parents and children are much happier.

"Female students have stated that pants are more comfortable and provide better flexibility for them.

"Skirt wearing, consciously or unconsciously, has the potential to impose many considerations of modesty and immodesty in ways that trousers do not.

"Girls are inhibited in their ability to participate in a wide variety of sports, social interactions and playground activities," Ms Lenzo said.

Dr Mergler said teachers can facilitate discussions with their students regarding their rights as young individuals: what they have a right to wear, and their right to feel comfortable.

"Teachers can then take those students' voices back to school leaders and open up a bigger discussion," Dr Mergler said.

Ms Lenzo said our Union, acting as a collective voice of teachers and school support staff, can further help bring this to the attention of school boards across Australia.

"We need to ensure we continue to raise awareness of the impact of Girls' Uniform Agenda and the positive impacts this has on all students – boys included," Ms Lenzo said.

Teachers can access resources provided by Girls' Uniform Agenda at [www.girlsuniformagenda.org/resources](http://www.girlsuniformagenda.org/resources) to help facilitate these discussions with students.

## Changing the school culture

Dr Mergler's personal experience of trying to make change at her daughter's school resulted in school leadership simply removing the terms 'boy' and 'girl' from their uniform policy – a disingenuous attempt at providing gender neutral options.

"When schools do this they immediately create a situation where girls have to be brave and wear the uniform designed for boys, which all students and parents consider the 'boys' uniform', if they wish to wear shorts or pants," said Dr Mergler.

"They have to cross a gender line that is policed fiercely by societal norms held by other students and some of the community."

Testimonials from girls who have pushed for change at their schools and been forced to wear the boys' uniform as their only option if they want shorts or pants highlight the stigma, including that of Koda – a 14 year old student who described her experience on the Girls' Uniform Agenda website.

"I have received some backlash from other students at the school. I have been jeered at by other students and had people I've never met before walk





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past and say to their friend, 'there's that weirdo'," Koda wrote.

Dr Mergler said schools can do a lot more when it comes to changing the internal culture.

"Girls need to be involved in decision making to ensure appropriate options are provided.

"Some schools have worked with their female students and have brought in options. They've asked their uniform supplier for a variety of shorts and pants and the girls have worn them for a few weeks, and have decided which ones they are most comfortable with.

"This is a much better strategy than forcing girls to wear a boy's uniform that was designed and intended for boys to wear.

"Additionally, communicating to parents as to why this matters is important to ensuring a smooth transition," Dr Mergler said.

#### **A collective voice for disparate people**

Dr Mergler pointed out that it can be very isolating for girls and their families

if they try and combat a problematic school policy on their own – with schools often claiming to have never had the issue brought up before.

"This is an unlikely reality for a school in modern times.

"If no one has truly requested shorts or pants for girls, communication channels at the school are likely to be limited or intimidating – acting as a deterrent.

"Girls' Uniform Agenda gives girls, parents and the school community a supportive space and a practical platform to voice their concerns.

"Young supporters of Girls' Uniform Agenda are very passionate and they are simply saying change is needed," Dr Mergler said.

"They want the right to wear shorts inside the school yard, just as they do outside the school gate".

To find out more about Girls' Uniform Agenda and to access resources to start the conversation at your school, visit [www.girlsuniformagenda.org](http://www.girlsuniformagenda.org).



# Dive into an ocean of knowledge

**Cool Australia's website features a host of resources to help teachers bring to life the environment, sustainability, geography, environmental sciences, English and other disciplines. Kirsty Costa from Cool Australia writes.**

*Blue*, a feature documentary by Northern Pictures, comes at a critical moment in our history when the state of our ocean has reached crisis point. Shot on location in Hawaii, Indonesia, the Philippines and Australia, the film takes us deep into the Pacific, into bustling fish markets in Indonesia and remote tropical beaches in the Coral Sea. Told through the eyes of seven Ocean Guardians, *Blue* is an exceptional educational tool that ignites a curiosity and love of learning about our liquid world.

Cool Australia's free teacher toolkit is now available for early learning, primary and secondary teachers. It includes 62 lesson plans and student activities, 120 hours of activities, 160 factsheets and a compelling library of digital resources. These curriculum aligned lessons span across many year levels and subject areas, and include never seen before video clips from the film. These are all valuable resources a teacher might use to involve young people in interesting and meaningful learning.

*Blue* is a feature documentary film charting the drastic decline in the health of our oceans. It is a cinematic song for



our oceans; beautiful, intimate and grand. No matter where you are in Australia, it will make you want to rise up with the waves to become an ocean guardian.

Along with the film is an ambitious global campaign to create advocacy and behaviour change through the #oceanguardian movement.

To watch the film and become an ocean guardian, visit [www.bluethefilm.org](http://www.bluethefilm.org)



## Sample activity from a Year 9-10 English lesson...

### Ocean Guardian campaigns – social action activity

**Curriculum links:** Year 9 and Year 10 English

**General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and creative thinking, Ethical understanding

**Cross curriculum priority:** Sustainability

**Learning intentions:** Students develop skills and confidence to speak up about issues that matter to them.

**Success criteria:** Students will:

- identify the features of good campaigns
- feel empowered to have a voice
- create a compelling campaign for social action, and
- identify the 'ask' and evaluate the responses.

#### Part A: 30 minutes

**Step 1.** Introduce the lesson by informing students that they will be considering the power of youth voice to influence action on issues of global concern. In this instance, the focus will be ocean conservation, becoming an Ocean Guardian and convincing others to do the same. Explain that students will be working in groups to consider a set of existing campaigns and present a campaign from their personal perspective.

**Step 2.** Open the video *Who is Madison Stewart?* at <https://vimeo.com/211443595>.

**Step 3.** Explain to students that the clip is from *Blue* and features a young campaigner, activist and Ocean Guardian, Madison Stewart. While watching the clip, encourage students note the messages they hear from Madison about young people being able to make a difference.

**Step 4.** After watching the video, facilitate a discussion on the key points made by Madison. Prompt students by asking for their thoughts on these key messages:

You have the power to make a difference no matter how old you are.

One person can make a difference.

You can ask questions about the decisions that are being made by others about your future.

**Step 5.** Explain to students that shared stories are a powerful way to connect with people. Invite the class to engage in the 'Think, Pair, Share' visible thinking routine:

**Think:** about a story from their past when they 'spoke up'. It could be as simple as asking for something they really wanted, or letting someone know they were lost, or speaking up when they saw that someone or something was being treated unfairly. If required, write these questions on the whiteboard and invite students to use them to guide their thinking:

Where were you? What was happening? Who was involved? What were you feeling? What did you do? What was the result?

**Pair:** with a classmate to tell the story.

**Share:** ask for volunteers to share their story with the rest of the class.

**Step 6.** Ask the class to comment on the values they think link to the stories. If students need clarification around what values are, use the school's values to scaffold student discussion. Explain that the value of 'courage' can help a person to take action and speak out against something. Ask if any stories shared by the class displayed courage, then ask for any other values that have driven the person to 'speak up'. During the discussion, list the values suggested by students on the whiteboard.

**Step 7.** Write the following quote on the whiteboard:  
"I'm not fully sure I'll save anything, but the principle is that we fight for it in the meantime." Madison Stewart  
Ask students to consider the values that Madison might have, especially in relation to the work that she does campaigning against shark fishing. Write students' suggestions under the quote.

**Step 8.** Introduce the concept of values aligned actions. Ask students to identify an action for each value on the whiteboard. Suggest that an easy way to think about actions is as 'values with legs', and these can be written as 'We will' statements. Begin by writing an action next to the value of 'courage': 'We will' (speak up about issues that matter to us). Work as a class to develop an associated 'We will' statement for at least three of the values listed on the whiteboard. Draw students' attention to the diversity of actions suggested and highlight that the same values can lead to many different actions.

**Step 9.** Ask the class to record the values and associated 'We will' statements. Remind students that their actions around issues is important, regardless of how old they are.

Find the full lesson at <https://www.coolaustralia.org/activity/Blue-ocean-guardian-campaigns-social-action-year-9-10/>

To download other free *Blue* lesson plans for the year level or subject area you teach at – <https://goo.gl/pZxnN9>

**Cool Australia is an education not for profit that helps teachers find cool ways to critically engage, involve and switch on young Australians to learn for life. Last year, Cool Australia helped 76,000 exceptional educators teach 1.7 million young Aussies using free units of work and lesson plans and affordable online professional development to grow their professional skills anywhere, anytime and at their own pace.**

Cool Australia and Northern Pictures would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of GoodPitch<sup>2</sup> Australia, Shark Island Institute, Documentary Australia Foundation, The Caledonia Foundation and Screen Australia in the development of these teaching resources.

# Taking students overseas:

## the professional considerations of navigating foreign cultural contexts

**A reflection of their dedication to the holistic learning of their students, many teachers have the passion and experience necessary to conduct overseas trips for their students. But there is without a doubt a myriad of professional considerations teachers must make before embarking on such journeys. Journalist Sara El Sayed discusses conducting Solidarity Journeys with teacher Damian Nelson.**

Damian Nelson is a Queensland teacher and Network Coordinator of the Solidarity Journeys program. Solidarity Journeys is a collective of educators, returned volunteers and aid workers – informed by the principles of human rights and ecological responsibility – with a commitment to forming and strengthening attitudes of solidarity between people of the 'Minority World' and people of the 'Majority World'.

From his 15 years of experience developing immersion programs for students, Damian has a depth of knowledge regarding the professional considerations that come with conducting such a journey.

### The journey

A Solidarity Journeys program runs over 12-13 days, with students living in various locations and experiencing the nuances of the culture of the country they visit.

"The first couple of days are spent in a major centre, in living conditions that are basic but quite comfortable to allow students time to adjust to the new environment.

"In this time students would visit sites of historical, cultural or political significance.

"For faith based schools, students may connect with church or other aid agencies to gain insights into their work.

"The next stage involves journeying to smaller centres until eventually being in the care of a small remote village community for the core element of the journey – the 'immersion' experience.

"Typically we would be cared for by the church or parish community – accommodation could be in groups under the supervision of the teachers in local village accommodation, or in a community building or in a church facility such as a convent.

"This element of the journey is often the experience that has the greatest impact on the students.

"After a few days in the village we return first to a small regional centre, then back to the major centre," Mr Nelson said.

### Purpose is important

Stressing the importance of being clear about the purpose of a journey – Mr Nelson drew comparison between a solidarity and service model, highlighting the ways in which a trip founded on a service model can create a superiority divide rather than promote empathy among students.

"I have witnessed some schools visit communities in PNG and East Timor who

spend a few days painting classrooms.

"When they leave the members of the local community have said to me 'do they think we are incapable of using a paintbrush'?"

In considering the purpose of a trip, Mr Nelson said one must be mindful of what they're really setting out to do – to provide a service that locals are likely capable of providing themselves, or to foster understanding and empathy between cultures.

"We do not operate out of a service model but a solidarity model. The service model reinforces the stereotype that 'we' are superior to 'them' whereas a solidarity approach acknowledges that 'we' – us and them together – are equal with different strengths.

"The purpose of our journeys is to engage with the people and communities we visit as equals to gain insights into the realities of their circumstances, form relationships, learn from each other and critique our own culture from their perspective.

"Once a relationship is formed between the respective communities, then a conversation can begin about how each can be of service to the other."

### Risk management and cultural context

Mr Nelson said risk awareness and risk management are the most important considerations for the teachers who are planning and implementing journeys such as these – this includes awareness of the cultural context of the host country.

"It is very important, indeed crucial that the person leading the group be intimately familiar with the culture and context of the host communities.

"What is needed is a degree of familiarity that has been gained through being 'in-community' for quite an extended period of time.

"Teachers who have worked in the host community for a year or more and have developed close relationships are likely to be intuitively aware of the risks – and know what they don't know.

Briefing sessions for students before, during and after the trip are also integral.

"These sessions would include instructions to seek and act on the advice of medical practitioners with expertise in travel medicine regarding vaccinations and precautions to take while on the journey to minimise the risk of disease.

"The briefing sessions also need to provide information about the destination in terms of its history, geography, climate, political circumstances, culture, religions and traditions.



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**The purpose of our journeys is to engage with the people and communities we visit as equals to gain insights into the realities of their circumstances.**

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“Students need to be sufficiently prepared so as to minimise the degree of culture shock, to be able to suspend judgement when they come across cultural practices they may find somewhat confronting, and to avoid behaviours that are culturally insensitive or may offend their hosts.

“Equally importantly, opportunities need to be provided throughout the journey for students to debrief their experiences to allow for adequate processing of the experiences.

“Comprehensive debriefing sessions two or three weeks after returning home are also crucial not only to reinforce the learnings gained on the journey, but to manage the culture shock students may experience when returning home.

“A common experience, particularly after being in a village community living very simply, is to be overwhelmed by the absolute overabundance of goods in our massive shopping centres.”

Whether or not a program is able to be implemented at a school depends on whether school leadership sees the program as being valuable, and whether there is the capacity to adequately resource in terms of time and staff.

“It must be acknowledged that schools have many pressing priorities.

“For many schools there are very good reasons why offering a Solidarity Journey would not be one of those priorities.

“It is disappointing that in some schools teachers with a passion for offering these opportunities to their students have been frustrated because of lack of resources.

“Concern for the safety of students is of course a reason why some schools choose not to offer their students these programs but we need to be careful of an attitude of risk aversion such that we stifle opportunities for students to have such wonderful life changing experiences.”

### **Rewarding journeys**

Mr Nelson said the way students responded to the experiences along the journey and afterward was inspiring.

“I am reassured that the future is in safe hands; that there will be many good people doing good in the world.

“I can see that my classes are full of good kids who are going to grow into good adults.

“To be a part of that formation process is indeed a great privilege,” Mr Nelson said.

To find out more about Solidarity Journeys visit [www.solidarityjourneys.net.au](http://www.solidarityjourneys.net.au) or email [dnelson@solidarityjourneys.net.au](mailto:dnelson@solidarityjourneys.net.au).

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## A better world in 13 years?

### Agenda 2030 – the UN Sustainable Development Goals

**In 2015, all 193 United Nations member states endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals, representing an ambitious agenda for global development by 2030.**

**Simon Schmidt and Lubna Haddad look at the goals and their potential impact on sustainability education.**

This set of 17 goals follows the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) – eight global goals for the 2000-2015 period which sought to address long term problems such as poverty, illiteracy, infant mortality and access to water.

Unlike the MDGs, which focused primarily on the needs of the developing world, the Agenda 2030 SDGs are intended to address all aspects of global development and to provide a set of overarching targets for all countries to aim towards.

Australia is a signatory to the SDG agenda, but our current government is lagging behind many other countries in adopting the goals in any practical sense, or in laying out a path towards meeting its obligations and targets. There is however great opportunity for educators here and around the world to use the Goals to frame and focus their teaching and for current and future generations of students to engage meaningfully and constructively with Agenda 2030.

Education itself is an integral element of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. The fourth SDG (Quality Education) focuses on the resourcing and delivery of safe, universal and inclusive education, and along with Gender Equality (Goal 5) and Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8), is a priority campaigning focus for Education International, the global federation of education unions of which the IEUA, the AEU and the NTEU are members.

For the purposes of teachers and curriculum developers, however, educational priorities are woven through the whole SDG agenda – providing a powerful and coherent framework for a curriculum which encourages and empowers our students to imagine and to actively participate in a healthy, peaceful, sustainable and prosperous future for our planet and its people.

**Simon Schmidt is an Officer of IEUA VicTas [sschmidt@ieuvictas.org.au](mailto:sschmidt@ieuvictas.org.au)**



# Transforming our world from our classrooms

Equipping our students with the life and work skills and knowledge to address the multiplicity of challenges that face us locally and globally is one of the most important responsibilities we have, as educators – and the United Nations SDGs provide a fabulous framework for teachers.

I remember allocating classes – as Head of Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) and as a History and Legal Studies teacher – obviously preferring to take only my favourites. But good leadership meant that I needed to practice what I preached about cross curriculum professional development, so I took on what I thought back then was a dreaded Geography class. How wrong I was, because I discovered the wonderful hands on focus of Geography and the ways in which the stages 4 and 5 syllabus embedded the UN's Millenium Development Goals (which expired in 2015).

Although the new syllabus in NSW is less explicit, the opportunities for embedding the SDGs are ample, and not limited to the secondary content. The Australian Curriculum also embeds general capabilities that all students should be taught, including ethical and intercultural understanding, personal and social capability, as well as cross curriculum priorities focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, and Sustainability.

## More to teach?

As teachers though, we dread having to find ways to fit more in. But the beauty of the SDGs is their universality and wide application. They don't have to meet denominational ethos, accreditation authorities' standards or state legislations, and I think that is exciting in a very 'nerdy' kind of way. The teacher's autonomy is in selecting what and how to teach students about the SDGs, and the curriculum

possibilities are limited only by your imagination, and definitely larger and broader than the scope of this article.

Nonetheless, let's unpack a couple of ways the SDGs can be integrated into the curriculum and programming without too much fuss. In fact, the SDGs can be a great lesson starter and the UN's website provides a range of resources, so there is no need for hours of research for reliable information. It's click and go.

## Cross curricular opportunities

The SDGs offer a practical approach for cross curriculum lessons and assessment, an approach which many schools, or departments such as HSIE are already utilising to reduce the assessment tasks for students and teach explicit links and knowledge across different Key Learning Areas (KLAs). Queensland trialled New Basics with what they called transdisciplinary rich tasks, as did Tasmania with Essential Learnings. Cross curricular approaches actually make teaching easier, and students are not relearning the same information in different KLAs and telling you that they've already done this in their last class.

In secondary schools, Geography and Science are a perfect combination as are English and History, and in primary curriculum, Science and Technology are already combined. The SDGs are so easily applicable to many subjects, for example, SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy (Science), SDG 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure (Design and Technology), SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities (Geography), SDG 13 Climate Change, SDGs 14 and 15 Life below water and Life on Land (Science, Biology, Geography)

For Legal Studies (Years 11 and 12) topics such as Individual and the Law, Human Rights, Crime, World Order and Sources of



**Integrating the SDGs in our curriculum is exciting, challenging, creative, and wonderfully invigorating for education, teacher collaboration and student learning.**

Law, the SDGs are perfect as a lesson starter or underlying focus to introduce global legal goals (SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Another of the goals is to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all, which is fundamental, especially when the statistics tell us that the most corrupt of all legal institutions are the judiciary and police. This is pertinent to the essential learning outcome of assessing the effectiveness of the Australian legal system and international mechanisms measured by accessibility, resources efficiency and enforceability, application of the rule of law, protection of individual rights and so on.

Envisioning our ideal world by 2030 is to plant the seed of creativity for the next innovation in clean energy that reduces our carbon footprint, creates sustainable communities especially in developing countries and mitigates the way in which we build our cities and infrastructure to reduce our impact on life on land and under water. It also improves our access to quality education (SDG4), decent work and economic growth (SDG8 in Economics), and responsible consumption and production (SDG12 in Commerce, Economics). The combinations are endless.

#### **What about the primary curriculum?**

Nevine Tita, a Sydney primary teacher of seven years experience, with a marketing career behind her, believes that implementing the SDGs looks harder than it actually is. She has looked at how she would implement SDG3 – Good Health and Well-Being, and was able to integrate it into PDHPE where she would teach about malnutrition and its effects (which also relates to SDG1 No Poverty, and SDG2 Zero Hunger. She links it to Science by looking at environmental factors which affect health, and creatively links it with English, as reading and literacy exercises the brain and nurtures good health and wellbeing.

Her examples foster further applications – in Mathematics when students are dealing with the relevant statistics, in History when studying the changing patterns of agriculture, Geography when mapping affected areas, and Science and Technology when examining alternatives to electricity – particularly when 1.4 billion people worldwide have no access to it! And there's your segue to SDG7 Affordable and Clean Energy, and SDG14 Climate Change.

I remember asking my Year 7s to go home and count how many items in their homes require electricity. Their shock when they returned to class with the data was genuine and that led us to a fantastic discussion about Australia's carbon footprint and we then used an online carbon calculator to measure their individual carbon footprint. Their engagement was what teaching is all about!

Integrating the SDGs in our curriculum is exciting, challenging, creative, and wonderfully invigorating for education, teacher collaboration and student learning. As I said before, the possibilities are endless and you never know who in your classroom is the next Elon Musk.

We have a social and moral responsibility to nurture tomorrow's generation to build a world better than the one we are leaving them. We can even start with *The Lazy Persons Guide to Saving the World*. Our mission as educators is to be at the coal face of it all, especially tasked with dispelling 'fake news' and letting the evidence speak for itself. I would love to hear how you are integrating the SDGs in your classrooms, social justice committees and pastoral lessons, and working across different KLAS.

**Lubna Haddad is an Officer of IEUA NSW/ACT [lubna@ieu.asn.au](mailto:lubna@ieu.asn.au)**

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AITSL - <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>

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#### **Essential Learnings, Tasmania**

<https://stors.tas.gov.au/au-7-0050-00022273>

[http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news\\_and\\_activities/projects/archived\\_projects/curriculum\\_policies\\_project/documents/tas/Tas-2005-EssentialLearningsFramework1-2002.pdf](http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/archived_projects/curriculum_policies_project/documents/tas/Tas-2005-EssentialLearningsFramework1-2002.pdf)

#### **New Basics – Queensland**

<http://68.77.48.18/RandD/New%20Basics%20Project/NewBasicsrichtasksbklet.pdf>

WWF <http://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/climate/causes-of-global-warming#gs.zKFBUaI>

EPA - <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/AGC/home.html>

#### **Lazy person's Guide to taking action**

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction>





In the last edition of IE for 2017, Kaleidoscope featured Peter Baines and his extraordinary work with the organisation he founded, Hands Across the Water. Baines talks again with journalist Bronwyn Ridgway.

**The kind of young people who signed up were a special kind of young person – one who was genuinely out to change the world.**



Readers may be interested to know that Baines and the team are offering school leavers an alternative to schoolies – the opportunity to be part of The Young Hands Ride in support of at risk children and communities in Thailand. Aimed at changing the lives of those in Thailand, The Young Hands Ride is a dry ride – no alcohol nor drugs – a lot different to a typical schoolies trip.

During a six day experience cycling through the east of Thailand, young school leavers are guided by the Tour de Asia team of experienced Thailand bike tour guides. There are three mentors, aged between 17 and 25 years from Hands Across the Water, who accompany a group of 12 school leavers.

But it doesn't end with the ride. Riders are paired up with their mentors, who assist them throughout the year with their goals of training and fundraising.

Rhiannon Tuntevski is a Ride Mentor and, at 25 years old, has been a part of the Young Hands team since its inception in 2014. She completed her schooling at Belmont Christian College, then her Bachelor of Communications at the University of Newcastle.

#### Quite a ride

Tuntevski describes how they set up the ride.

"Together with the Hands Across the Water team, we set up the Young Hands Ride to give young people a chance to change the world, while having an experience we knew would fundamentally change their world.

"By removing the ominous presence of having a parent or a teacher on a trip and adding an element of physical challenge, we created an experience that was designed by young people, for young people. So our adventure became a five day 500 kilometre bike ride through the stretch of coast just to the east of Bangkok, where participants committed to raising \$2,017 for Hands Across the Water.

"It sounded a little crazy, why would young people give up their chance at

that coveted schoolies trip to celebrate such a milestone? But I quickly realised that those who signed up were a special kind of young person – one who was genuinely out to change the world, and our participants in 2017 were no different.

"Under the guidance of Tour de Asia, our tour provider, we set out early on the Monday morning. The morning routine of the alarm going off before 6am, rolling out of bed and into our matching Lycra cycling kits, meeting each other over breakfast with an excited but nervous anticipation – it all becomes part of the tapestry that the week is! There are days that are tough, and days not so tough, and hills that are steep, and some that roll on for a while, but really none of those things are the things that are remembered.

"It's that moment of riding into PAMA House, one of six homes across Thailand supported by Hands Across the Water. That moment of receiving a hug and a heartfelt thank you from one of the children, who all know that what you've just done has helped them get through school, have a roof over their head and put good food in their belly."

#### Impressive and inspiring

Peter Baines sees Young Hands as a significant development within Hands Across the Water.

"The Young Hands crew have just picked up the idea and run with it, and I'm continually impressed with what they achieve," Baines said.

"They're a pretty inspiring bunch. Every young person has an innate desire to change and become involved with their world. We want to help them realise their potential and in doing that positively contribute to the world around them."

The Young Hands Ride is on again in 2018, 3 - 8 December. It's open to anyone aged 17 to 25. Details and registrations at <https://www.handsgroup.org.au/event/young-hands-ride-thailand-2018/>





## Social media sends strong message to employers

**Last year, teachers and support staff in Catholic schools in NSW and the ACT took multiple stop work actions to protest an unfair, non Union enterprise agreement (EA) proposed by their employers, Journalist Alex Menyhart writes.**

The employers' action was met with a concerted show of opposition by members, particularly characterised by their response on social media.

If the EA was approved, teachers and support staff would not be guaranteed access to an independent umpire in order to resolve a dispute. This move by employers was an attack on the fundamental rights of their employees.

As part of their strategy to counteract the employer's action, the Union launched a significant social media campaign to help prevent this cynical agreement becoming a reality.

This proposed enterprise agreement was affecting 11 dioceses across NSW and ACT – a lot of land to cover. Social media meant that members everywhere could actively have a voice in the

campaign and receive instant updates from their Union.

It also gave them a chance to feel solidarity with members in other dioceses and take inspiration from their actions posted online.

Members want to know what their Union is doing for them. Harnessing social media meant the Union could respond immediately to any members who became articulate on the issue of arbitration.

### Real time action

Through a series of Facebook Live videos, IEUA NSW/ACT updated members with the latest developments, answered questions in a series of Live Q&A sessions and broadcast live footage of stop work meetings.

It was difficult to run these events at times which suited all teachers and support





staff, so officers collected questions from members beforehand and all the videos were uploaded to Facebook and YouTube afterwards so they could be re-watched anytime by anyone. These videos garnered thousands of individual views throughout the campaign, with a peak viewing rate of over 9000 for just one video. The overall Facebook page reach also increased dramatically – with a peak weekly page reach of 32,000!

#### Message understood

Arbitration was an issue heavily weighed down in legalistic jargon. When bargaining was taking place between the Union and employers, the employers leaned across the table and said 'good luck explaining this to your members!' Unlike employers, the Union put its faith in the intelligence of its members and provided detailed and regular updates on the progress of bargaining and posted correspondence between them and employers on the Union website, Facebook and Twitter.

'Pollie packs' were sent to Labor Party members because of their known support of the Union on the issue of arbitration. Politicians sent back letters of support and photos wearing the Union t-shirt and these were then uploaded to Facebook. Members could see their local MP rally behind the cause and this created a sense

of the contribution they were making to the larger labour movement.

Action generated on social media also supported the content of digital and print communications from the Union.

Social media in no way replaced the need for reps on the ground and in schools, rallying members and informing them of developments in the campaign and making speeches at rallies, but it did provide a larger voice to members, and engaged and linked communities across geographical boundaries.

So what was the result of this campaign? A resounding 87.87% of voters voted 'no' to the non Union enterprise agreement – a win for teachers and support staff and a win for effective social media campaigning!

See: <http://www.ieu.asn.au/campaigns/catholic>

**Alex Menyhart was the online journalist for IEUA NSW/ACT Branch during the 2017 Catholic systemic schools campaign.**



[facebook.com/ieunswact](https://facebook.com/ieunswact)



[twitter.com/#!/IEUNSWACT](https://twitter.com/#!/IEUNSWACT)

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