

TERRITORY Educator

Magazine Of The Australian Education Union – NT Branch


AFTER THE
ELECTION

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Annual Conference report

NT Budget austerity

Term 2/ 2019



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Contents

FEATURES

Anger over austerity plan	4
The global game	6
2019 annual conference	8
Taking a stand on violence	10
Pursuing permanency	11
We want to have a voice	12
Grabbing the bull by the horns	13
Getting in the right head space	16

REGULARS

AEU NT branch news	2
From the president: Where to from here?	3
School profile: Nightcliff Middle School	5
Advice: Not remotely true	14
Sub-branch rep profile: Jo Stewart and Lisa Scarfe, Bradshaw Primary	15

2019 Quality Educator Award



Dina accepting her award from Steve Asher of Fleet Network

Congratulations to Dina Campbell-McQuillan of Darwin High School, who has been awarded the 2019 AEU NT Quality Educator Award, sponsored by Fleet Network. Dina was presented with her award at a DHS staff meeting and received a voucher valued at \$1000.

Dina's colleagues had this to say about her work: "Dina creates interesting and innovative learning tasks in a supportive and nurturing environment. Parents attest that Dina has a positive effect on student attitudes toward learning and the choices they make for the future. She creates a respectful space where students feel safe and has a gift for tapping into the hidden potential of each child." We would also like to acknowledge the following members who were nominated by their peers:

- Rodney Gregg, Casuarina Street Primary
- Katie Honan, Batchelor Area School
- Sallyanne Raggett, Arlparra School
- Natalie West, Tivendale School

Union reps of the year

The Unions NT awards are presented each year on the May Day weekend. Each affiliate union is encouraged to recognise individual members of their union for outstanding

contributions to the movement. The following AEU NT members were nominated:

- Michelle Ayres, Arlparra School
- Dennis Venning, Tennant Creek High School
- Humpty Doo Sub-Branch Executive
- Rebecca Gunner, Nakara Primary
- Grant Smith, Casuarina St Primary
- Pia Harrison, Sadadeen Primary

With so many worthy contenders, Branch Executive decided to acknowledge the contribution of both a sub-branch team and an individual representative.

The winners of the May Day awards were:



Michelle Ayres from Arlparra School

- Michelle Ayres from Arlparra school. Michelle has worked tirelessly to organise her sub-branch, including meetings with assistant teachers in her school. She has been active within the wider union, attending regional council meetings and as an AEU NT delegate to the New Educators Conference.



Humpty Doo Primary reps

- The sub-branch executive team at Humpty Doo Primary School. The

sub-branch, led by Jess Lockwood, Tasha Shuker and Tylah McDowell, organised members using work health and safety laws to protect staff against occupational violence. In doing so, they united teachers and support staff to stand up for their rights.

Permanency update

Since the beginning of the Permanency Project in October 2017, 305 teachers from across the Territory have been converted to ongoing employment. The project continues this year, with 26 teachers made permanent in Term 1 this year.

Stage 1 of the project will continue to run until the end of the year, with AEU officers currently negotiating Stage 2 with the Department. We recommend talking about this with colleagues in your sub-branch and passing a motion to take to the principal about maximising permanency opportunities in your school.

Branch elections

Elections will take place in Term 3 for most positions on the union's Branch Executive, the body responsible for managing the affairs of the union between Branch Conferences.

These elections will be conducted by the AEC. In accordance with the union's rules, nominations will open on or about 22 July for the following positions:

- Branch Secretary
- Regional Executive Councillor (all regions)

2018 financial report

The 2018 AEU NT audited financial report is now available at our website or can be supplied to members on request.



Where to from here?

There are tough times ahead for NT education, meaning it's more important than ever to stick together, writes Jarvis Ryan

In a surprise result, Scott Morrison and the Coalition have been returned to government. We are now confronted with a political reality that few were expecting.

The AEU is proud of the campaign we ran across the country for Fair Funding Now. The AEU leadership advocated for a change of government because we believed it was the only way for public education to receive the recognition and resourcing required to close the substantial achievement gap between rich and poor in this country.

Our campaign still has widespread community support. This election result was not in any way a repudiation of our push for genuine, equitable, needs-based funding of schools, and renewed investment in early childhood and vocational education. Clearly though, education alone wasn't enough of a vote changer to change the government.

Where does this leave us? With a conservative Morrison government, there will likely be no improvement to current funding arrangements for schools, preschools and VET. We can almost certainly expect further attacks on unions, and in the case of the teaching profession, further attempts to undermine professional autonomy, such as with the introduction of a national standardised phonics test for 5-year olds.

For Northern Territory public schools, the future is grim. Under legislation passed by the Morrison (then Turnbull) Government in 2017, federal funding for public schools is now capped at 20% of the agreed resourcing benchmark, the SRS. NT public schools are currently funded at 23% of the SRS by the federal government.

The bilateral funding agreement the Gunner Government signed in December locks in 10 years of cuts from the Commonwealth.



Due to the tough economic and fiscal situation in the NT, it is highly unlikely the NT Government will be willing or able to pick up the slack, meaning our schools are likely to tread water at best. The latest NT Budget provides only a 1.7% increase in funding to public schools for 2020 – that's a cut in real terms, once 2.5% salary increases are factored in.

Despite continuing heroic efforts from teachers and educators, without the necessary funding to invest in additional teachers, upskilling of staff, quality programs and evaluation, and so much more, NT education outcomes will likely remain sub-par, feeding into ever greater levels of spending on incarceration, welfare and health.

It's a vicious cycle all too familiar to educators and many Territorians.

Also of concern on the local front is the potential for further austerity from the Gunner Government. The recent announcement that teacher housing subsidies in Katherine would be reduced could be the tip of the iceberg.

Michael Gunner and his cabinet have endorsed every key recommendation of the recent Langoulant budget repair report, which includes proposals to overhaul public sector employment conditions and industrial relations, including a ban on back pay in future negotiations and a foreshadowed pay offer of just \$1000 per annum for all public servants (less than 1% for a CT9) in our next round of bargaining in 2021.

The current situation is challenging to say the least. But we will not give up. That's not what teachers do. That's not what unionists do.

On the positive side, our salaries and many of our conditions are protected in an industrial agreement for the next two and a half years. We have strength in numbers – with more than 2000 members, and we are growing stronger all the time – and the ability and willingness to mobilise in support of our objectives.

In tough times, it's more important than ever that we stand together – to defend what we have, and to continue to fight for our vision for an inclusive, well-funded education system as the bedrock for a fair society.

The AEU will never give up on this vision.



ANGER OVER AUSTERITY PLAN

The NT Government's budget repair plan puts it on a collision course with the AEU and other unions, writes Jarvis Ryan



Katherine teachers meet with the Chief Executive to discuss proposed cuts to their rental subsidy

On 16 April the NT Government released a 178-page report detailing a plan to return the NT Budget to surplus over the next decade. This follows a report released in December last year forecasting a massive blowout in the budget deficit in public debt if current government spending levels are not reduced. The report was authored by John Langoulant, a corporate consultant and former Under Treasurer of Western Australia.

Of the 76 recommendations in the report, all but one have been at least partially accepted by the Gunner Government.

The AEU and other unions were provided with a briefing by the Treasurer, Nicole Manison, before the report was released publicly, and the Government has stated it is committed to working with unions on changes that impact on public sector employees.

None of that changes the fact that numerous recommendations the government has accepted represent an attack on union members' rights and working conditions. The endorsed actions include:

- A cap on the total number of public servants, including caps for individual agencies.
- Restrictions on the hiring of new employees in positions not designated as "frontline" – this includes numerous positions that are notionally corporate but provide vital support to schools, such as counsellors.

- A further reduction of the NT public sector wages policy (already cut last year from 2.5% to 2%) to just \$1000 a year salary increases for all employees, beginning in 2021, when the AEU will next be in bargaining.
- Eliminating the provision of backpay to employees when bargaining negotiations go beyond the expiry of an agreement.

These are the sorts of austerity measures we would expect from an anti-worker conservative regime, not a Labor government.

The good news in the short-term is that members' core salary and conditions are protected in binding enterprise agreements until late 2021.

However, we can already envisage a bitter and hostile dispute with the government in the next round of bargaining, with real wage cuts already gazetted as policy and no additional resourcing available to address likely AEU workload claims and other costed improvements.

Worryingly, the Langoulant review also calls for deeper structural reform of the NTPS, recommending "harmonising" conditions and a review of entitlements across the sector. He questions well-established practices such as offering six weeks of recreation leave, saying this is out of step with the private sector.

The first flashpoint for teachers was the sudden announcement of a \$500,000 cut to housing subsidies for 94 Department of Education employees in Katherine.

Members responded quickly and decisively, with 40 AEU members attending a special regional council meeting and condemning the proposed cut.

A final decision on the subsidy was still to be made as this article was published, however the actions of our Katherine members has given the Government pause, and highlighted the sort of action all members will have to be ready for to challenge the austerity agenda of the Gunner Government.

In coming weeks all NTPS unions will be developing a strategy to challenge the proposals in the Langoulant review and formulate a collective response. More than ever, we will need to stand united to protect our hard-won conditions.

Building bridges to student success

Nightcliff Middle School is a community-focused, multi-cultural school which caters for students from Nightcliff, Coconut Grove, Rapid Creek, Millner, Jingili and Moil. The school has an enrolment of 330 students, which represents a 30% increase in the past two years.

Our demographics include 25% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, 39% of students with English as an additional dialect and 30% of students with a recognised disability. High academic expectations and the wellbeing of all our students are at the forefront of everything we do.

We provide a wide range of activities and pathways including Life Work Skills, Arts Production, Sport and Recreation, Wellbeing and all core subjects. Nightcliff Middle School is the only school which offers direct pathways to both Darwin High School and Casuarina Senior College, including the Centre for Excellence programs, ACE programs, SEDA and VET programs.

Over the past two years the school has embarked on a rebranding focus that has not only seen us come up with a

With an emphasis on both academic and social learning, Nightcliff Middle School caters for the needs of the individual student

new logo but has also seen a focus on certain areas of the curriculum. These include a strong emphasis on literacy which has been supported through an extra lesson a week concentrating on specific skills that are determined through the staff professional learning teams.



The staff have also worked with the middle years team to develop writing strategies that work across all subject areas. This focus has enabled students to make significant gains which is reflected in our NAPLAN results.

There has also been a recognition by the staff that the general capabilities from the

Australian Curriculum are the medium through which we can help students build their 21st century skills. When staff develop their teaching programs they identify and focus on the relevant capabilities that tie in with the topics they are covering. In addition to these skills being developed in all learning areas, Nightcliff Middle School offers interest groups on Wednesday afternoons as a way for students to collaborate across all year levels. These interest groups include robotics, sewing, digital illustration, cartooning, dance, Duke of Edinburgh and Tournament of Minds.

Ultimately, what makes Nightcliff Middle School a great school is the strong sense of community and care apparent among our students and staff. We understand that adolescence is a time of important decision making and the adolescent student is experiencing rapid changes in all areas of their development.

Nightcliff Middle School assists and guides its students as they develop into young adults through our comprehensive Social and Emotional Learning program.



The GLOBAL GAME

We spoke with Angelo Gavrielatos, Project Director at Education International, about the international forces shaping education policy and the union movement's response



Powerful corporate forces are shaping the future of education at the global level

Can you tell us about Education International and your role within EI?

EI is our international union organisation. It represents more than 32 million members in 400 organisations in more than 170 countries around the world.

Members of the AEU in all states and territories are part of the global union federation of teachers and other education workers, Education International.

My role at EI is to lead our global response to the growing commercialisation and privatisation of education. That means working with member organisations to build campaigns to resist, expose, halt and reverse this commercialisation and privatisation, which we consider the greatest threat to the achievement of quality education for all.

What do you mean by the commercialisation and privatisation agenda in education?

Education is currently valued at about \$US5 trillion per annum globally. It is considered a growth industry and as such we are seeing corporate actors moving into the education space to Hoover up some of this value.

Commercialisation and privatisation are occurring, regrettably, in virtually every country around the world. They take different forms, and they tend to look quite different in the developing compared to the developed world.

In Africa, corporate-backed players are seeking to enter the space of education. They set up, for example, chains of schools, which they often describe as low-fee schools, and seek to exploit children and the aspirations of families.

In advanced economies like Australia and the US, commercialisation and privatisation takes a different form. In these countries we have relatively strong systems of education and to varying degrees, systems that attract a fair amount of respect from the broader public.

In these countries, corporate entities look for a point of weakness to enter the education market. In the US, that point of weakness was assessment. So for a global corporate actor like Pearson, one of its core products is a standardised test, so it has sought to take over assessment.

This is seen as the thin end of the wedge. First assessment, then standardised curriculum and you soon then start to take over teacher evaluation. Once you have done that, you start running teacher education programs.

From there, it is a small jump to operate a couple of chains of charter schools and the like, and what they are doing right now, is looking at moving into the digitisation of education, which could result – and would result according to their own literature – in the significant undermining of the profession.

The next step will be demanding teachers get out of the way because in this way of thinking, technology and artificial intelligence will solve all of our issues, basically destroying the social and human dynamic that is a pre-condition for quality education.

We have seen elements of that here in Australia, with the proposal to introduce robomarking and NAPLAN online, for example.

Exactly. And let's not forget that in Australia, Pearson is one of the players with the contract



Angelo is a former AEU federal president

for NAPLAN. In Australia we are seeing elements of a strategy that is being employed in other countries like the US to try and commercialise and privatise education.

Why do you think governments around the world are following this agenda? Is it as simple as cost-saving or are there other elements to it?

There are two factors at play here. One is clearly cost. But also, governments are increasingly influenced by neo-liberal ideology which seeks to abrogate their responsibility in terms of guaranteeing and providing public services.

Two years ago Prime Minister Scott Morrison and federal Finance Minister Mathias Cormann were quoted asking what is wrong with education being outsourced to private companies? This is part of a global ideological push that we are seeing and it is being promoted by international finance institutions like the World Bank, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, among others.

The other part of this ideology is an illustration of power. Curriculum and schooling are two of the most important, powerful institutions and forces in our society. They determine what we expect future generations to be able to know and be able to do and what future generations will be.

It's quite daunting to think about trying to tackle these issues at a global level. How have EI and the global union movement been doing this?

Five or six years ago, there was a realisation amongst a number of education union leaders that we are taking on forces the size and strength of which we had not adequately appreciated in the past. We are talking about entities that are more influential than many countries combined.

No one union, no one country could deal with this global agenda individually, and that's why it was determined that we had to build a global response to build programs identifying common targets to ensure that the sum of our global presence would be greater than the sum of our individual parts within the confederation of Education International.

Are there some particular examples you could point to in terms of effective campaigns?

There has been some success along the way. For example, a couple of years ago the government of Uganda announced the expulsion of this rogue, corporate actor, Bridge International Academies. It determined it was operating illegally in its country and ordered that it be shut down.

Bridge, supported by Pearson, the World Bank and others, then took the government of Uganda to the High Court, challenging its decision. The High Court upheld its government's decision, saying it is an illegal operator that set out "to operate illegally". So that is a success.

Now, the campaign is not over there, because one of the challenges we have got in places like Uganda and many countries around the world, is enforcing these positions. This company continued to operate in contempt of the courts, in contempt of the government, even though it was deemed to be an illegal operator.

What is striking about that, is that global institutions like Pearson, like the World Bank, continue to support, politically and financially, a company deemed to be operating illegally, by a sovereign country.

There are examples of great campaigns being run in Latin America. For example, in Uruguay, the teachers' union is campaigning together with other anti-privatisation movements. The anti-privatisation movement in Uruguay is very big. They have a major issue with the privatisation of water.

So, the teachers' union is joining forces with the anti-privatisation movement, the broader union movement, with students, with farmers, all of those groups, saying that it is one struggle. The privatisation of education, the campaign to stop the privatisation of education is as critical as the campaign to stop the privatisation of water.

So, there are signs and evidence around the world which give us hope and motivation to continue.



Solidarity in



Delegates discussed and debated 40 motions relating to 29 different areas of our work. These decisions will now be actioned by the Branch Executive.



Education Minister Selena Uibo talked about her plans for the coming years and declared her ongoing support for the union and the public education system.



A highlight of the conference was the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members attending. They spoke passionately about our motions and how they impact schools and communities.





A new Delegate induction was held before Conference to give all delegates a crash course in standing orders and debating motions.

Katherine ✓



Our annual conference in Katherine was attended by 90 delegates from across the Territory representing 61 sub-branches.



Gerry Georgatos outlined the critical and complex and issues of Indigenous youth suicide. He has worked at the highest level of government to effect real change in our approach to mental health.



Federal AEU President Correna Haythorpe detailed the ongoing fight for equitable school funding and the national campaigns to increase the power of educators.



Valerie Bulkunu from Shepherdson College delivered a motion in language relating the lack of professional development for assistant teachers. There was a time in the NT (1970-1990s) when a program existed that qualified many Aboriginal teachers through a locally delivered and contextually relevant tertiary education. Those teachers have been the backbone of many remote schools for a generation. The removal of this program has seen a significant decline of fully qualified local Indigenous teachers.



Taking a **STAND** on violence

The AEU is leading a national push to change the way education systems respond to violence and aggression against our members, writes Jarvis Ryan

When you think of managing work health and safety risks in a school setting, what's the first thing that comes to mind?

Asbestos? Chemicals? Maybe trip hazards? Think again. While all of these are risks that need to be managed, they're small fry in the education sector.

According to the Department of Education's 2017-18 annual report, there were 571 reported WHS incidents last year. Fully half of those – 288 – were classified as “being hit by moving objects”.

Although this category includes several sub-groups, AEU officers know from experience that the vast bulk of these incidents are assaults against employees by students.

Sadly, the biggest threat to the health and wellbeing of our members in schools often comes from the very young people educators are legally and ethically duty bound to protect. Physical and verbal aggression and violence against teaching staff by students, and also by parents, is a growing problem in schools.

There is a term for it: occupational violence. We know there are many reasons underlying it. But our starting point must be to say that it's

not acceptable, and work collectively to improve our response to it.

It was this thinking that led to a recent national forum in Canberra on occupational violence in public schools, hosted by the ACT Education Directorate.

Driven by the AEU, this was the first event of its kind, bringing together key organisations from across Australia to discuss the growing national problem of violence and aggression against staff in public schools.

In addition to an AEU presence from every branch, the forum consisted of senior representatives from all education departments (including NT DoE CE Vicki Baylis), representatives of principal associations and officials from three state WHS regulators, including the CEO of WorkSafe Victoria.

The key theme was the need for a proper balance to be struck between competing responsibilities to both students and employees, rather than the current paradigm which often sees educators' primary moral purpose of putting children first overshadowing employers' legal requirement to take all reasonable steps to ensure a safe work environment for employees.

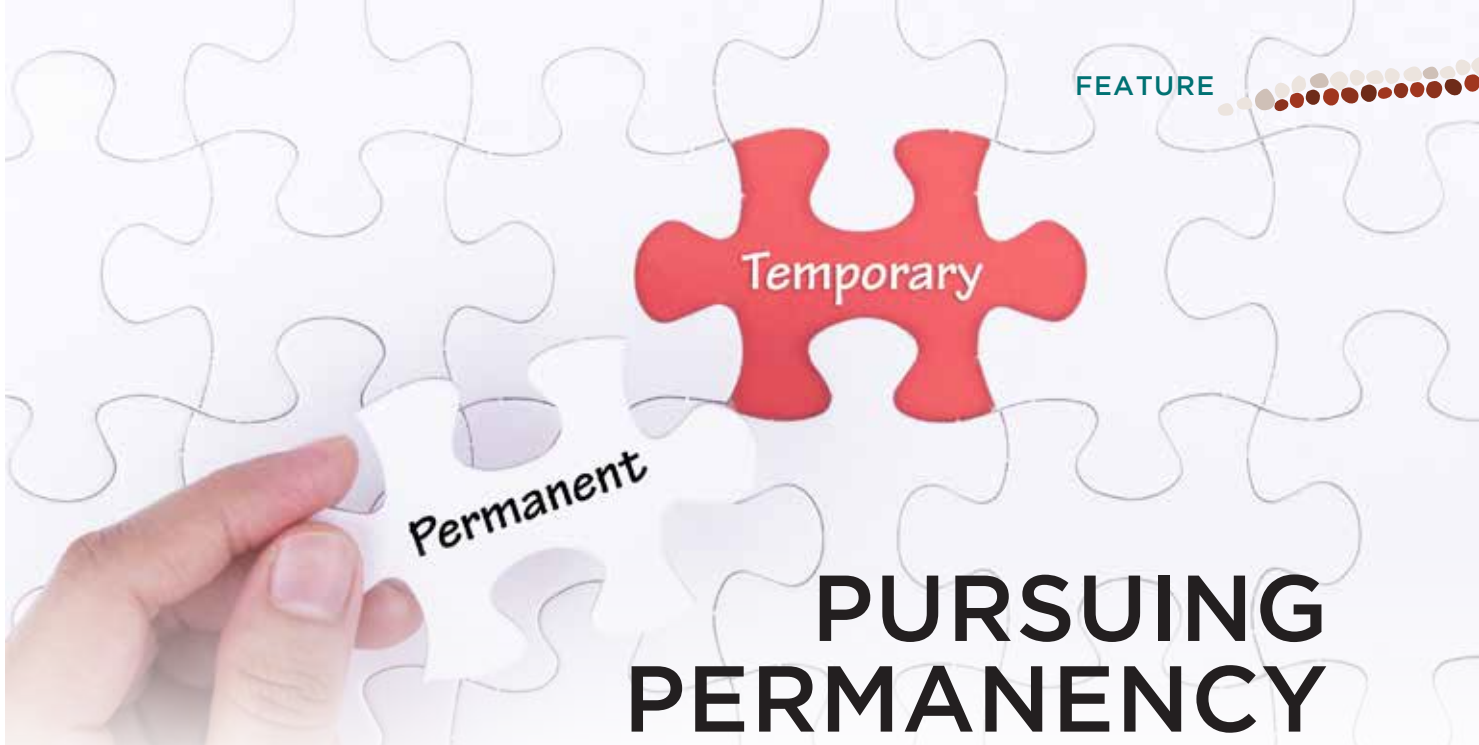
Much of the day was spent in round table discussion looking at hypothetical workplace violence scenarios and hearing different perspectives. There was significant goodwill from all involved and a recognition that the challenges schools face in managing violence and threats against staff are growing but complex, with no easy solutions.

All agreed that better strategies and systems must be developed. To that end, the AEU is setting up a national working group to guide our strategy. In the NT, the Full-Time Officers have requested that the Chief Executive list occupational violence for discussion with her colleagues at AESOC, the national senior education officers' forum.

As a union, we are deeply committed to ensuring members feel safe at work. If you are the victim of violence or aggression in the workplace, we urge you to lodge an incident report and notify the union office.



AEU officers from every state and territory attended the inaugural national forum



PURSUING PERMANENCY

Job security is an important element of our new agreement, writes Branch Secretary Adam Lampe

Two important wins in the current NTPS Teachers and Assistant Teachers' Enterprise Agreement are clauses 15 and 16, which provide undertakings around job security and teacher transfers.

Teacher permanency is an ongoing issue for the Northern Territory public education system. The Permanency Project was implemented in October 2017 in response to pressure from the AEU NT.

The project was supposed to deliver an increase in the number of permanent teaching positions in schools and decrease the number of fixed-term contracts. It has failed to do this. The permanent-to-fixed term ratio has basically remained static over the last 18 months at approximately two-thirds permanent to one-third fixed term contracts.

The union's aim is to reduce the level of fixed-term contracts to a maximum of 20% across the system, but making inroads toward that figure has proven difficult. One stumbling block is the domino effect of teachers attached to schools acting in positions, either in higher duties (external or internal) or contracted to positions in the corporate division of the Department, or teachers on various types of extended leave.

Generally, these teachers can hold their specific school-based positions indefinitely, restricting schools to employing teachers on contracts to cover them. However, as a result of clause 16 in the new Agreement, a revised teacher transfer framework has been developed collaboratively between the Department and the AEU NT.

One of the elements of the new framework is to put a restriction on the amount of time a

The AEU is working to solve the permanency puzzle

school-based teaching position can be held in abeyance. Two years will be the maximum amount of time employees will be able to remain attached to their school-based positions while acting in another role.

After that, they will have the choice to remain in their acting roles (or on leave) and become unattached to the system while retaining their own permanency, or they can return to their attached positions. This arrangement will free up those positions for permanent appointments.

However, a more insidious obstacle to permanency are the implications of school global budgets. Principals often fear taking the risk to convert fixed-term contracts into permanent positions due to fluid student enrolment and attendance, preferring to commit to 12 or six month, or even term by term, contracts. Even worse, it is an open secret that some principals prefer to employ teachers in their first few years of teaching because their wages are lower than experienced teachers and less of a burden on the school budget.

Against this is clause 15.4 of the Agreement, which allows a teacher to apply directly to the Chief Executive of DoE and request that their fixed-period employment be considered for conversion to permanency, whether it is to the school or the system.

The advantage of having job security spelled out within an enterprise agreement means that the union can now pursue the matter of permanency through formal industrial processes, giving us greater leverage at both an individual and systemic level.

I encourage members who meet the criteria for being converted to permanent status to contact our office for advice if you believe you are being unfairly overlooked.

'WE WANT TO HAVE A VOICE'

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates at our 2019 conference

The AEU NT is focused on building better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, writes Darcel Russell, AEU Federal Aboriginal Education Officer

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues were central to the education and industrial policy debates at the AEU NT Branch Conference, held recently in Katherine. Along with the caucus, two workshops were held on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues.

I presented on the union's work at a national level, including the development of the AEU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Plan. The objectives of the new national plan align with the AEU's federal policy on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. The aim of the plan is to across the AEU to implement key elements of the policy, prioritising the following objectives:

- Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander committees;
- Employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Recruit, train, retain and organise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members;
- Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers.

The structure of the AEU plan is intentionally flexible, and the Federal Office will work with branches to ensure that one priority objective from the plan is implemented each year, over a period of five years. It is further envisaged that each branch and the Federal Office will choose to implement the objectives that are most

appropriate to their work on an annual basis, and that all four objectives are implemented over a five-year period.

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members' caucus was held on the morning prior to the commencement of the Conference. Ten delegates attended the caucus to discuss recommendations and prioritise issues to be debated on the floor of the Conference. The caucus was chaired by Cassandra Brown, AEU NT Branch Indigenous Executive Councillor.

Aboriginal delegates were well-represented at the workshops, where strategies for further engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in the work of the union at the branch level were discussed. Organising and training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members at a sub-branch level was identified as a priority. In addition, members at the workshops discussed broader policy issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff in schools.

A number of these issues were raised in debates on resolutions on the floor of Conference. These include motions calling on the Northern Territory Government to: fully fund and expand bilingual education programs; ensure that Northern Territory schools are funded on the basis of enrolment and not attendance; the reinstatement of a remote area teacher education program; and the importance of access to housing for local recruits.

When asked, "What do you want from the union?" one delegate replied, "I want to have a voice. I want to be heard." The large number of Aboriginal delegates at the NT Branch Conference ensured that Aboriginal members were engaged in policy debates and that Aboriginal voices were heard in policy discussions on issues directly impacting upon all of us.

Grabbing the bull by the horns

From the time she was old enough to have an idea about her adult life, Marisa knew she wanted to be a teacher. “When I was in upper primary, myself and a friend used to hold classes for the little kids at recess time!”

Marisa began teaching in 1988 at Katherine School of the Air. “In those days the adventure was fabulous, not only did I have great colleagues at the school and teach some terrific Territory kids, but I also had opportunity to help draft cattle, go buffalo catching, heli-mustering and visit some very ancient, beautiful country.”

Marisa has always been interested in unionism and was a student union member at teachers’ college. When she first joined the union in 1989, it was known as the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. She remembers the Katherine region being very active in the union, not just as a space to resolve industrial and professional issues but also where she made friends, participated in social activities, and got help with housing.

Marisa explains that her colleagues from that time in Katherine South Primary School still influence her teaching practice today. She says it was these amazing women who taught her that unionism is about support: supporting our students, our colleagues and our profession.

Being in the union also means being prepared to get involved. Marisa has held several formal positions in the union: sub-branch rep, regional councillor for Katherine, Darwin and Arnhem. She also held a position on the union Executive and represented the union at federal women’s conferences.

“The union is one of the ways that I have a voice and influence in issues that go beyond the classroom. It is the vehicle through which we look after and look out for each other.”

In 1997 Marisa moved to Nhulunbuy Primary which in those days was the biggest school in the NT. She remembers being on buffalo duty on the school oval. “There’s me – about five months pregnant, on the oval, quietly urging students away from the beast! It was a huge old thing, came to graze on the grass and cause our lives some misery, it was snorting and puffing, tossing its head around with those massive horns, just a few metres away! I’m not sure how that would go down with today’s WHS policies!”

Marisa also worked on the NT Curriculum Framework. She considers it essential that teachers become involved in developing curriculum to

After 30 years of teaching, long term member Marisa Boscato reflects on her teaching career with Alyson Kavanagh... including a memorable encounter with a buffalo on the school oval!

provide an authentic voice in the policy and support that is provided to schools.

Marisa’s work now includes developing a teachable curriculum that connects the Warlpiri Knowledge Cycle with the Australian Curriculum at Yuendumu School. She says, “This work is a huge privilege for me and has given me a really deep appreciation for the work our members undertake in remote parts of the NT.”



Marisa Boscato

After a colourful career spanning 30 years and still teaching, the advice Marisa received at the beginning of her career is still so relevant. “Be active in your profession, don’t wait for mentors to be assigned to you – get out there and find them – find lots of them. Wrap your professional life with people you can trust to be wise, knowledgeable, credible and supportive.”



Marisa (centre) with Katherine School of the Air students in 1988

Not remotely true

Vice President Stephen Pelizzo clears up a number of misconceptions about conditions and entitlements for remote members

Remote schools are often characterised by high turnover and difficulty for principals in recruiting and retaining teachers.

The sense of isolation from mainstream culture and services, the drain on compassion from working daily with large proportions of students who suffer trauma, as well as not ever quite seeing kids gain the results you would in other situations, is challenging.

The AEU NT considers it appropriate that staff who work in these circumstances are well rewarded for this. We continue to fight for better conditions for remote staff and the appropriate application of existing entitlements.

Entitlements and conditions specific to members working in remote locations are set out in numerous instruments, among them the teachers' enterprise agreement, OCPE Employment Instructions and By-laws and policies and procedures managed by the Department's Human Resources division.

They include: rental subsidies, fares out of isolated locations (FOILS), remote incentive

allowance, remote retention bonus, special study leave as well as the teacher in a special school allowance.

What we must guard against is a growing trend for junior administrators to "interpret" these policies and conditions. This is usually done in such a way as to limit, reduce or simply make more difficult for staff to access them.

When reported, the Full-Time Officers take up issues with senior departmental officers and these usually result in reasonable and agreed outcomes. However, this seems to struggle to filter down, meaning these same petty problems arise over and over again.

Here are some examples of misconceptions or outright falsehoods that we are aware of members having been told:

- That FOILs can be to the regional center (as opposed to Darwin or Alice);
- That on transfer, employee vehicles will only be moved to the regional centre (their responsibility to collect);
- That new staff are not eligible for uplift on appointment over six months, and that on successful completion of a long-term contact, their relocation will not be back to a regional center;
- That they cannot be in receipt of more than one allowance at once;

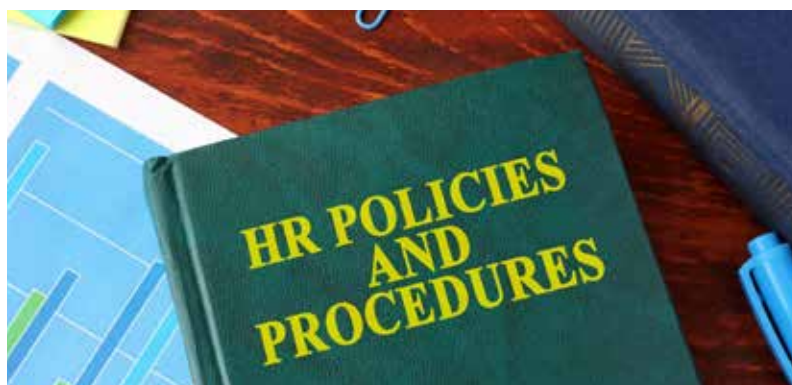
- That they can't apply for special study leave unless they are currently working in a remote setting; and
- That staff must apply for their remote retention bonus.

All the above statements are not just a misinterpretation of policy. They are completely wrong. They undermine the intent of the policies and do not follow established practice.

Here is what you are entitled to:

- FOILS will deliver you to a major center, e.g. Alice Springs or Darwin (unless you negotiate another arrangement);
- Vehicles that are part of your uplift should be delivered to you;
- New staff are eligible for uplift on appointment for more than six months, and on successful completion of long-term contact, your relocation will be back to a regional centre;
- You are entitled to simultaneously claim two allowances, such as teacher in a special school and teacher in charge of a preschool;
- Applications rounds for special study leave are open twice per year and are assessed by a DoE committee (if any member is experiencing issues accessing this program please contact our office);
- You are eligible to receive the remote retention payment after the completion of 12 months continuous service in a remote locality ('qualifying service').

If you have cause to question advice around your entitlements, speak to your sub-branch rep or contact the AEU NT office for advice.



Make sure you're not being given the wrong advice on your entitlements

Lisa Scarfe and Jo Stewart, Bradshaw Primary School

Jo and Lisa share the role of sub-branch president at their school Bradshaw Primary.

Jo has been teaching for 20 years, with stints both interstate and in various parts of the NT. Lisa has been teaching for over 25 years, in a variety of contexts. She has taught in the UK, Victoria and in the NT for 20 years. Both have been at Bradshaw for the past four and a half years.

How do you view your joint role as sub-branch presidents?

We decided to do it together to share the load. We have a

large staff and 20 members so felt a cooperative approach would work best. We both have the capacity to support our large staff in this shared role. Jo's strength is knowledge of documents and policies while Lisa's strength is being part of the leadership team at Bradshaw and being able to have input at this level.

What aspects of being a sub-branch president do you like?

Being able to be there and be supportive of our colleagues. We have many new staff who don't know things like yard duty expectations, contact hours, after hours expectations and the like, so we like being able to help and solve issues as they arise.



What tips do you have for new sub-branch presidents?

Network with others – connect with sub-branch presidents and reps at regional meetings. Understand the information in the Teacher Responsibilities Guide as this includes practical information on our day-to-day conditions. If you get the opportunity to attend the AEU NT training, go along – we found it very valuable. Don't hesitate to ask for help from the AEU NT office.

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Melissa, Primary school teacher & THF member

Getting in the right headspace

Tim Davis Frank spoke to headspace's Be You NT manager Michelle Oliphant about new initiatives to assist schools and young people with mental health concerns

What are the concerns and most recent data around mental health in the NT?

Although it is difficult to get definitive data on mental health concerns specifically for young people in the NT, nationally, one in seven young people aged between four and 17 has experienced a mental health issue in the past 12 months – that is 560,000 young people.

What is headspace?

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25-year-olds with 108 centres across Australia. In the NT there are centres in Darwin, Alice Springs and soon Katherine, as well as online and phone support services through eheadspace.

When did headspace start working in the NT?

headspace School Support commenced in the NT in 2012 as a national evidence-based service that supported all NT secondary schools to prepare for, respond to, and recover from suicide.

What is Be You?

Be You is an end to end national framework to empower every Australian educator, from early learning to primary and secondary school as well as our next generation of teachers, to foster the mental health of those in their care. It is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and led by Beyond Blue.

Be You builds on the success and learnings from five previous programs aimed at promoting mental health and wellbeing for children and young people in the education space – KidsMatter Early Childhood, KidsMatter Primary, MindMatters, Response Ability and headspace School Support.

Be You can provide a fresh whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing or build upon and continue previous work achieved in schools through KidsMatter and MindMatters.

Individual teachers and educators can access online up to 13 hours of full funded professional learning across the entire framework.

Individual educator accounts on the site allow teachers to track and report their own PL progress easily.

Be You is aligned to the national Professional Standards for Teachers and Principals which fulfils the teacher registration requirements for ongoing professional learning.

Be You sets out five core domain areas that when addressed, have been proven to grow the mental health and wellbeing of a school community, but your school decides which domain is a priority for you at any given time. There is no set order you have to follow.

- Building Mentally Healthy Communities – Whole school approach to mental health promotion
- Learning Resilience – Curriculum decisions to support SEL and resilience
- Family Partnerships – Relationships between schools and families that support mental health and wellbeing
- Early Support – How to recognise and respond to students experiencing mental health difficulties
- Responding Together – Critical Incident Support and Response (including suicide prevention and postvention)

How do teachers and schools get contact with headspace about Be You?

- Contact Michele Oliphant, Territory Manager, via moliphant@headspace.org.au or on 0447 926 799
- Everyone: Visit www.beyou.edu.au and read/share/ use the general information and resources about mental health and wellbeing
- Educators: Register yourself to create your Be You account and access the professional learning modules

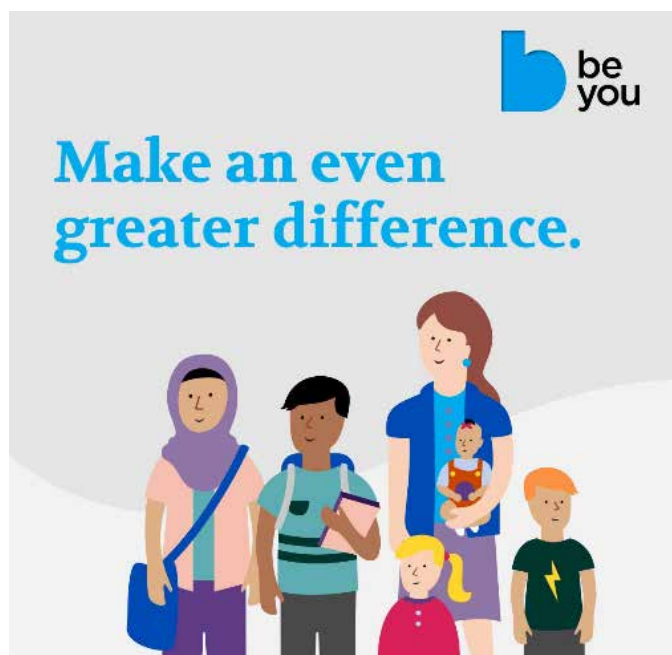


Image from the Be You website

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