

TERRITORY Educator

Magazine Of The Australian Education Union – NT Branch

MIND THE EQUITY GAP

Guide to
performance
planning

Reflections
on 2019

Term 4/ 2019



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2020 Branch Conference

This year's Branch Conference resolved that the 2020 annual conference will be held in Darwin. The Branch Executive met on Friday 20 September 2019 and determined that next year's annual conference will be held on the May Day weekend (2-3 May) at the Hilton Hotel in Darwin.

Our annual Conference is our union's supreme decision-making body and a chance to network with AEU members from across the NT. Motions are submitted by members via sub-branches (workplaces) and these are discussed and debated on the conference floor. Every sub-branch may elect at least one delegate to attend.

Registrations and requests for proposals from sub-branches will open at the beginning of the 2020 school year, with a cut off in mid-March. We advise holding a sub-branch meeting early in the year to elect delegates and put forward proposals.

Election results



AEU NT elections have concluded with the re-election of Adam Lampe as Branch Secretary for a further three years.

In the other contested Branch Executive election, Ken Guest and Pepe Millman were chosen to represent the Alice Springs region. Wendy Pelizzo was elected to the National Early Childhood Committee. Thank you to all who took part and voted in the elections.

The following members are stepping down from Branch Executive at the end of this year: Paula Thornton, Glynis Hester, Linda Hyland, Barry George, Carly Phillips and Dennis Venning. Thank you to all of you for your service to our union and the members you represented.

School Strike for Climate



Katherine students at the local climate strike

At the Global School Strike for Climate, Territory students turned out in their thousands. In Darwin the event was one of the biggest rallies seen in the city. In Alice Springs protesters filled Todd Mall while students took part in actions in Katherine, Yirrkala, Maningrida and Jabiru.

The AEU is proud to support students in asserting their democratic rights.

Sign up online

It's easier than ever for new members to sign up online at join.aeunt.org.au. No more paperwork!

You probably have a colleague who has been meaning to join but never gets around to filling out the form... That's no longer an excuse!

A quick and easy process enables new members to sign up in five minutes from their computer, tablet or phone.

Lodge an issue...

Secondly, there is now a facility for new and existing members to lodge an enquiry with the union office at aeunt.org.au/contact.

If you need advice on an issue or to update your details, lodge your matter here and it will be logged in our database and assigned a case number.

Our office does our best to respond to every member query within one day. We're proud of our quick responses but we want to do even better – that's why we've introduced the new system.

You can of course still phone the office between 8.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, on 8948 5399 and ask for assistance on any matter.

BONUS OFFER

Join online before the end of the 2019 school year and receive your first month of membership FREE when you enter the promo code "TERRITORY".

Taking stock of 2019

Our union has much to be proud of, writes Jarvis Ryan

It feels like only weeks ago that I sat down and mapped out the AEU NT's priorities for the year. And just like that it's November and another year is almost done.

Despite the year flying by, it's been a good one for our union. Here are some of the highlights in terms of achievements.

Staffing

We've continued to press the Government to keep its 2016 election commitment to increase classroom teacher numbers by at least 165. The Department's annual report reveals there are 100 additional CTs in schools compared to three years ago. We'll keep pushing to make sure the full commitment is met in the 2020 election year.

Transfers

We negotiated a new transfer framework with the Department and this will commence in 2020. Guaranteed remote transfers will be supplemented by service and compassionate transfers, along with procedures to manage the placement of "unattached" staff who have been out of their substantive position for more than two years.

This move will free up hundreds of positions to be filled on a permanent basis.

Permanency

Since late 2017, 376 teachers have been made permanent thanks to the Permanency Project negotiated by our union with DoE. We are currently finalising discussions with the Department on Stage 2 of the project, which will launch in

early 2020 to extend permanency further.

Our industrial team is using strengthened security of employment provisions we fought for in our current enterprise agreement to lodge disputes on behalf of individual members who have been employed on contracts for excessive periods of time.

Principals

The AEU has led the push for permanency for contract principals following the Government's pay freeze for executive officers. We are working with the NT Principals' Association to make this a reality and we continue to grow our principal membership.

We have also been part of the broader push to improve the conditions of all principals through the classifications review conducted by Mercer. This brings long overdue recognition of the added complexity and burdens faced by principals, especially in small schools, in the era of global budgets.

Housing

Our members in Katherine spearheaded a strong campaign to protect their housing subsidies, meaning the scheme will now be grandfathered with only modest rent increases. New employees in 2020 will receive an enhanced relocation allowance.

The union continues to advocate for our members in remote locations, where housing quality and safety remain a perennial issue. In Tennant Creek we have successfully lobbied for the reintroduction of a housing committee to promote the rights of our members as tenants.

Work Health and Safety (WHS)

We've changed the conver-

sation on work health and safety in schools by empowering members to utilise your rights under WHS laws. There are more than 20 trained HSRs in schools now thanks to AEU support, with the number growing.

In every one of these areas, just imagine what the case would be without a union advocating on behalf of educators. In Katherine, the housing subsidy might have been abolished entirely. Instead of one in three teachers on contracts, the number would be far higher.

As much as our union has grown in recent years, I still think there are too many teachers, principals and support staff who don't fully understand just how important the AEU is in guaranteeing salaries, working conditions and employee rights.

That's why perhaps the single biggest contribution you can make to our union is to encourage a colleague to join by explaining the benefits of unionism. Together we are stronger.

Finally, I want to thank two members who have been instrumental in our union over a long period. Paula Thornton and Glynis Hester will step down at the end of the year from Branch Executive, where they have represented the regions of Alice Springs and Palmerston respectively with distinction over many years.

Paula and Glynis embody the professionalism and selflessness that are hallmarks of union representatives. Their contributions and wisdom will be missed but not forgotten.



PERFECTING PERFORMANCE PLANNING

There's a difference between performance planning that aims to improve teachers' skills and formal underperformance procedures, writes Adam Lampe

An important addition to the current NTPS Teachers and Assistant Teachers' Enterprise Agreement is clause 47 on Staff Performance Planning and Review. It is significant because it allows the union to dispute flawed applications of the performance planning and review process. The clause outlines the principles behind the approach to planning and review, which reflect the necessity of regular reviews in order to maintain and improve employee performance. Both managers and employees are expected to engage "constructively" in the process.

Most of the time, when annual reviews are approached in the manner suggested in clause 47, they provide a positive space in which teachers can reflect on current practice and career goals and use the results for professional development. However, problems can arise when managers rashly escalate concerns over performance into a formal managing unsatisfactory performance (MUP) process without following correct procedures.

Clause 47.8 states that "where identified, performance-related issues have not been able to be resolved or rectified in line with clause 47.2, the employee's principal or manager may commence a formal performance improvement process" (clause 47.2 outlines the principles underpinning performance reviews).

Key words in clause 47.8 are "resolved or rectified", which implies that a legitimate and rigorous attempt has been made to do so before launching into a MUP. Unfortunately, in our view some

managers escalate matters precipitously to a formal process using a MUP and put classroom teachers in a precarious and vulnerable position.

Failing a MUP invariably leads to a teacher losing their job, which in turn leads to a referral to the Teacher Registration Board and, ultimately, a likely loss of registration; effectively, it can lead to the end of a career.

Therefore, it is essential that school leadership performs its due diligence in the steps it takes between conducting a performance review and commencing, if deemed necessary, formal performance management.

Clause 47 provides a clear guide on correct procedure. Once a performance issue has been identified, managers must document all related incidents and discussions with the affected teacher. Failure to do so will likely lead to the union challenging the use of a MUP process, on the grounds that the employer has not produced sufficient evidence of the issue in question.

Once any issues are identified and documented, teachers must have the opportunity to respond to discussions about their performance, upholding the principle of natural justice.

In consultation, a plan should be developed which is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. It could involve extra training or professional development. It is a semi-formal plan which should be framed positively. It is closer in conception to a performance improvement plan, not a MUP. The improvement plan should be reviewed at appropriate points. Hopefully, by this stage, the issue has been resolved.

Members should work with their sub-branch representatives to ensure genuine attempts have been made by school leaders to rectify performance issues and provide reasonable opportunities for teachers to demonstrate improvement. This might mean repeating and adding to parts of an improvement plan. The basic test that performance review and performance management processes have been done properly is that a MUP, when it arrives, should not be a surprise to the teacher in question.

Any difficulties or queries focusing on teacher performance matters should be directed to the union office.



Performance plans should be a constructive endeavour

Fostering intercultural understanding

The NT Department of Education Alice Springs Language Centre's (ASLC) role is to deliver quality language programs in all government schools in the Alice Springs region. ASLC is teaching languages to over 2000 students from Transition to Year 12. Currently, languages taught in schools include Arrernte (the local Aboriginal Language), Chinese, Japanese and Spanish.

Students are encouraged to expand intercultural understanding, develop respect for diversity and differences and extend the ways in which they can communicate with others. Learning to communicate in multiple languages provides additional job security and promotional opportunities. ASLC is improving employment pathways through providing a VET Certificate II & III in Applied Language in Arrernte with language industry workplace visits. This course is taught with linguistic consultation and local Aboriginal leadership. ASLC assists in preserving the local Arrernte language by teaching an intercultural Arrernte program to all Year 3 Primary students in all Alice Springs government schools. Through the delivery of engaging intercultural Asian and Spanish language programs, ASLC also promotes student engagement with Asia & Europe. Studying Spanish Beginners Stage 2, Centralian Senior College Spanish student Poojana Thotawatta recently won a national Spanish Embassy award for Excellence. His Spanish teacher Maria Monsalve from ASLC commented, "Poojana is a student who has always been committed to achieve high grades. He worked independently inside and outside of the classroom,

Learning a language gives students the chance to access the range of post-school options where languages can be used

which resulted in excellent assessments." ASLC consolidates and increases intercultural knowledge, understanding and language skills by providing the opportunity for students to participate in overseas and local study tours. This year a group of secondary students travelled to China with their teachers. In 2018 groups travelled to Japan and Spain. Year 11 and 12 Arrernte students travel to Canberra each year to undertake work experience at AIATSIS, the Aboriginal Archives, where they study old Arrernte manuscripts, photos and films. The Year 10 Arrernte students at Centralian Senior College recently went on a tour around Alice Springs reading Arrernte signs. At the Araluen Arts Centre Yeperenye structure the students interpreted the Arrernte stories about Mparntwe country to a group of tourists. The Year 11 and 12 Arrernte students visited the Megafauna Museum to study the Arrernte signage, which



ASLC teacher Maria Monsalve and Spanish student Poojana Thotawatta

were translated by students in 2019. A requirement of the assignment was to give feedback about how Arrernte signage around the town could be improved.

The importance of intercultural communication is often overlooked in the workplace and wider world. This can mean that misunderstandings and mistranslations are commonplace. In order to travel through life and through the world, whether for business or pleasure, a desire and willingness to adapt to and understand new cultures and other languages is necessary. Adaptability includes the ability to try to communicate with new people in various languages. Being able to communicate in another language helps us to adapt, accept and respect one another locally and in the wider world.

Susan Moore – Principal



Students at Centralian Senior College studying Arrernte

Mind the equity

GAP

New research highlights the shocking funding divide between NT public and private schools. With the dust settling after the federal election, Trevor Cobbold of national public education lobby group Save our Schools (SOS) has published research analysing school funding trends across Australia and what the future holds

Trevor is a former economist with the Productivity Commission and specialises in crunching official data. In this case he has compiled public data on school funding published online by ACARA. Importantly, Trevor's methodology always accounts for inflation rather than just using raw dollars.

The findings from an equity standpoint are damning: over nearly a decade from 2009 to 2017, funding for Northern Territory private schools increased enormously while funding for public schools was cut. This is despite large increases in federal funding to schools over the past decade.

"The NT Government took the opportunity of increased Commonwealth funding for public schools to massively cut its own real funding of public schools," according to the SOS paper on the NT.

The end result of the past decade of government policies at the federal and territory level is that NT Catholic and Independent Schools are now better resourced on a per student basis than public schools, even though approximately 83% of disadvantaged students in the Northern Territory are in public schools and 88% of disadvantaged schools are public schools.

Here we publish excerpts of Save our Schools' analysis to highlight how the funding and equity divide has grown over the past 10 years.

Private schools race ahead

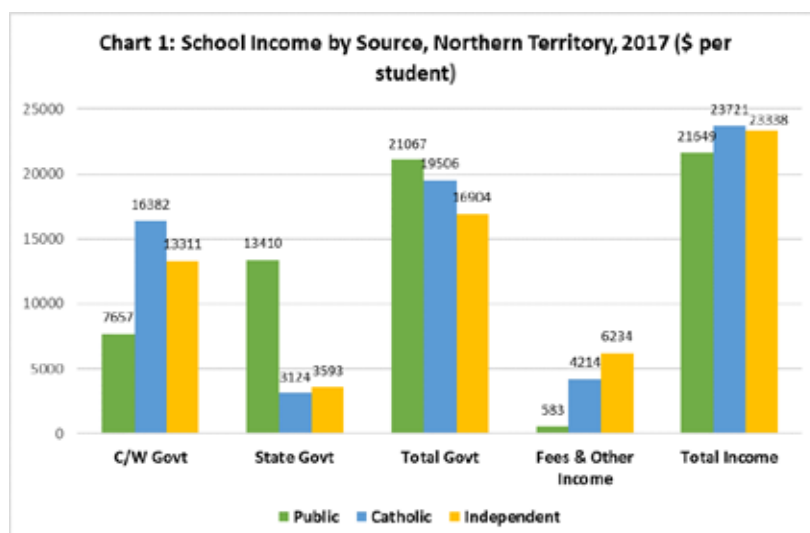
As Chart 1 shows, the total income of Catholic and Independent schools in the Northern Territory is significantly higher than for public schools. The total income of public schools was \$21,649 per student compared to \$23,721 in Catholic schools and \$23,338 in Independent schools.

A decade of cuts to public schools

Chart 2 highlights how income disparity between public and private schools has widened substantially since 2009. Total real income per student in public schools fell by \$1,070 (-5.9%) per student but increased by \$3,848 (25.6%) in Catholic schools and by \$3,038 (19.6%) for Independent schools.

The increased income disparity between public and private schools was due to a massive cut in funding of public schools by the Northern Territory Government which more than offset increased Commonwealth funding.

Real government funding for public schools fell by \$764 (-4.4%) per student while funding for Catholic schools increased by \$4,048 per student (35.3%)



Source: ACARA, National Report on Schooling data portal

and for Independent schools by \$2,535 (23.3%). The Commonwealth increased real funding for public schools by \$4,013 (200.4%) per student, by \$4,245 (48.4%) in Catholic schools and by \$2,904 (37.8%) for Independent schools.

The Northern Territory Government cut real funding for public schools by \$4,777 (-31.2%) per student compared to cuts of only \$198 (-7.4%) per student in Catholic and \$369 (-11.4%) per student in Independent schools.

Public school funding declined under Gonski

Even during the period of the so-called Gonski funding agreements from 2013-2017, the income disparity between public and private schools continued to widen.

Total income per student in public schools increased by only \$113 (0.7%) compared to \$2,996 (18.9%) in Catholic schools and \$2,811 (17.9%) in Independent schools.

The increased income disparity between public and private schools was due to a massive cut in funding of public schools by the Northern Territory Government which almost fully offset increased Commonwealth funding.

Public schools cuts continue

Under the new Commonwealth/Northern Territory funding agreement, NT public schools will continue to be badly underfunded to 2023 and beyond while private schools will be nearly fully funded by 2023.

Under the new Commonwealth/Northern Territory funding agreement, Northern Territory public schools will only be funded at 76.6% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2023 and there is no commitment to ever get to 100%. In contrast, private schools will be funded at 95% of their SRS by 2023.

Under the agreement, the Commonwealth will reduce its funding of Territory public schools from 23.1% of their SRS in 2018 to 21.6% by 2023 while the Territory Government will only increase its share from 56% to 59% by 2023. However, an accounting trick in the agreement allows the Territory Government to claim other non-school based expenditure up to 4% of the SRS towards its commitment. This means it can effectively reduce its funding to 55% of the SRS by 2023 rather than increase its funding.

Consequently, Territory public schools will only be funded at 76.6% of their SRS by 2023. The cumulative underfunding to 2023 will amount to about \$1.3 billion. There is no commitment to increase the Territory share beyond 2023 as in the other Commonwealth/state agreements.

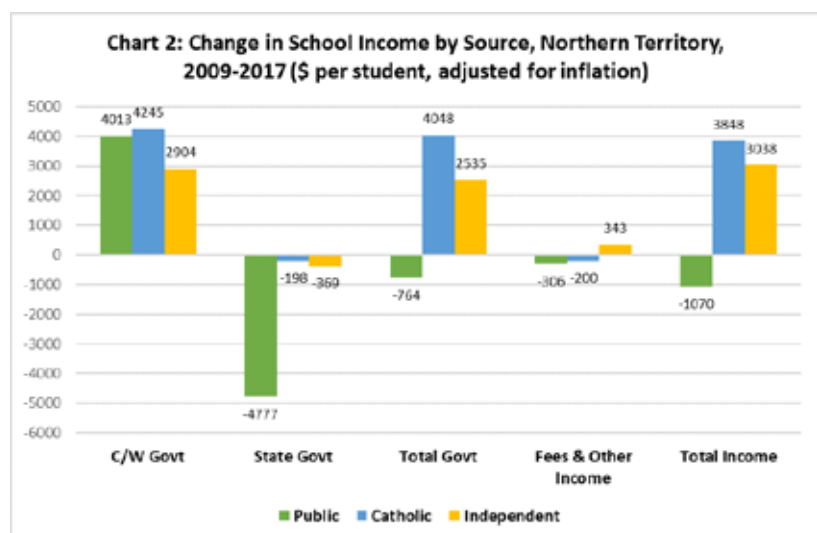
The Commonwealth has guaranteed that Territory private schools will be funded at 80% of their SRS by 2023 (they are currently funded at 70%). They will continue to be funded at 15.1% of their SRS by the Territory Government. Thus, Northern Territory private schools will be funded at 95% of their SRS by 2023 – much more than for public schools.

Catholic and Independent schools can continue to supplement their large increases in government funding with increases in income from fees, charges and donations in excess of rising costs to extend their resource advantage over public schools in the future.

The future

There is no prospect that the new Morrison Government will fund public schools beyond 20% of their SRS. The immediate priority is to pressure the Northern Territory Government to commit to funding public schools at 80% of the SRS by 2023.

Public education organisations must to continue to advocate for a nationally integrated funding model directed at reducing disadvantage in education, ending special deals and over-funding of private schools, and boosting funding for public schools.



Source: ACARA, National Report on Schooling data portal

Members, marches and

2019 saw our union working on building, training and activating our members

Our 2019 Annual Conference was held at the Knotts Crossing resort in Katherine. The weekend featured speeches, motions and workshops aimed at improving the working conditions for all educators.



AEU officers and organisers continued to travel about the Territory supporting teachers and their sub-branches, promoting union campaigns and recruiting new members.



Darwin educator Dina Campbell-McQuillan was recognised with a Quality Educator Award.

Michelle Ayres and the Humpty Doo sub-branch received May Day awards for their work in building union power within their schools.



more



Organisers have delivered training to over 80 sub-branch reps about union values, running sub-branches and writing motions.



Principal recruitment has been growing and our union is working to overturn executive contracts for principals. All workers need representation to assert their workplace rights.



Education unions led this year's May Day march through the city to celebrate and protect peoples working rights.



With social justice as a core value of the union movement, your union supported the right to strike for young people. The School Strike for Climate actions were held in several locations across the Territory.

Paying tribute to Paula

Long-time Executive member Paula Thornton retires at the end of this year. AEU Life Member and former Branch President Nadine Williams pays tribute to a quiet but determined colleague

Having had the pleasure to know Paula for a long time, I have recollections and vivid memories of her contribution to and enthusiasm for the union she belongs to and which she has supported since her early days in the NT public education system.

Paula has worked as a primary teacher in Alice Springs at Bradshaw and then Gillen since the early 1990s after beginning her career in Darwin in the Catholic system.

I first met Paula in Alice Springs when the Regional Council were organising May Day representation in the days when unions used to have a large union contingent at the popular Bangtail Muster. Paula has always supported May Day and International Women's Day events and boosted the AEU NT presence and solidarity with other unions.

Paula used her talents as a music teacher to help write protest songs. When the CLP government locked out union members after weeks of protest across the NT, Paula was there.

With guitars and good voices, we resisted the pressure to cave in and accept a paltry pay offer with no improved conditions, and her contribution went further in producing a "cook book" to highlight the plight of "starving" teachers (staff who took strike action were docked pay and this dispute went on for at least three weeks).

Paula was active in her sub-branch and the Alice Springs Regional Council before becoming a member of the Branch Executive in the early 2000s, on which she has served for almost two decades continuously.

Paula has always taken a keen interest in the national affairs of the public education union, including attending our Federal Conference as part of the small NT delegation. In 2005, when Annual Conference was in Perth, Paula attended and I remember her meeting and greeting international delegates from a range of countries and as always, Paula was able to communicate the unique and multicultural membership and student population we have in the NT.

I personally had a great deal of support from Paula and her husband Des while living and working in Darwin as the AEU NT President (2003-8) and as a result met Paula's family who lived in The Narrows.

Paula's presence has always been positive in her sub-branch, at Regional meetings and Executive. She has always taken seriously her responsibility as a rep in negotiating EBAs to get the best possible outcomes for members.

My good friend and Branch Vice-President Stephen Pelizzo speaks highly of Paula's conduct during the very difficult times our union went through in 2014, saying she showed immense strength of character – "a locus of calm in a sea of chaos". Stephen also notes Paula's central involvement in union agitation around the Alice Springs bus interchange in the early 2000s and her role in achieving a sensible resolution.

I always valued Paula's calm counsel. I knew I could get her advice and help if I was stuck in a pickle over some union business and we often had long talks when flying up and down between Alice Springs and Darwin for meetings.

Paula attended and helped organise many AEU NT annual conferences and never missed a conference that I can remember since 1995. Her length of service to the Alice Springs Region is legendary.



Engendering a movement for **CHANGE**

The AEU Federal Women's Conference brought together over 50 delegates from across Australia, writes Alyson Kavanagh

The focus of the Federal Women's Conference (FWC) is to drive change toward gender employment equity. This year, the conference was built around key industrial issues for women; job security and adequate retirement, addressing violence against women and flexible work. The theme "Advancing feminist futures, together we rise" is aimed at creating safe, inclusive spaces for women to participate in our union.

Our delegates Rachael Metcalfe and Amanda Pehi share their experiences.

Rachael Metcalfe, Forrest Parade School

I learned a lot at the conference. I knew the AEU was a large union, but I didn't realise it was the second largest in Australia. There were numerous inspirational speakers, including ACTU President Michele O'Neill who gave the keynote address.

Michele noted recent wins by the tireless efforts of many unions in the areas of family friendly working rights, paid parental leave and domestic violence leave while acknowledging that due to wage theft, increased casualisation of work and that due to the fact that only 15% of the total workforce is unionised, there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve social justice for women both in and out of the workplace.

Pia Cerveri and Wil Stracke, both of Victorian Trades Hall, delivered amazing workshops on gendered violence and campaigning respectively. Pia updated us with the most recent and more nuanced definition of gendered violence and facilitated a very thought-provoking discussion around what it can look like in our workplaces. In her workshop, Wil drew our attention to several strategies to run effective campaigns, especially on how to frame our message to speak to the values and beliefs of those we need to bring on board.

I left feeling a renewed sense of engagement with the themes of the conference and confident as a teacher and an AEU sub branch rep, in working towards improving women's working conditions and achieving gender employment equity.



AEU NT Women's Officer Alyson Kavanagh (middle) with delegates Rachael Metcalfe (left) and Amanda Pehi (right)

Amanda Pehi, Lajamanu School

The focus was on job security and adequate retirement and addressing violence against women in the workplace. Women make up the majority of the union movement in Australia and the intersection of unionism with feminism has produced significant improvements for women's rights at work. I attended the Indigenous caucuses and the very informative panels on violence against women and engaging First Nations women in the union.

At the end of the conference the Indigenous caucus members gave a report back and I addressed the topic of NT local Indigenous recruits not having access to the same remote incentives as mainstream recruits, such as housing. Assistant Teachers, who often carry a heavy workload in a bilingual setting, are especially important. They frequently have little incentive to come into work every day other than us telling them to "Do it for your own". The AEU NT endorsed a campaign for greater rights for support staff at our 2019 Branch Conference in Katherine.

Co-creating a new reality

A remote Arnhem Land school's approach could hold a key to reimagining the world together, writes Dan Yore

I am sitting next to Nungki, a Gumatj elder as he looks through a telescope for the first time. We are sitting by the beach near his homeland of Dhaniya in North-East Arnhem Land. He is in awe. The rings of Saturn are exquisite tonight. We have just finished presenting a "bothways" astronomy workshop for a group of students from Yirrkala School. Together with a group of Yolngu artists he has just told us the mesmerising story of the Djulpan, a Seven Sisters song line. Following this the Yolngu elders sat back humbly, as I the Western science teacher rather nervously took the microphone to explain orbits, light years and Greek mythology. They encouragingly clapped and cheered as my presentation finished.

Lying on my back afterwards with a few of the old women and a couple of students, we gazed at the Milky Way above, continuing to offer explanations from both worlds. "Bala ga lili". Co-creating together. This is Galtha Rom: a special education ceremony for the students and teachers of Yirrkala School.

I moved to the Northern Territory in 2013 and spent four years teaching in Darwin. I had moved from the field of medicine as I had felt that the health system fundamentally was not capable of holistically improving people's health and wellbeing in the 21st century world. It had not moved in response to the rapidly evolving globalised nature of chronic lifestyle diseases that we are now faced with.

For me education was a way of moving "upstream" to a place where young people developed the capabilities needed to make choices about a life they deemed to be of value. However, as I began to get deeper and deeper into the education system an eerily similar pattern began to emerge. It was a system that valued conformity over creativity, individualism over community and the creation of workers over self-actualisation.

However, some recent experiences have given me hope. For the past few years I have had the great privilege of working with the Yolngu of East Arnhem Land in their community-led school in Yirrkala. The experience, professionally and personally, has been nothing short of transformative. More than that I have come to quickly see that there are here sophisticated

educational methodologies, born out of millennia of cumulative wisdom, that I believe hold some keys to unlocking the 21st century educational methods our global community is so desperately searching for.

2019 marked the 30th anniversary of the song Treaty written by the world famous Yolngu band Yothu Yindi. Lead singer Dr M Yunupingu, one of the first Aboriginal principals in Australia, was also one of a number of Yolngu pioneers of this Both Ways educational approach in Arnhem Land. The main Galtha Rom camp for 2019 thus was a celebration of this anniversary and the educational legacy left by Dr Yunupingu.

The school returned to the beautiful homeland of Biranybirany where the Both Ways methodology was born and to celebrate the writing of that important song. At Biranybirany there is a special water place called Garma that provides a foundational metaphor for the school's approach. It is a place where fresh water from the river (Yolngu knowledge) and incoming salt water from the sea (non-Yolngu or Balanda knowledge) engulf each other and give rise to newly formed foam (galimindirrk) on top. This new foam is the shared, co-created knowledge of Both Ways education.

For decades this Both Ways philosophy has provided a framework for Yolngu and Balanda people to co-create authentic and shared new realities out of seemingly incompatible knowledge systems. At the pinnacle of this process is Galtha Rom, an educational ceremony where the community negotiates roles and gathers together ideas as starting points for sorting out important issues.

There has been an increasing vogue in recent times towards prioritising critical thinking in mainstream schooling. However, from what I've seen on the ground, it seldom has the space or the teeth to provide the deep and contemplative inquiry I've seen in Galtha Rom.

Whilst we can surely deepen the ways we teach students to think analytically, of greater concern is a complete lack of focus on developing the means to reimagine a broken world.

Both Ways approaches like Galtha Rom are not necessarily a silver bullet. The most powerful solutions remain those organically and collaboratively developed locally. However, what these approaches do is provide a framework for processes that could be used to reimagine our reality through inclusive dialogue that leverages knowledge systems that for many generations have gone untapped.

A lifetime of service

Leon White's commitment to Indigenous education and workforce development will be recognised with AEU Life Membership

A true legend and pioneer of remote education delivery, Leon recently retired after a career spanning five decades. He will be recognised at the AEU's 2020 Federal Conference with Life Membership for his outstanding contribution to our union and public education in the Northern Territory.

Leon first came to the NT in 1970, to teach in Wadeye (Port Keats) as a lay missionary.

He was based there until August 1974, then accepted a job as a relief teacher at Yirrkala School for six weeks. At this point Leon joined the NTTF, the predecessor of the AEU, and remained a member almost continuously for the next 45 years.

From 1974 to 1978 he worked as a visiting teacher to homeland centres attached to Yirrkala School. He was part of the organising group for the 1976 NTTF Conference that started discussion around paraprofessional Aboriginal staff being able to join the NTTF.

Moving back to the NT in 1980 after a brief period of study leave and work as a prison educator in South Australia – and also getting married – Leon commenced work at Batchelor College as a senior lecturer to oversee moves to make the teacher education program more effective at the community level. He continued and deepened this work on his return to Yirrkala in 1986 as a Batchelor lecturer based at the school and was instrumental in the creation of a Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program providing for the needs of hub schools servicing homelands centres, addressing the learning needs of both participating students and visiting students.

A study leave sabbatical in 1990 allowed Leon to complete a Master's degree focusing on the inadequacies of secondary education delivery in the north-east Arnhem region. Upon his return in 1991 Leon became principal of Yirrkala Homeland School until late 1999. He then served as principal of Yirrkala School until "retirement" at the end of 2004.

Despite allegedly retiring, Leon continued in a variety of roles with Yolngu education and training remaining his passion. He commenced a PhD at Melbourne University, did another stint at Batchelor and worked as an attendance and engagement officer for Gove Peninsula schools. Fittingly, Leon concluded his full-time career with the Department by serving once again as principal of Yirrkala Homeland School from 2014 until the end of 2018. His final project was a review of homelands education provision.

Leon says his primary mission was to ensure that appropriate leaning for all teachers was in place to ensure quality learning for students: "Working in remote settings drove my commitment to using the available resources to guide our action and stop morale-sapping conversations about 'they should' or 'we could' without examination of what we can do! This doesn't excuse successive governments and departments for under-resourcing remote education, but it is fundamental to the wellbeing of all involved educators."

Yirrkala's current principal Katrina Hudson said two attributes stood out about Leon: "Firstly, his insight and commitment to Yolngu teacher education – his belief that the Yolngu worldview and aspirations must be considered in all decisions that relate to educating Yolngu children. Secondly, his generosity in mentoring newly arrived staff to north-east Arnhem Land and raising awareness about culturally appropriate practices with respect to education."



Leon White out the front of the Yirrkala Homeland school building

Improving the lot of education tenants

The AEU and Government reps are working on practical solutions to housing issues in Tennant Creek, writes Tim Davis Frank

Tennant Creek was named in 1860 after a shepherd, John Tennant. Any belief that the name referred to generous protections and rights of the tenants of the community has historically been inaccurate. Teachers, principals and other staff have complained about the issues they face as tenants in government-leased housing. However, recently the AEU NT Barkly Regional Council has worked with the Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development (DLGHCD) to change this. Regional managers for both departments agreed to sit down with AEU NT housing representatives, an AEU NT Organiser principals to start to work together to improve the conditions of tenants in Tennant Creek.

The AEU NT Barkly Regional Council carried the following motion in August 2018: "This Barkly Regional Council requests that FTOs pursue the DOE in regard to union and teacher representation on the Tennant Creek housing committee". It took the full-time officers a year to get some traction on this matter. While it was slow, the result has been a positive step for collaboration on this important issue.

With the help of the local councillor Sid Vashist, the AEU NT was able to reach out to regional managers and set up a meeting with elected union members who would represent the tenants at their schools. The two school sub-branches also compiled a list of questions regarding their rights and detailing the concerns that they had. There were 19 questions covering safety and security; process issues; department responsibility; and communication difficulties. These questions were tabled prior to the meeting and all were addressed in the meeting.

As a result of this open, formal and constructive meeting, members have been able to express their opinions and there have been a number of actions agreed to address their complaints:

- Ongoing concerns about security of tenants will be assessed with a full security audit of all rental properties.
- The issues of communication and feedback about maintenance requests will be addressed through improved reporting systems and processes.
- When break-ins occur, staff have been advised that they are supported in taking a day of emergency leave, separate from personal leave, to get their lives and homes in order.
- Any tenants who lack a formal tenancy agreement or vacate checklist can now request these vital documents through the DoE Housing Officer.

Finally, both departments have acknowledged the importance of improving the supply of government housing for employees. The news that emerged in this meeting is that tenders have been put out for the commissioning of more government housing. This positive step is supported with the development of a policy about government employees access to government housing regardless of race or where they were born. These two future projects will be watched very carefully. It is our hope that all DoE employees will soon have access to safe and hospitable housing in Tennant Creek.



Barkly Regional President Denning Venning (centre) with Julieanne Spina (left) and principal Maisie Floyd (right)

Cissy McKenzie, Timber Creek School

Timber Creek is a small community about three and a half hours west of Katherine on the Victoria Highway. Sub-branch president, Cissy McKenzie came into teaching after being employed in support roles working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families. She has worked for nine years as an early childhood teacher.

How do you view your role of sub-branch president?

I try and involve the staff and share union information so that we can build understanding about what the union does. I also encourage members in our region, especially Indigenous staff, to join and become involved in union activities.

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

I like being able to advocate for remote communities and helping to provide a voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I like that the union is inclusive in helping to bring people together. I like being a positive role model to my colleagues.



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

Make sure that you work together with the members in your school and support each other. Attend regional council meetings to find out what is happening in other schools in your region.

Quality systems bring better support

The new departmental structure provides more timely resolution of housing issues, writes Mick McCarthy

A major source of frustration for many remote members is government employee housing and maintenance. The union office has made many representations to the Department on this issue over many years.

As a result of the Department's restructure last year, a new team – Quality Schools Systems and Support (QSSS) – was created to assist schools with matters relating to the non-teaching side of school operations. During 2019, this office has held regular and productive dialogue with most of the QSSS regional directors helping members to solve issues.

With a new policy, guidelines and procedures on Government Employee Housing (GEH) for Remote Staff effective from November, the QSSS team is working to improve the systems for managing repairs and maintenance as well as relocations and storage.

These new documents are detailed about what accommodation you can expect, inspections, responsibilities and occupancy agreements. It still lacks some details about maintenance of houses and what to do when things are broken or malfunctioning. (Note that arrangements in Katherine and Tennant Creek are different because housing is typically leased from private owners, adding an additional layer of complexity.)

Our advice to members in GEH is to put complaints and requests in writing to detail problems with photographs as appropriate to elaborate.



Government Employee Housing

Send this information via your principal to the QSSS person in your region and cc the union office.

We now have a clearer route to resolve problems that arise. While not everything everywhere is fixed, communication to members and principals about what is happening is much better. We think the QSSS structure is working well. We'd like to hear from members if you believe otherwise.

More than a buzz word

The NT's first teacher health and wellbeing survey brings a long overdue focus on the welfare of educators, writes Alyson Kavanagh

The AEU NT has been concerned about the health of teachers for some time now, noting growing workload and other stresses in our member surveys and through our interactions with members via casework. The recent teacher health and wellbeing survey conducted for the Department of Education by Australian Catholic University (ACU) has deepened this evidence base, allowing us to match the qualitative stories we hear of teacher health with quantitative data.

While an investment in planning and educating for student wellbeing has been made, the investment in the wellbeing of the teaching workforce has previously received limited attention. At the beginning of this year we urged members to take the survey for two reasons.

Firstly, this is the first time such direct feedback has been sought by an education system

in Australia. Secondly, the information gleaned will build our case to improve working conditions for teachers.

The Department has released a Teacher Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2022 that responds to the key findings of the survey. The strategy proposes three priority areas to enhance teacher wellbeing: encouraging connection to the profession and feeling supported; allowing teachers to focus on their core work; and ensuring educators feel safe and respected at work.

The heavy burden of high workloads is revealed in the findings. Teachers are working long hours and committing to their roles working with students and families. It is precisely this commitment that can leave teachers more vulnerable to stress.

This vulnerability to stress due to high job demands is approximately double the average of other workforce sectors. The multitude of non-teaching tasks and roles that teachers are expected to undertake contributes to high stress levels.

Understanding job demands is crucial to reducing the attrition rate in the teaching profession. A reduction in

non-teaching workload was identified by the survey as a key recommendation.

The AEU NT supports consultation with teachers to determine a suitable re-balancing of workloads. Workload was a major claim in the last round of bargaining and will be revisited in the next. One agreed outcome we will pursue is reviewing the Teacher Responsibilities jointly with DoE.

The survey findings also highlighted the widespread incidence of occupational violence among teachers. Just under 40% of teachers have experienced exposure to violence from students and/or parents. In response to such concerns, the AEU NT has begun a concerted campaign around occupational violence with schools, empowering our members to use work health and safety laws to promote safety at work.

It is well known that teachers in their first five years are the most likely to leave the teaching profession. Supporting this group of the workforce will require new and different ways of working. Creativity from this group of early career teachers may be the inoculant against burnout.

We welcome the strategy's commitment to provide more structured mentoring and support to early career teachers.

Wellbeing is a concept that has received a lot of buzz and can be applied with both positive and negative connotations. However, this study and the resultant strategy has both revealed and acknowledged some harsh truths and is a welcome development in formulating approaches to better support teachers by guarding against stressors and burnout.



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