

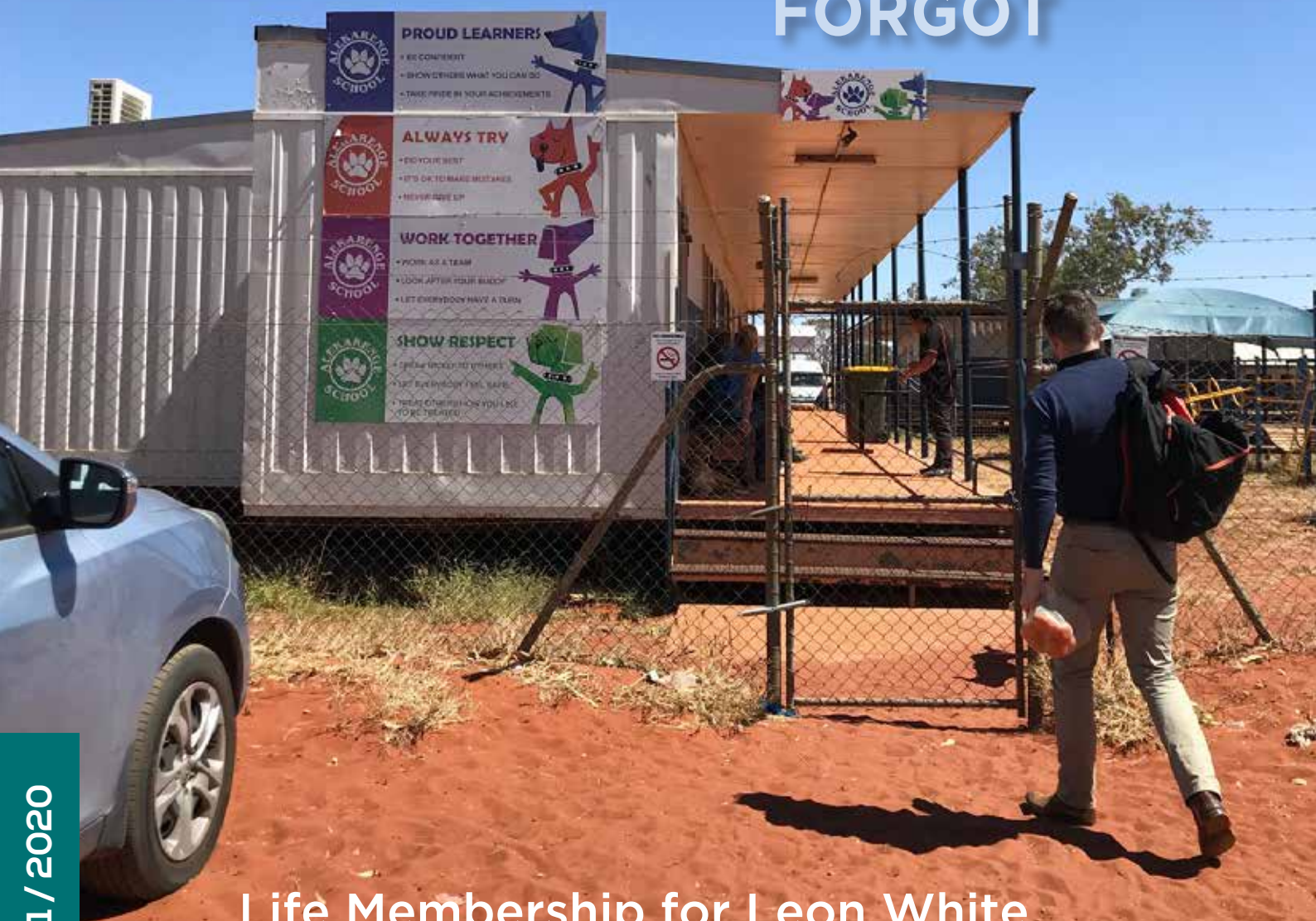
TERRITORY Educator

Magazine Of The Australian Education Union – NT Branch



SHAME

ALEKARENGE: THE SCHOOL AUSTRALIA FORGOT



Life Membership for Leon White
Social media, work and the law



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Leon with Branch President Jarvis Ryan and Federal President Correna Haythorpe

Life Membership for Leon White

Leon White was awarded AEU Life Membership at our 2020 Federal Conference in recognition of his exemplary contribution to the union's affairs and education in general. A passionate champion of the people of Yirrkala and its surrounding Homelands, Leon worked for 45 years in a variety of roles on the Gove

Peninsula and retired last year. Leon attended the awards ceremony along with his wife Naminapu. He gave a passionate speech about the continuing struggle to champion for Indigenous self-determination and perspectives in education. An extract of Leon's speech is reprinted on page 11.

Conference 2020

Our annual Branch Conference will be held in Darwin at the Hilton over the May Day weekend (2-3 May). Each sub-branch is entitled to send at least one delegate funded by the AEU NT and submit motions for discussion. The deadline for registrations and sub-branch motions is Friday 20 March.

This year's theme is *Public*

Education: Priority #1. As 2020 is an election year, Conference is a key opportunity to ensure public education is the number 1 priority for politicians and the wider community.

A curtain raiser event open to all members will be held on Friday 1 May, with leaders of the three major parties invited to explain their policies on education.

Branch elections

Elections will shortly be held to fill several federal and branch positions. Two positions on Branch Executive are currently vacant: Regional Councillor positions for Alice Springs and Palmerston, respectively. These positions must be filled by a member from the relevant region.

Federally, the following four positions are vacant: National TAFE Council

Executive Member; National TAFE Council Delegate; ATSI Federal Conference Delegate; Yalukit Yulendj (National ATSI Committee) (TAFE Division) Member.

Nominations for these positions are expected to open on 24 March. Check our website for more information or contact the Branch Secretary, Adam Lampe.

Rosemary Richards scholarship

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

This is an opportunity for an AEU woman member with an idea for an innovative project, research or study experience that will increase her skills and experience in the union's work at state/territory, national or international level. By extension, it should also support the AEU's women members. The Scholarship is valued at \$10,000 and is intended to cover all project expenses.

Contact Women's Officer Alyson Kavanagh or visit aeufederal.org.au for more info.

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.





Public education: priority #1

In just five months, voters will decide who governs the NT for the next four years, writes Jarvis Ryan

The AEU NT is not affiliated with any party. We don't take a position on who you should vote for in an election. But as a union we are far from indifferent to the outcome, for the simple reason that which party is in office often has a big influence on your working conditions, by virtue of funding and policy decisions.

As such, over the coming months it's important that AEU members work collectively to ensure whichever government is elected in August makes public education its top priority.

This should be a no brainer. Public schools educate the vast majority of students, and an even greater proportion of disadvantaged students. Investing in education is an investment in the future of our society – the most effective way governments can set young people up for a great life.

All politicians and candidates pay lip service to notions like these. But we don't want talk from the politicians. We want commitments, and we want action.

In the coming weeks, our Executive and our annual Conference will endorse key priorities that we will ask all the major parties commit to supporting. These priorities will be determined by our membership through the AEU NT's democratic structures, often originating from a sub-branch or regional council motion. Without overly pre-empting

those processes, I think I have a fair idea of what some of the AEU's main asks will be. That's because in my visits to workplaces across the Territory, the same themes tend to recur. Here are a few:

Job security remains a big issue. We've made some inroads in this area for teachers, and now there is movement for principals. But for support staff, especially those employed remotely and via school councils, precariousness is a way of life. Will the parties make commitments to increase permanent employment?

Workload remains a backbreaker in schools, and most sharply in primary settings. Which parties will commit to funding an increase in teacher numbers, and in non-contact time for primary teachers?

Competitive salaries are critical to attract and retain teaching staff in NT public education. The current government has already endorsed a wages policy for the next four years offering an insulting \$1000 per annum, and prohibiting back pay to prevent long negotiations. Will the parties commit to bargaining in good faith and ensuring salary offers are fair and competitive?

School infrastructure is very patchy across the Territory. We've welcomed significant investments in some urban settings. Regional and remote schools tend to lag behind.

Elsewhere in this issue we expose the truly shocking state of Alekarenge School. And we know of other schools whose infrastructure is in a similar state of disrepair.

Our union has been told there's no money in the budget for capital spending. Which parties will commit to ensuring all

students learn in safe classrooms with appropriate amenities?

As the election grows near, we are giving the leaders of the three major parties – Labor, the CLP and the newly-formed Territory Alliance – the opportunity to make their case directly to educators.

On the eve of our Branch Conference, all three have been invited to attend an education forum and explain their key policies and commitments on public education. For Conference delegates and members living in the Greater Darwin area, this will be your chance to hear directly from the leaders and perhaps even put a question to one of them.

Based on what we hear from the parties at that forum and in response to written questions, we'll then produce a "report card" in the next issue of the Territory Educator, so you know what each party is promising with respect to education.

I know politics may not be everyone's cup of tea, but I urge you to pay close attention over the next five months and help us keep the pressure on so that we get the best possible policies for public education.



MORE THAN JUST LIP SERVICE

Consultation is not just a good idea, it's a legal requirement in many work situations, as Branch Secretary Adam Lampe explains

Consultation is an essential part of managing change in the workplace. Change can be stressful, even dangerous if not managed properly.

Good consultation processes promote change in a manner which can improve the way workers respond. This lowers the negative impacts of change, which almost invariably requires people to do something different in their work.

The benefits of consultation are so universally accepted that the *Fair Work Act* requires all enterprise agreements have a consultation clause.

Unfortunately, workplace consultation is often done poorly. Some managers unilaterally impose change on the workplace, because they do not understand what consultation means.

Frequently, consultation is confused with information: employers inform workers what, when and how change will take place and leave it at that. However, informing employees of change is merely the first step in the consultation process: workers must then be provided the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the decisions leading to change.

Successful consultation follows a series of stages, each involving clear communication, staff engagement and feedback following decision-making. From the beginning, employees need be made aware of exactly what change is being proposed, the intended implementation process (especially timelines) and how decisions will be made.

Employees' views and opinions then need to be

sought on both the proposed change and the process of change. This can be done a variety of ways – consultation meetings, surveys, online forums – as long as there is substantial dialogue between the employer and affected employees.

Finally, there needs to be transparency as to how decisions regarding change have been made, an accessible record of employee input and ability for employees to provide feedback on the consultation process.

An important provision in the management of change clause in enterprise agreements is that employee representatives are part of the consultation process. In the case of the majority of workers in public schools in the Northern Territory, that means the AEU NT.

It is one of the reasons why the Department of Education is required to consult the union before it implements major change in the system.

Failure to consult with the AEU NT has led, on occasion, to industrial disputes, which almost always have negative impacts on the employer's plans to implement change. On the other hand, consulting with employees and the union has demonstrably led to better outcomes.

The recent change to the Katherine housing subsidy is an example of successful consultation. Because the proposed measure was a major change to the conditions of employment for teachers in Katherine, DoE was required to consult with affected employees. Consultation took the form of scheduled meetings during work hours, where departmental officials explained the nature of the change, why it was taking place, and how it was to be implemented.

Employees provided feedback individually at the meetings and online and, most crucially, as a group through their employee representative, the AEU NT. The Department gave the feedback the attention it required in a proper consultation process, and adjusted the initial change proposal to something less drastic: employees who were receiving the subsidy would keep it for the life of their current employment, while new employees will receive a gradually reduced subsidy over the next three years.

As a result of proper consultation, both the employer and Katherine teachers engaged in a non-disruptive and participatory change process. It provided the change the employer wanted to implement, but in a slightly changed form with a less negative impact on the existing workforce.



Senior departmental officers consulting with employees in Katherine last year

Small school, big impact

A small public school located in the Darwin suburb of Karama, Manunda Terrace Primary School is delivering excellence in education.

The school has an enrolment of 176 students from preschool to year 6 with 60 per cent identifying as Aboriginal and 35 per cent as English as a second language/dialect. Our school prides itself as a strong multicultural school with strong ties to the traditional owners, the Larrakia people.

Manunda Terrace is committed to positive relationships with students and families and prides itself on being a school focused on its community.

The school's wellbeing policy is an integral part of our culture and through the Berry Street Education Model we provide our staff with the training, curriculum, and strategies to support all our students. The Berry Street philosophy provides teachers with the skills and resources to deliver programs that are developmentally-informed and age-respectful.

Manunda Terrace teachers and support staff are committed, community-minded educators who strive to provide the best educational outcomes for all students. Teachers promote a love of learning whilst taking student variations in learning style, interests and relationships into account.

Of the nine teaching staff, five completed their final practicum at the school and have chosen to become part of the Manunda family.

Key initiatives at Manunda Terrace include Explicit Instruction; Age Appropriate Pedagogies; Meaningful Maths; Read, Write, Inc; Japanese; Connecting Cultures,

Manunda Terrace's strength lies in its ties with the local community

Connecting Futures and the Learning Commission.

Manunda Terrace is an approved Charles Darwin University Teaching School, with partnerships and program support with the Smith Family, Larrakia Nation and the Confucius Institute. The school is part of Keep Australia Beautiful's Eco-Schools program and promotes sustainability both within school and the community.

The school also hosts two classes from Nemarluk Primary School where students who require specialised and individualised educational programs are educated. Whilst the staff are provided by Nemarluk, the classes mostly cater for students who reside in the Karama area, some who have siblings attending the school, enabling family members to be educated within the one precinct. These classes participate in many of the whole school programs such as Read, Write, Inc and add to the diversity of the school.

The school has outstanding resources and facilities. Spacious and well-maintained school grounds provide students with the opportunity to play and socialise in a safe and child friendly environment.

Manunda prides itself on its multiculturalism and ties to the Larrakia people



Progression or taking learning **BACKWARDS?**



Gonski's vision of 'personalised learning' will stifle creativity and lead to a generation of automatons, writes Professor Alan Reid

The education debate in Australia becomes tangled when the same key concepts are used by various groups and individuals to mean very different things.

Take the concept of "personalised learning". It can describe a flexible approach to learning which starts with each student's individual strengths and capabilities, and encourages a wide range of learning activities. Or it can be used to justify a program of rigid and scripted individual learning progressions.

In the past few years the idea of "learning progressions" has garnered a lot of attention in curriculum debates and reviews. Invariably it is argued learning progressions promote "personalised learning".

It is important therefore to subject this claim to some scrutiny and try to understand the version of "personalised learning" being promoted in policy circles.

From year levels to learning progressions

In 2017 the then Turnbull government appointed David Gonski to lead a review into how to improve Australian schools. The idea was that if the amount of Commonwealth money going to schools was to be increased – as recommended by the earlier Gonski review in 2011 – then we needed guidance as to what the money should be spent on.

A central proposal in the subsequent 2018 report, dubbed as Gonski 2.0, relates to "personalised learning". Using the well-rehearsed argument that all students should be able

to demonstrate a year's learning growth every year, the report's first recommendation is that schools move from a year-based curriculum to a curriculum expressed as learning progressions independent of year or age.

It claims this move will enable schools to better meet the individual learning needs of students than does the organisation of schools by year levels. The latter, the report says, is a remnant of the industrial era and must change if schools are to come into the 21st century.

Certainly, the idea of scrapping year levels potentially creates greater flexibility for students and teachers. Rather than aiming curriculum at the average of a cohort of students at a particular age, teachers can "personalise" the curriculum by making an individual student's readiness for learning the key criterion for curriculum planning.

Of course, a number of schools already do this, and in many other schools where year levels are still used, teachers use adaptive or differentiated teaching to cater for individual interests.

There is always a danger removing year levels will result in a return to streaming if teachers group students according to perceived ability levels rather than age, but this is not an automatic outcome and can be guarded against.

However, the question of removing year-level structures can't be separated from the issue of what is taught and how. And it is here that it seems the report has taken a progressive idea like personalisation and colonised it with an instrumental purpose.

Gonski's version of personalised learning

There are different approaches to personalising learning. Some enable teachers and students to





negotiate learning programs based on students' interests and learning needs.

For instance, in the Big Picture schools in Australia and the US, students investigate topics or issues individually or in groups and report on their findings. The key to this kind of learning is skilled teachers helping students make connections across the curriculum, because key concepts are understood through negotiation and collaboration.

This approach prizes student agency and group as well as individual activities. It recognises learning is not a linear and scripted activity.

But that is not the version of personalised learning proposed in the 2018 Gonski report. This report recommends an approach where content and skills across every area of the curriculum are atomised into bite-sized chunks of knowledge, and then sequenced into progression levels.

Students work on their own and, at regular points, use online assessment tools to test their readiness for the next chunk of knowledge. Once one level is mastered, they move onto the next.

The report recommends that, over the next five years, the recently developed and implemented Australian Curriculum should be rewritten so every learning area and general capability is written up as a number of progression levels.

It offers an example of "spelling" being broken into a 16-level progression, with students mastering each step before moving lock-step onto the next level.

The Gonski version of personalised learning bears an uncanny resemblance to the model of direct instruction developed in the US in the 1960s. This is a tightly scripted, step-by-step approach that follows a predetermined sequence through packaged resource materials.

Assessment follows each instruction phase with tests aligned to the behavioural goals of the program. The results are fed back to the teacher and student, and the stage is then set for the next phase.

Similarly, Gonski suggests students advance incrementally through progression levels. At regular intervals they should be assessed by an online assessment tool against the learning progressions that measure student attainment and growth in attainment levels over time.

The tool could also suggest, for consideration by the teacher, potential interventions to build further progress.

Although there is an apparent nod in the direction of teacher decision making, it is inevitable the tightly scripted nature of the process will result in a reliance on the use of online resources.

Online assessment tools make students automatons

The National Education Policy Centre in the United States recently reviewed a number of personalised learning programs in the country that have adopted similar characteristics to those Gonski prescribes. The report concludes that they reflect *"a hyper-rational approach to curriculum and pedagogy that limits students' agency, narrows what they can learn in school, and limits schools' ability to respond effectively to a diverse student body."*

The manifestation of this model in the US has been a financial bonanza for private technology companies such as Summit, owned by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. These companies have developed online tests and learning resources capable of tracking the progress of, and devising programs for, individual students.

With such programs, students become individual automatons moving through standardised progression levels. Creativity and critical thinking are stifled as students are steered down an already determined path. And teachers are increasingly excluded from the process, as planning and decision-making is done by algorithms.

The result is a narrow and highly individualised learning experience that is unlikely to prepare students adequately for the challenges of the 21st century.

The point is that "personalised learning" can take many forms. Some approaches will liberate learners, some will tightly constrain them. The model proposed by Gonski is more likely to do the latter. Far from moving schools away from an industrial model, Gonski's model would entrench it.

Rather than immediately adopting a model such as "progression levels", surely it would be better to clarify our understanding about personalised learning, including the theories and assumptions on which various versions are based.

Then, if personalised learning is the goal, why not evaluate a number of different models of personalised learning?

The version of personalised learning Australia promotes should be one that nurtures a love and a passion for learning, not one that reduces it to a checklist.

Alan Reid is Professor Emeritus of Education, University of South Australia. This piece was originally published at The Conversation website.



SHAME

The school Australia forgot

The plight of Alekarenge School is a scandal and highlights the skewed priorities of the Territory and Federal Government when it comes to school infrastructure, writes Jarvis Ryan

Australia is one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

You could be forgiven for forgetting that when you step into the grounds of Alekarenge School in the Barkly Region, two hours drive from Tennant Creek.

On entry, you will likely be greeted by wild dogs that have entered the school grounds because its fencing is so dilapidated the dogs can't be kept out.

The problem is so bad that students must eat their meals locked up in a cage-like structure to prevent them from being bitten. Despite this precaution, numerous teachers and students have been bitten in recent years.

Kids are forced to play in hot, dusty yards on rusted play equipment with no shade netting.

Ramps to buildings and walkways are so corroded that, far from providing access, they represent a safety hazard.

In the Families as First Teachers building, teachers co-ordinate activities for up to 50 parents and their infant children in a demountable classroom whose floor is in danger of collapsing at any moment.

A condemned, crumbling asbestos portable building sat boarded up for years, with the Department of Infrastructure ignoring repeated requests to remove it.

Alekarenge's teachers have laboured heroically to continue to provide a quality education to their students even in the face of these inadequacies, not to mention other challenges. In 2018 they remained in Alekarenge and kept the

school open, despite rioting and unrest in the community, to provide a haven for students.

Student attendance plummeted in the wake of the unrest and the school had its budget cut due to the Department of Education's longstanding policy of funding schools based on attendance rather than enrolment.

Last August I invited our Federal President, Correna Haythorpe, and Deputy President, Maurie Mulheron, to visit Alekarenge. They were shocked by what they saw.

"It was a privilege to meet the passionate and dedicated staff at Alekarenge school, however no student or staff member should have to endure the dilapidated buildings and playground areas that we saw on our visit," Correna said after her visit. "It is shameful that any government, be it Commonwealth, state or territory can believe that it is acceptable for students, teachers, principals or education support staff to learn and work in such unsafe buildings."

Following our visit, the AEU's Barkly Regional Council and then the AEU NT Branch Executive endorsed a campaign for a new school to be built in Alekarenge.

Our call was echoed by Alekarenge's LEaD Committee, a parent and community advocacy body, who wrote to Minister for Education Selena Uibo last October:

"The families of Alekarenge School have many hopes and dreams for the future of their children. We want changes to make sure we can always be proud of Ali Curung Community.

"Our kids are the future of our community and we want them to have the best opportunities our country can provide. We are already working with Centrefarm [an Aboriginal horticulture company] to develop this community towards economic independence in the next 25 years. This can't happen unless our children are proud of our community and have a good education...

"We are asking for three things:

1. Get rid of the old buildings and play equipment that give our community shame.
2. Build new buildings and play equipment for our community to be proud of.
3. Do not remove any more buildings until new buildings are funded and a date for building is given."

Last September the AEU NT wrote formally to Minister Uibo requesting her government commit to building a new school. I raised the issue with local MLA and cabinet member, Gerry McCarthy, and infrastructure minister Eva Lawler. I got the same message from everyone: there is no money for new infrastructure.

The best the Department of Education has offered is to transport portable classrooms no longer required in Top End urban schools.

The perverse irony of this proposal is that the current buildings at Alekarenge are mostly "temporary" – they were installed as an interim measure after fire damaged the old school.

That fire occurred in 1970 – 50 years ago.

The AEU has raised the issue again with ministers this year as finalisation of the 2020-21 Budget nears. We have been told there will be

to build and upgrade public schools to replace outdated infrastructure and in response to growing student enrolments and identified need.

What we object to is the double standard whereby some students and some communities are deemed to matter more than others.

The festering neglect that is Alekarenge School is a disgrace that would never be accepted in a major town or city in Australia.

We know Alekarenge is not the only remote school desperately needing attention. But it is one of the most glaring cases of government neglect you will ever see in this country.

There is no excuse for it to continue. This government must commit now – in this budget – to funding the construction of a new school for Alekarenge.

Feds must do their part

The plight of Alekarenge School is not just a Territory problem. The Morrison Government bears a large part of the blame by abolishing federal capital spending on public schools.

Last year the Morrison government provided a \$1.9 billion capital works special deal for private schools without providing a dollar for public schools. Capital works funding – for new school



Left: a caged area where students eat to prevent dog attacks, middle: dogs roam freely in the school due to poor quality fencing, right: dilapidated play equipment with no shade.

no money in this year's budget for new school infrastructure spending. According to the Department, even the repairs and maintenance budget will be stretched thin.

The lack of funds for infrastructure marks a departure from big spending in recent years. New special schools have been built in Darwin and Palmerston. Last year's budget allocated \$29 million to Stage 2 of Zuccoli, a new primary school in Palmerston.

In recent years, \$42 million has been allocated to the Bullocky Point precinct in Darwin, allowing for the building of a new distance education centre and upgrades to Darwin High and Darwin Middle to cope with rapid enrolment growth.

The AEU has supported all these upgrades. We welcome the Government committing funds

buildings and school maintenance – has not been provided to public schools by the federal government since 2017, leaving state and territory governments to pick up the slack.

Historically, the Northern Territory has relied on Canberra to provide additional funding to overcome the massive disadvantage suffered by remote Indigenous communities. There is no way the huge infrastructure deficit we see in public schools – most glaringly obvious in remote communities – can be addressed without substantial federal resourcing.

The AEU has made central to our Fair Funding Now campaign a demand that the Federal Government establish a capital works program for public schools, commencing at \$300 million per year and increasing each year in line with enrolment growth and rising costs.

Opening the door to permanency

A new working group has been formed to explore the possibility of returning contract principals to ongoing employment, writes Jarvis Ryan

This year has begun on a positive note for contract principals after much of 2019 was dominated by the fallout from the government's executive contract wage freeze.

Principals were rightly angered by the shoddy way they were treated by the government, and the result was a very low take up rate for the supposedly voluntary freeze.

In parallel to this political wrangling, a review of principal classifications was underway – a commitment won by the AEU NT in enterprise bargaining. This was long overdue, with the last review done in 2010.

Currently, there are almost no guidelines governing what classification level a principal will be employed at based on the size of their school and other characteristics, and no transparency in how schools move up or down classification levels.

This contrasts with other states and territories. When I requested data from other AEU branches last year, most were able to point to a short document that explained principal levels, usually governed by the school's budget or a combination of size and complexity.

The review done by Mercer using the Job Evaluation System allowed for objective benchmarking of positions based on their work value. This scheme doesn't assess the work an individual principal does – instead it assigns "points" to a principal position based on a range of factors. This data can now be used as the basis for a new classification system that is fair, transparent and easy to understand.

AEU NT officers attended a briefing on Mercer's draft recommendations late last year. These will remain confidential for the time being as they

are subject to Cabinet approval due to potential cost implications and other factors.

However, one tangible outcome was the Minister for Education requesting the Department set up a working group to consider the viability of returning contract principals to ongoing status.

This is a long-running demand of the AEU NT and has now also been endorsed by the NT Principals' Association (NTPA), which reports a strong sentiment among its members to move back to permanency in the wake of the pay freeze.

A working group consisting of senior representatives from DoE, the AEU NT, the NTPA and the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment has been formed and is now meeting fortnightly to advance this project.

These meetings will occur on a "without prejudice" basis, as typically occurs in enterprise bargaining. This means the union will not always be able to provide the level of detail we might like to members. However, it does enable all parties at the table to engage in frank discussions and negotiations.

What I can say is that all parties are engaging in this project in good faith and are committed to moving it forward as quickly as possible, knowing that an election is imminent and that this work will have to be paused once caretaker provisions commence in July.

In the political sphere, the AEU NT will be seeking commitments from all parties to allow this work to continue beyond the election, with an objective of reclassifying all principal positions as ongoing. This work will flow into teacher enterprise bargaining commencing next year.

As circumstances allow, our office will provide updates to members on the progress of negotiations. In the meantime, I am keen to hear from principal members on your key issues. For non-members, I encourage you to join the AEU NT and ensure your voice is heard in this process.



We are working to create a new principal classification system that is fair and transparent

Maintain search for utopia

In his Life Membership speech, Leon White urges the AEU to maintain its support for Indigenous-led approaches in education

As unionists, we believe in the power of collective action. This spirit inspires me to suggest that the AEU continue as an advocate in supporting preparation for a new educational approach that sees our country change to see Indigenous communities – and not just selected individuals – engaged in the process to move forward.

This is about placing the centrality of community development in our educational roles and our ability to develop our skills to work within and under community control to achieve agreed community educational outcomes.

We have a union focusing on education, and while I understand our responsibility to teachers as members, we have a responsibility to the future to insist on working with a focus on sustainability as we move forward.

When I arrived at Yirrkala in 1974 there was a clear instruction by the Yolngu Ngalapal (elders) of that time regarding the role of non-Yolngu itinerants such as myself in the training and teacher preparation of Yolngu teachers. I was the recipient of the view about the importance of localised community-based training as the community felt that: “When they go away they grow away.”

At Yirrkala we work to encourage young students to walk in two worlds and ensure that this will enable them to maintain their own Yolngu culture and thrive in the Balanda (non-Yolngu) world. There are many ongoing challenges to this. Ngapak (whitefella) pronouns of the past such as ‘my’ program, ‘my’ school, ‘my’ department, even ‘our’ department’s way, ‘us’ and ‘them’ belong just there as relics of a past assimilationist regime, a past systemic ideology that refused to demonstrate mutual respect for the knowledges, languages and cultures of the host communities.

So it is important that new recruits to communities such as Yirrkala submit to learning about the local ways to show competence, to continue to learn as teachers, to develop real confidence and yet still make contributions to the development of their Indigenous host communities and to their own growth as people and educators. This process requires ongoing advocacy from our union.

Training local Yolngu teachers and support literacy workers does not have the systematic support it requires. In recent times, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) has located all of its teacher education programs at Batchelor and has discontinued community-based approaches that allowed training and education to be provided in or near home communities.

It is worth remembering that in World War II, Donald Thomson’s idea to the establishment of the North Australia Reconnaissance Unit was to get the Tooth and Tail balance right. The Tooth, or front line, would only work if adequately supported by the Tail. Today we don’t really have this view as the importance of support staff is not present in the dollar-driven global budget discourse.

As well as the location of local teacher preparation programs, the courses have increasingly dropped a focus of linguistics and language-related study that is important in the preparation of Indigenous classroom teachers and language teachers. We have got caught up in a rush to National Standards and forgot that in the NT we used to follow the motto that, “One size doesn’t fit all.”

In conclusion, it is our responsibility to work now to shape our future, not to inherit the one we will surely get. Paulo Freire’s work shows potential for achieving this nexus. I was at a conference in Cartagena, Colombia in May in 1997 that held a formal memorial for Paulo Freire and his contributions to education.

At that time a letter from Paulo was read, written just days before his death. In the letter he urged us all to maintain a search for utopia. He warned that we should not allow our resolve to keep up this search to weaken. He argued that once we give up this search – we give up hope.

My hope is that given the current urgency of our country learning about compassion, environmental action and our democratic institutions that we will insist on democracy as our way and not ScoMo’s. We must work to ensure the sustainability of our future as agencies, communities and cultures.

This is an edited version of the speech Leon delivered at his Life Membership induction ceremony in February.



Leon White addressing delegates at the 2020 AEU Federal Conference

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Shaping the future

After 35 years of teaching, Carolyn Edwards is still excited about new opportunities

For Carolyn Edwards, teaching and unionism are in her blood. “From a union point of view, but also a principal point of view, it runs in my family. My grandparents were staunch ALP members in Queensland during Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s time.

“My dad was a principal. He was in the union in one form or another since 1967. He knew Col Young (a former AEU NT Secretary). My dad was at a meeting with Col in Chung Wah Hall in Darwin in about 1968 to discuss forming a union here.”

Carolyn was born in the Territory and did nearly all her schooling here. Growing up, she moved “all around the Territory”, courtesy of her father’s work. She started as a teacher at Malak Primary in 1985, back when it was a very large school with rows of demountables.

After a few years at Gray Primary, she moved to Humpty Doo Primary in 1991 and remained there for most of the next 16 years. It was there that her passion for leadership awakened. “At the time there was very strong leadership there – people like Glenda Sharp and Maree Bredhauer. It was an environment that was inclusive of developing young leaders.

“This coincided with the introduction of the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF). The Territory has always been good at taking things from elsewhere. The NTCF was a recognition that we needed to develop approaches that we were strong in.”

After a stint as an assistant principal at Humpty Doo, punctuated by a year overseas on exchange in Canada, an opportunity arose to take an acting AP role at Henbury School. Carolyn went on to become principal and worked there for more than a decade.

A driving question at Henbury, Carolyn says, was asking what education looks like beyond the written curriculum. “Working in a special school is the most rewarding thing anyone can do. It’s about celebrating the smallest of achievements. Sometimes we’re so focused on where all the students need to be, whereas at Henbury it’s all about individualised education.

“It was so powerful to think beyond the fence line, not having to be constrained with what happens within these buildings, but asking: how can we get businesses involved? How can we

build partnerships? That’s where the Henbury Corporate Luncheon came from, and then later the op shop and café at Aralia St.”

A new opportunity arose in 2019: to become the founding principal at the Territory’s newest public school, Zuccoli Primary in Palmerston.

Although the setting is different, Carolyn says the challenge, just like at Henbury, is to be innovative. “A big part of the brief at Zuccoli was that it was to be a future-focused school. Taking the job was exciting for me because I could continue to influence what happens in a school, but also go back to my roots in primary.

“We’ve made the focus inquiry-based learning right from the very beginning. The staff who have been selected have that background. It is also play-based learning, because we are early childhood heavy.”

Carolyn says the biggest change she’s noticed in her education career is today there is a far more centralised approach to improving teaching and learning.

“What I’ve really noticed in the last couple of years in the NT is that the support for school improvement is very focused and there is an emphasis on system improvement and doing things together. For example, when we have our leaders’ conferences, it is everybody together, including teaching principals, rather than north vs south.

“What’s important is that we are encouraged to be individuals. So long as we’re meeting system priorities, schools are encouraged to develop our own approaches. We’re not all clones of each other. There are common threads, but when it comes down to nuts and bolts, we have capacity to shape things at a school level.”

There is a unique opportunity to shape the future at Zuccoli, with a small teaching staff of 10, including three neophytes, this year while the rest of the school is built. Carolyn is focused on passing on what she’s learned to the next generation, emphasising she wants all her teachers to become leaders.



Carolyn overseeing stage 2 of construction at Zuccoli

When it's time for a change

New transfer procedures make moving schools easier and should open up more permanent teaching vacancies, writes Mick McCarthy

Whether you are a permanent or fixed term teacher, you need to be aware of the new school transfer and unattaching arrangements the AEU NT has negotiated with the Department, which are now operational.

These new policies and procedures were an agreed outcome of our new enterprise agreement (EA) process finalised in 2018. They represent a significant step forward for schools and teachers and are intended to create:

- A fair, equitable mechanism for permanent classroom teachers to change workplaces, regardless of region or school;
- More school-based positions that can be opened up and filled on a permanent basis (via the current Permanency Project or future iterations).

There is also an advantage in that, potentially, there will always be a small pool of experienced and existing NT teachers who could fill urgent vacancies in a shorter time than advertising and identifying a suitable candidate externally.

Transfers will fall into categories of priority covering all envisaged needs to move:

- Guaranteed – remote teachers retain their entitlement to transfer to Darwin, Katherine or Alice Springs after three years;
- Compassionate – family or personal reasons for needing a change of location;
- Voluntary, or “school to school” – a wish to move



Sometimes applying for a transfer is just because you need a change

for career or just change purposes.

As at present, it is envisaged that where exporting and importing Principals agree, that will continue to deliver the swiftest outcomes. Other classifications also deserve similar consideration and the AEU NT will seek to expand transfer policy coverage to other employee groups.

The other form of movement that occurs in our system is when a permanent teacher takes a fixed term position either at level or as a temporary promotion. Until now, that person's substantive, or “owned”, position is kept for them, backfilled indefinitely on a fixed term basis.

We know of many teachers who have no need or wish to return to that position, so why block the opportunity for someone else to have a permanent job? Going forward, positions will be held open for a maximum of two years. Individuals currently away from their owned positions will be asked their intentions.

Employees can agree to return to their substantive position after two years, or be placed in the pool of teachers requiring placement in a suitable vacancy, with the freedom to apply for positions you would like to fill.

During Term 1, senior departmental HR officers are providing information sessions on the new arrangements to senior and corporate managers and to principals. Their acceptance and use of the processes are important in keeping the pool of teachers seeking or needing to move at a manageable size, by accepting suitable teachers into their team or school.

There will be a departmental governance process to ensure there is consistent participation by schools and reviews of the process after six and 12 months from implementation, with the AEU NT able to provide input.

A good proportion of members want to stay at the workplace they are currently in. Nothing in these new changes weakens their existing tenure. However, for those that need to or just want to move on, they now have a transparent and measured process they can engage in (with help from our office as needed) to improve their personal and family lives or progress their career.

There are also benefits for fixed term employees and principals that together can contribute to a more stable, happier workforce – which will deliver better outcomes for students in our public schools.



Melody O'Meara, Project Officer

Melody has joined our team this year as a Project Officer. There's a good chance you'll see her in your workplace soon

It is my privilege to have gained the position of Project Officer (Membership and Recruitment) with the AEU NT.

Despite some big shoes to fill following the departure of Tim Davis Frank, I am excited about getting out into as many schools as possible and learning more about the experiences of a wide range of teachers and support staff.

I spent 2019 as an English teacher at Darwin High School, 2016-2018 teaching Middle Years at Ramingining School, and 10 years before that teaching English at a range of regional and urban schools in Victoria.



Melody (centre) with Henbury School AEU reps Nim and Julie

I am a long-term AEU member but it has only been since moving to the Territory that I have become involved beyond attending sub-branch meetings and supporting strike action when it arose.

I was a sub-branch representative for most of my time at Ramingining School and learnt a lot sitting on the Branch Executive for a year as one of the Arnhem Councillors. I am looking forward to learning

more again this year as a Project Officer and hope to visit your school or workplace at some stage.

So far I've already visited many sub-branches in Darwin and Palmerston as well as Katherine. Later this term I will visit Alice Springs and Groote. The union office has mapped out a schedule for the rest of the year to ensure we visit and support as many members and workplaces as possible.



2020 AEU NT Branch Conference 1-3 May, Darwin Hilton

Registrations and sub-branch motions close Friday 20 March www.aeunt.org.au

Think before you post

Workers should be aware of their employer's policies if they intend to use social media, including outside work time, writes Henry Pill of Hall Payne Lawyers

A lot of workplaces permit, or even encourage, use of social media in work time. But as a recent case involving a WBBL cricketer demonstrates, social media use at work or about work can have negative consequences for workers.

The suspension of Hobart Hurricanes wicketkeeper, Emily Smith for three months after a single post to Instagram showing a team line-up prior to a game, is a timely reminder for employees to consider any ramifications from social media use in the workplace. While Smith's post was intended to be light-hearted, her employer, Cricket Australia, ultimately found that she had breached its anti-corruption code and handed out a heavy penalty.

While the experiences of top-level cricketers might seem a long way from your average workplace, there are lessons for all workers about social media use in the workplace. Like Cricket Australia, many employers have policies about social media.

Some workplaces allow workers to use social media in the workplace but many have restrictions on the timing, frequency or type of use for a range of reasons.

In Smith's case, a light-hearted shot from the team dressing room had a profound effect on Ms Smith's Career!

Many employers have a prohibition of "excessive" social media use (such as using social media excessively, or at all) or a ban on using social media



It's a good idea to set the privacy settings on your accounts tightly

during safety-critical times or tasks.

Understanding when and how your employer permits social media to be used in the workplace is important if workers want to avoid breaching policies, even unintentionally, that could lead to disciplinary action including the potential for dismissal.

Protecting confidential information

Workers handling confidential information will likely be subject to policies and procedures designed to protect that confidential information which belongs to the company or clients or customers.

When posting on social media at work, workers should be wary of the risks of inadvertently disclosing information which might be confidential.

This kind of information might include:

- worker, client or customer names or contact details;
- information which may amount to trade secrets or intellectual property of the employer; or
- information which may be critical to workplace safety or security.

The best way for workers to stay on the right side of their obligations is to have a good understanding of their employer's policies around social media use and confidentiality.

Social media use outside of work

Your social media behaviour outside of work can also impact your job. There are numerous cases of employees being sacked for comments they have made about their bosses, colleagues or the company they work for. Banter that at the pub on a Friday after work would just be usual venting, when posted on social media can result in losing your job.

In certain circumstances, even posts made outside of work time which have nothing to do with your employment might breach a social media policy or code of conduct. These can include posts or messages which might offend other people, be abusive, threatening or discriminatory.

What can you do to stay out of trouble?

There are a number of things you can do to make sure your posts don't get you into trouble.

- Read your employer's social media policy;
- Place a statement on your social media page that the page expresses your private views, not those of your employer;
- Make sure you have tight privacy settings on your social media page so that it can only be viewed by friends and family;
- Think before you post! Save a tweet/post in draft, sleep on it and see if you think it is a good idea in the morning;
- Don't post while affected by drugs or alcohol. Really, this is almost always bad and never as funny as it seems at the time.

This article is adapted from Hall Payne's website - hallpayne.com.au. It is general advice only. For specialised assistance contact the AEU NT or Hall Payne.

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