

AEU NT Member Bulletin 4/2017

27 October 2017

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World Teachers Day

Today is a day of celebration and recognition for the incredible work done by teachers. We would like to acknowledge all our members, and offer special congratulations to those of you nominated for a Teaching in the Territory Excellence Award!

NAPLAN Online

A meeting of Education Ministers in December will be asked to approve the NAPLAN test moving to an online format in 2019. The proposal is being driven by the curriculum authority, ACARA.

After much discussion at a national level and in every Branch, the AEU is unanimous in opposing the shift to NAPLAN Online.

The concern of the teaching profession is that moving the test online will further exacerbate the existing problems with Australia's testing regime. We are concerned that it will reinforce inequity faced by students from lower socio-economic, regional and remote communities, and distort the curriculum by forcing young children to focus on developing ICT proficiency to complete the test, at the expense of developing core skills like reading and writing.

Perhaps the most concerning aspect of the online shift is ACARA's intention that students' written work would be marked by computers. ACARA first proposed this in a paper in 2015, and claims that robots can mark students' work as well as teachers.

The AEU NSW Branch commissioned Les Perelman, an expert from Boston's prestigious MIT, to critique robot-marking. Perelman found that there are deep methodological flaws with the approach, because a robot has no capacity for human reasoning. Some of his key criticisms are:

- That robots can only detect low grade attributes of writing;
- That robots cannot detect "the most important elements of a text";
- That the ACARA "Report" uses evidence and data selectively and poorly;
- That ACARA ignores any authority critical of robot marking;
- That robots and humans should not be used in conjunction in marking;
- That even robots as grammar checkers are seriously flawed;
- That overseas evidence shows robot marking discriminating against some social groups;
- That introducing robots will encourage regressive teaching practices.

Our Branch Executive formally registered its opposition to the NAPLAN Online, and conveyed our position to the Education Minister, Eva Lawler. We will shortly write to the Minister formally requesting that she,

along with the other state and territory ministers, reject the proposal to move the NAPLAN test online in 2019.

Further reading

[Branch Executive resolution regarding NAPLAN Online](#)

[Les Perelman, Automated Essay Scoring and NAPLAN: A Summary Report](#)

Long-service leave

A number of members have contacted the union office seeking advice in relation to use of long-service leave (LSL) entitlements. Following a review by the Auditor-General's Office which recommended NTPS reduce liabilities associated with leave from their books, employees who have what is deemed an "excessive" amount of leave have been contacted and asked to state when they plan to use their accrued LSL (or in some cases, recreation leave) and whether they wish to have some or all of it cashed out.

NTPS By-Law 8 sets out the rules of accrual and use of LSL. The relevant section is as follows:

Maximum credit

8.3 Subject to by-law 8.5, an employee is required to use a long service leave entitlement within three (3) years of:

(a) the 10 year entitlement accruing; or

(b) the 11 to 20 year entitlement accruing; provided that the CEO and the employee may agree to temporarily defer the leave to meet special circumstances which will include, but not be limited to, agency and/or personal needs.

8.4 An employee who has not obtained approval from the CEO to delay the utilisation of his/her long service leave beyond the three (3) year limit specified in by-law 8.3 will:

(a) be directed by the CEO to utilise the 10 year long service leave entitlement from a date which suits the needs of the agency; or

(b) have the 10 year long service leave entitlement cashed out from the date determined in by-law 8.4(a).

The full by-law is [available at the OCPE website](#).

By-law 8 means that there is a requirement for employees to gain approval from the Department to hold unused LSL for more than three years after accruing it.

However, it is obviously incumbent upon the employer to monitor employees' LSL accrual and clearly numerous agencies have been lax in doing this, hence many staff have built up what is deemed an excess entitlement.

Our advice to affected members is to make clear to your principal and/or manager when you intend to take your LSL. You should not have to agree to cash out your leave if this does not suit you. If you are having issues, contact the union office for advice.

Contact the AEU

Please let us know ASAP if your workplace, contact details or income have changed

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