

TERRITORY Educator

Magazine Of The Australian Education Union – NT Branch



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Michelle Ayres
(Full-Time Officer, acting 2022; elected from January 2023)
Jarvis Ryan (Full-Time Officer, 2015-2022)

Branch Secretary

Rachael Metcalfe (Full-Time Officer, from January 2023)
Adam Lampe (Full-Time Officer, until January 2023)

Vice-President (General)

Brian Gray, Relief (from January 2023)
Michael Pearson, Darwin Middle School (until January 2023)

Vice-President (TAFE)

VACANT (2023)
Delean Holtze, Batchelor Institute (until January 2023)

Treasurer

Michael Stimpson, Nhulunbuy High School (from January 2023)
Julie Danvers, Maningrida School/Nightcliff Middle School
(until January 2023)

Women's Officer

Melody O'Meara, Relief 2022/AEU NT Office (from August 2022)

Indigenous Councillor

VACANT (2023)
Bilyana Noel Blomeley, Casuarina Senior College
(until January 2023)

Arnhem

2 x VACANCIES (2023)
Brian Gray, Yirrkala School
Gwen Warmbirriri, Mililngimbi School (retired end 2022)

Alice Springs

Gillian Furniss, Centralian Senior College
Ken Guest, Acacia Hill School

Barkly

1 x VACANCY (2023)
Georgia McClanachan, Tennant Creek High School
(until January 2023)

Darwin

Deb Lamb, Nightcliff Middle School
Nim Jayawardhana, Henbury School
Melissa Rabar, Namarluk School
Emily Parker, Darwin High School

Katherine

1 x VACANCY (2023)
Sarah Colomb, Katherine High School
Andre Retrot, Katherine High School (until end 2022)

Palmerston & Rural

1 x VACANCY (2023)
Robyn Berton, Taminmin College
Lorenzo Siciliano, Taminmin College
Rachael Metcalfe, Forrest Parade/Darwin Middle School
(until January 2023)

AEU NT Staff

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AEU NT membership team (Bridget and Melody) with Emily Parker (centre), Darwin High rep and Darwin Executive Councillor

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Arnhem members standing up for education during our Territory-wide strike

Cracking the ice and a better deal for teachers

After a stalemate of almost 18 months, the AEU NT, in alliance with other NTPS unions officially cracked the pay freeze! Chief Minister Natasha Fyles made the welcome announcement early October 2022. Following continued negotiations to strike a better deal, members voted up the new 2021-2024 enterprise agreement. Signed by Fair Work 18 January 2023, teachers can now expect a 3% pa compounding pay rise, backdated to October 2021.

Eligible employees should see backpay in accounts during February. Anyone whose employment falls under the new agreement and is technically considered to have been employed on 18 Jan date of signing is eligible for backpay. Other wins in this agreement include additional NCT for graduate teachers and mentors, banking of FOILS, improved career progression opportunities for Assistant Teachers, formalisation of new Katherine retention payments, an additional PD day, abolition of CT5-CT6 progression hurdles and commitments to review teacher workloads and homeland teacher allowances.

Branch elections

AEU NT Branch Officer elections were completed late-2022 with the positions of President, Branch Secretary, Vice-President and Treasurer contested. Congratulations to successful candidates, Michelle Ayres (President), Rachael Metcalfe (Branch Secretary), Brian Gray (Vice-President General) and Michael Stimpson (Treasurer) on winning their elections. Melody O'Meara was elected unopposed to a second term as Women's Officer.

Vice-President TAFE and Executive Councillor representing Indigenous members are currently vacant due to insufficient nominations. Commendations to all who stood. In 2022, the Branch Executive welcomed Andre Retrot (Katherine High School), Lorenzo Siciliano (Taminmin College), Georgia McClanachan (Tennant Creek High School), Emily Parker (Darwin High School), Gwen Warmbirrri (Milingimbi School) and Bilyana Noel Blomeley (Casuarina Senior College) as Indigenous Councillor.

Thank you to Cassandra Brown, who represented our Indigenous members for many years and to Delean Holtze for representing our TAFE division for such a long time. Their positions were not recontested. We wish outgoing Treasurer Julie Danvers (Nightcliff Middle School) the best and thank her for her many years of service to the AEU NT.

We acknowledge the significant contribution of outgoing Vice-President General Michael Pearson (Darwin Middle School). Gwen Warmbirrri has our sincere thanks for her valuable contributions last year as she moves into well-deserved retirement. Georgia McClanachan and Andre Retrot are also moving on in 2023 and we thank them for their service. We also appreciate the efforts of Bilyana Noel Blomeley who faithfully served as Indigenous Councillor during 2022.

Elections for 2023 vacancies are pending AEC notification and timelines. For more information about Branch Executive

please contact Branch Secretary Rachael Metcalfe.

Secondary school review

Deloitte Access Economics, in partnership with the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University has been engaged to review secondary education in the Northern Territory. Current secondary education delivery for all students will be considered and options for improvement identified. Findings and a recommended approach will be shared publicly following consideration by Government with a final report due in May.

A Principal Reference Group and Expert Reference Group is planned to inform review recommendations and findings. Education Minister Eva Lawler says "...it is important to periodically review school resourcing arrangements to ensure that funding is equitable, needs-based and sufficient, and to identify any opportunities to strengthen education delivery." It is the sincere hope of this union that the aforementioned "needs-based" funding is prioritised.

Attendance-based 'effective enrolment' funding report released

Speaking of 'needs-based' funding, news of the planned abolition of the 'effective enrolment' policy was akin to an early Christmas present for many. While we welcome the announcement and want to work with Government on policy development, we remain concerned about timeframes. Read more from Dan Yore on page 7. Help us keep Government accountable by encouraging your colleagues to sign up at aeunt.org.au/membership/.

Mobile phones banned at school

We are interested to hear how your school is going with the new mobile phone ban as per Education Minister Eva Lawler's announcement late 2022. The new policy strives to strike a balance between harnessing the educational value of mobile devices and the risk of distraction and social harm through misuse. The move has been welcomed by COGSO, with President Tabby Fudge describing the announcement as "...a further commitment by the Minister towards our children and young adults' mental health and wellbeing." Email aeunt@aeunt.org.au and tell us how the policy is going at your school.

Katherine teachers get new housing support scheme

Now formalised in the new agreement, Katherine teachers will receive an increase to relocation allowances - up from 10 fortnights to 15. This is a direct result of grassroots member activism. New and existing teachers will also be awarded an annual \$3,500 retention payment to assist housing costs. Arrangements for those under the grandfathered subsidy will continue. The payment will be made to all Katherine school-based educators in two instalments at the end of each semester. We look forward to hearing from members about the efficacy of this new scheme.

WE DID IT! TOGETHER



Branch President Michelle Ayres reflects on the year that was and looks forward to holding Government to account in 2023

What a year! 2022 was a hard year for most, as we battled to overturn the wage freeze. No matter how Government might try to spin it, there is no doubt in my mind that a 9% pay rise over three years is anything less than a major win for our union. That victory belongs to you, the members.

Government was knocked off its game when you stood up and put words into action by walking off the job.

Government was knocked off its game when you stood up and put words into action by walking off the job. With no industrial action since 2014, they weren't expecting it. All it took was one four-hour strike to send our employer scrambling back to the table.

We surprised again when we did not bow to the last-minute attempt to stop our Territory-wide strike and rejected Wage Freeze 3.0: a confusing offer that meant some got crumbs and others got nothing.

I have rarely been prouder than the two days in September when, first, over 1,000 teachers joined the Territory-wide NTPS Day of Action despite attempts to quiet us and then, shortly afterwards, 86.3% of you voted down an offer some believed was sure to get up. These strong actions sent

Government the clear message that they must end the wage freeze.

But you didn't stop there! Hundreds of teachers continued to pile on the pressure to shift the now 2% wages cap with our work-to-rule campaign and the NTPS Day of Action in November. Finally, thanks to the action you took, we pushed Government from a four-year wage freeze of 0% pa to compounding increases of 9% over three years.

But this was not our victory alone. The NTPS Public Sector alliance was instrumental in ending the freeze. The Unions NT Executive has since passed a unanimous motion thanking teachers for our solidarity and our pivotal role in smashing the wage freeze.

The work of my predecessor, Jarvis Ryan must also be recognised. He led development of the 'Lose the Pay Freeze, Keep our Teachers' campaign and, alongside former Branch Secretary Adam Lampe, made a substantial contribution to negotiations. His seven years as AEU NT Branch President stabilised and grew our branch. We wish him and his family all the best.

As your elected Branch President, I can't wait to work with you to hold the NTG and DoE accountable, especially on proposed changes to the school funding model. Together, we can achieve anything



NOV 2020	Gunner announces Wage Freeze 0% pa pay rises \$4k bonuses/4 years
2021	AEU negotiates and drafts EA AOs vote down GA before accepting Wage Freeze 2.0: 0% pa pay rises \$10k bonuses/4 years
APR 2022	Teachers vote down Wage Freeze 2.0 (87.5% NO)
MAY 2022	Branch Conference votes unanimously to pursue Protected Industrial Action
AUG 2022	Parap 4hr Strike Wage Freeze 3.0 offered: 0% pa pay rises \$8k bonuses + classification restructure
SEPT 2022	NTPS Day of Action NT wide strike Wage Freeze 3.0 defeated (86.3% NO)
OCT 2022	Natasha Fyles announces end of Wage Freeze: 2% pa pay rise cap AEU returns to bargaining
NOV 2022	NTPS Day of Action Teachers receive new offer: 3% pa pay rises
DEC 2022	Teachers vote YES to 9% pay rise /3 years Release time for ECTs Katherine housing bonuses + more
2023	We're Worth More Funding for Failure-Success
FEB 2023	6% pay rise Backpay Oct 21 - Oct 22
MAR 2023	Backpay Oct 22 - present
OCT 2023	3% pay rise
2024	Return to bargaining Claims strategically developed and lobbied for across 2023 and 2024

QUIETLY *Optimistic*

Outgoing Branch Secretary Adam Lampe looks to the future as he reflects on his time with the AEU NT

As one not inclined toward optimism, I am quietly hopeful that 2023 will be a better year.

Against all kinds of odds 2022 ended triumphantly for the AEU NT: a new enterprise agreement was voted up by a healthy majority; an agreement which now covers all NT school principals who choose ongoing over contract employment, and the NT Government finally capitulated to the overwhelming evidence that attendance-based funding contributes to poor student outcomes. The challenge for the union now will be to move the grinding wheels of government toward a more constructive funding model sooner rather than later.

The new enterprise agreement did not deliver the kind of pay rises everyone would have liked but given that less than twelve months ago the NT Government was still refusing to back down from its policy of a four-year pay freeze, the offer of actual annual pay rises was a huge step forward. The cracking of the wage freeze would not have happened last year without the solidarity, commitment, and actions of AEU NT members, which also helped to galvanise other unions across the Northern Territory. It is an achievement of which our union should be proud.

With COVID measures winding down in the second half of last year (a trend that hopefully continues) and the election of a new AEU NT team led by Michelle Ayres, 2022 did seem like a watershed moment and a good time to move on from my role as Branch Secretary. Teaching has always been my first love, and I had envisioned that I would retire in the classroom. That is still the plan.

I am proud of my service in the AEU NT. I was first elected Branch Secretary in 2007, but I was a Darwin Regional Councillor from 2004 and Darwin Regional President from 2001, as well as being the sub-branch representative at Dripstone High School from the mid-1990s. There have been many



Adam pictured at the 2017 Alice Springs Conference

highlights. Here are few:

- **1996** - Being locked out of Dripstone High due to strike action which led to the introduction of two hours non-contact time (an increase from zero hours) for primary school teachers.
- **Combined Darwin/Palmerston** regional mass stop-work meetings moving from the greyhound track to Marrara Stadium in the mid-2000s. Heaps of fun.
- **2007** - WorkChoices confusing everyone, Your Rights at Work Campaign ending in Labor's victory and John Howard's defeat. Also, the chaos of the AEU NT annual conference in Nhulunbuy and everyone having a whale of a time.
- **2009** - NT Labor uses WorkChoices to suspend AEU NT's right to strike - a lowlight - overturned on appeal to Fair Work, ending with primary school teachers getting an extra hour non-contact time and a majority of teachers getting a 12% pay rise within the first 18 months of the enterprise agreement - those were the days.
- **2009-2012** - succeeding Matthew Gardiner as Unions NT Secretary and having, with Heinz Schmit (NTEU) as Unions NT President, an actual functional and fruitful relationship with the NT Government that provided positive outcomes for the broader labor movement in the NT.
- **2014** Annual Conference where both President and Secretary failed to show. It was left to Vice-President Stephen Pelizzo to run things, which he did with his usual aplomb.

- **2017-21** - Working with an energetic, stable, and supportive union office team led by Jarvis Ryan, which was already in place that I was fortunate to inherit when I got elected in 2017. They helped the union deliver four years of surpluses and put the AEU NT back into a healthy financial place. They were also supportive beyond measure over the COVID period.

I can mention many more: these are just some of the things that cross my mind at time of writing. I've avoided mentioning the many people to whom I owe a debt during my time as Branch Secretary of the AEU NT - there are too many - but you know who you are, and you have my undying thanks and best wishes. I'm not going anywhere. I'll still be a proud AEU NT member teaching in the NT. So, I'll see you around.



Sharing a laugh with former Vice-President Stephen Pelizzo, former AEU NT organiser Tim Davis Frank and past President Jarvis Ryan at Alice Springs Conference 2017

An INTRODUCTION

Rachael Metcalfe, Branch Secretary

Rachael Metcalfe is a long-standing member and PAR Executive Councillor. Her education background is as a SEN teacher and Secondary school teacher in Aotearoa NZ, the UK and NT. We welcome the breadth of knowledge and experience she brings to the role.

It is my privilege to have won the post as Branch Secretary of the AEU NT at the recent branch elections, late 2022. Despite some big shoes to fill following the departure of Adam Lampe, I am excited about taking on the challenges of this multi-faceted leadership role and co-stewardship of our branch.

I am passionate about advocating for members in our union. Since emigrating from the UK in 2012 with my late husband, I have held the role of sub-branch president at Nganmariyanga, Forrest Parade and was sub-branch secretary at Shepherdson College. I was awarded the 2021 Sub-branch Rep of the Year Award at Conference. Deepening and

broadening my union commitment, I have held the post of PAR Regional Councillor on the AEU NT Branch Executive since 2019, have been chosen to attend the Federal Women's Conference in Melbourne and served on both the Branch Executive Finance Committee and on the AEU NT bargaining team last year. I have been a regular contributor to annual Conferences and have been involved the Unions NT Women's Action Network.

It has been my privilege to teach across a wide range of settings and contexts in the NT: three remote schools and homelands, two SEN schools and primary satellite classes and a middle school. In the UK I taught, was a



Branch Secretary Rachael Metcalfe joins the team

Subject Leader and then managed (ST1-ST3) a specialist setting within an adolescent mental health unit for a total of eleven years.

I have also volunteered as a Registered Company Director in the UK for four years, co-managing a complex of 129 apartments with their leaseholders, legally winning the 'Right to Manage', managing budgets, insurance claims and matters of leasehold law.

I stand for a union that is fair, compassionate, and unstinting in its pursuit of the best conditions, support for its members and the future of NT Public Education.



Janette enjoying a break before taking on her new role

Janette Moore, Administration Officer

The AEU NT welcomes Janette to this crucial administrative position

I'm a born and bred Territorian and Cyclone Tracy survivor. I've lived in Darwin all my life, with the temporary exception of moving to Perth for a few years after the cyclone. As a teen in Darwin my Friday nights were spent at Skateworld in Nightcliff (where the new cop shop now sits) and Sundays down at the sailing club on Dad's

catamaran racing the afternoons away out on the harbour.

Most of my working life was in the trenches at Casuarina Centrelink (DSS when I first started in a traineeship). You name it, I've seen it! After 25 years I needed a change and did a bit of retail work with Target for something different. A few more exciting opportunities popped up over the years that I took advantage of, expanding my learning, gaining a few qualifications, and now here I am with the AEU NT!

Bridget O'Dwyer, Project Officer (Recruitment and Membership)

Bridget O'Dwyer brings a wealth of teaching experience and strong AEU credentials to the Project Officer role

During my education career, I developed my professional role within school communities and through my passion for public education. I have worked in varied primary classroom environments over the past two decades, including urban and rural Victoria and the UK. I moved to the NT in 2016 and spent six years living and teaching on the Tiwi Islands. Currently, I have taken leave from Humpty Doo Primary School to work with the AEU NT branch.

Attendance at AEU Active Training in 2010 has since seen me hold continuous sub-branch representative positions. I participated in the Women

in Leadership Development (WILD) program (AEU Vic.), gaining valuable exposure to issues and mentoring from AEU officers. Here in the NT, I was awarded the IEU NT Delegate of the Year for 2017 in recognition of my achievements and commitment to union members.

Having formed part of the first Project Officer - Membership and Recruitment team with the Victorian branch in 2015, I am really pleased to now be performing the role within the Northern Territory context. The challenge of projects, assisting members and strengthening the AEU through membership are all



Bridget driving membership for the AEU as part of the first Project Officer team at AEU Victoria

factors in my enthusiasm for the job. I thoroughly enjoy venturing out to schools and keeping in touch with teachers and education settings. I gain great satisfaction from empowering colleagues to address in-situ workplace issues, as well as those impacting the profession overall.

PARTNERSHIPS THE *Priority*

Bulman School principal Irene Singleton speaks with Melody O'Meara about recent school and community achievements

Situated four hours from Katherine up the Central Arnhem Highway and 200kms on the dirt after Beswick is Bulman School. The cattle station community of Bulman is also known as Gulin Gulin, Mardulk or Yulngu. The neighboring community of Weemol is three kilometres north-west.

Irene Singleton has been principal of Bulman School for six years and is excited to have returned to the helm in 2022. During her five-year absence, the school saw a revolving door of 13 principals.

Irene cites the school's greatest asset as their five Assistant Teachers (ATs). They are the same, dedicated women she worked with in the past and she values the consistency they afford the school.

The leadership and initiative shown by these people is amazing

"The leadership and initiative shown by these people is amazing" Irene says as she talks about their work together on "rebuilding school and community relationships with the language and culture program a focus." Irene credits high staff morale to "investment in building the capacity of local staff" and says they are "really stepping up and the LOC program is going well in partnership with Mimal Land Management Group."

In a forward-looking solution to the difficulty of sourcing teachers, Irene



Students and staff pictured with Chief Minister Natasha Fyles



Member for Arnhem Selena Uiibo pictured with local staff

is creating an AO4 position with Duty of Care, so a high-performing AT can teach independently and grow themselves as a professional educator. Irene hopes for more progress in improving pathways for ATs to become fully registered and is adamant that "they deserve better."

Irene knows from experience that "it is often harder to find staff out here [in Bulman] than in bigger remote schools and the Australia-wide teacher shortage doesn't help." She acknowledges the impact of interstate incentives but knows "they [teachers] don't only do it for the money, but when there is so much choice, they do begin to think about it."

The planned abolishment of attendance-based funding policy 'effective enrolment' couldn't have come sooner. Irene feels it is important to understand that "there are so many community and contextual factors that impact attendance, usually out of our control that we must respect."

She cites Sorry Business falling in critical weeks of the year as having a disproportionate and unfair impact on attendance and final funding. "Schools must be funded on

enrolments. We need that reassurance of funding and could use that bit extra to implement innovative programs to improve engagement and attendance."

The school recently welcomed Chief Minister Natasha Fyles and Member for Arnhem Selena Uiibo. Chief Minister Fyles praised school attendance levels of "almost 100%" and said she enjoyed meeting such "bright, energetic young Territorians."

Irene stresses that the "wellbeing of staff and students is always my biggest priority" and cannot emphasise the importance of meaningful rewards for the "professionalism, ownership, reliability and consistency" of ATs enough. This and an appropriate funding model, are the "keys to what remote schools need."

LOC trip in partnership with Mimal Land Management



WHY NT KIDS CAN'T BE LEFT WAITING FOR GONSKI A THIRD TIME



A typical remote school oval (Ti Tree School sports day)

Dan Yore was the 2020 NT Secondary Teacher of the Year, a 2021 Commonwealth SchoolPlus Teaching Award Fellow and Commonwealth DESE John Monash Scholar. He served on the AEU NT Branch Executive as an Arnhem Executive Councillor 2018-20 whilst teaching at Yirrkala School.

Territory kids will start the 2023 school year yet again being the most underfunded by need in Australia. It is a consequence in part due to the Northern Territory's attendance-based funding system, described in a recent Deloitte review as "punitive, significantly impact[ing] on equity within the system," and ultimately "in dissonance with the Education Department's policy goals."

In its so-called 'effective' enrolment policy, the Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction in Australia to fund schools based on attendance rather than enrolment - with disastrous consequences for the Territory's most disadvantaged schools.

Despite additional needs-based loadings being provided for disadvantaged students throughout Australia, the Deloitte review provided analysis demonstrating how the NT Government funding model ostensibly cancels these out. Interestingly and in the same breath, the review report clearly outlines the Commonwealth Education Act's Section 78(5) requirement that all States

and Territories implement a needs-based funding arrangement.

Effective enrolment is a funding system designed to fail both students and teachers. With a slew of system indicators currently flashing red, it's clear that's exactly what's going on. Year-on-year attendance has dropped across the Territory since the introduction of attendance-based funding as part of school budget reforms in 2014.

PISA results are worse than they were at the turn of the century, and NT teachers are working an average of 60 hours per week to close the resourcing gap, with less than 20% indicating that they see themselves in the classroom in five years.

NT Education Minister Eva Lawler recently accepted the full set of Deloitte review recommendations, including the abolition of effective enrolment, with the NT set to follow the rest of the country and fund on enrolment. However, the implementation timeline for this new policy

is estimated to be anywhere between two and five years, implying that a system already demonstrably inequitable that disproportionately impacts Indigenous students will continue for some time.

A shift to enrolment-based funding will necessitate increased Commonwealth co-investment. This is on the table, with Federal Minister Jason Clare pledging at the end of last year to "get every school to 100% of [their] fair funding."

To do so, another panel of "eminent Australians" will be convened, pushing the current funding agreements out another year, until the end of 2024. With the results of Gonski 1.0 (2011) and Gonski 2.0 (2018) fairly clear, a Gonski 3.0 type report will almost certainly simply confirm what we already know, representing nothing more than playing for time.

It is time that students in Northern Territory schools no longer have. With the system collapsing right in front of our eyes, they cannot be forced to wait for their Gonski funding a third time.

DEAFENING SILENCE

on Homelands continues



The dire need for funding certainty and infrastructure improvements on homelands continues to be ignored. Remote NT teacher and AEU NT Life Member Leon J White OAM calls for urgent action.

My involvement with homelands education started at Yirrkala in 1974 and has continued ever since as an adult educator, BIITE lecturer and principal. In 2019, I was part of the Review into Education Services in Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs) with Laura Berta. We visited the eight hub schools and 29 HLCs then operating across the NT. In every community, the expectation of action was clear. For three years since, the silence of the system in response to our report has been deafening.

The problems raised in the report are fundamentally linked to the recruitment, retention and remuneration of all educators working in homelands. The NT Government's inaction on our recommendations has prolonged the neglect and disadvantage suffered by families in homeland communities. There are fundamental human rights issues at stake.

The context

Homeland residents have chosen a modern hybrid lifestyle on their own country, drawing on both traditional and mainstream cultures. HLCs are essentially miniature schools in these very remote communities, run from a central 'hub' school or office. Absurdly, these are all lumped together for funding purposes as though they were a single site.

The staffing arrangement in homelands is also unique - with one or more local HLC teachers supported by a Visiting Teacher (VT) - and requires high-level collaborative practice. This needs to be included in VT job descriptions as it requires a

change of roles entirely: from a classroom educator to a teacher trainer. As Mr W Wunungmurra said to Yirrkala staff in 1986, "we don't want you to teach our children, we want you to work beside our teachers to support them in their study."

The consequences of a system that fails to adequately service these communities and look after the well-being of homeland educators are huge. We must ensure equitable resourcing. Mainstream models and the current mindset just don't work!

Community-based professional development

A key recommendation of the HLC Review was professional development of HLCs and the identified need for community-based provision. Previously, Batchelor College (now Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education) provided such programs through the Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program until its demise in the late 1990s. The subsequent decline in the numbers of trained Aboriginal teachers in NT schools has been not only disastrous, but shameful.

The key driving power of the original RATE program was its 'Both Ways' approach - establishing communities of Aboriginal educators from across the NT to work with respected Elders in community-based workshops. These included the yearly Aboriginal Languages Fortnight during which students undertook specific research projects with Elders and linguists. These were then interwoven into teaching and learning programs,

with the guidance and expertise of community mentors.

We often bemoan the lack of continuity in remote education and fail to understand or consider the evidence before us: that the RATE program worked!

As AEU NT members, you should argue for active consideration of the recommendations in the Homeland Education Review and ask:

(1) What is happening with the 'new RATE program' announced to great fanfare in 2020 but which seems to bear little resemblance to its predecessor? Is it a genuine community-based and negotiated approach?

(2) How are the urgent needs of HLCs going to be addressed in the NT Government's new school funding model? Will it reflect the real costs of delivering education in each remote site?

COMRADES WE NEED ACTION!

NOT SILENCE, ON THIS REPORT AND THE 'NEW RATE' PROGRAM TO ENSURE THE NEEDS OF OUR COLLEAGUES IN HOMELANDS ARE ADDRESSED. 'THE SOUND OF SILENCE' IS A GREAT SONG BUT NOT GREAT POLICY. ACTION PLEASE!

An example of visiting teacher accommodation in one of the homelands Leon visited for his 2019 review, some of the deplorable conditions students and teachers have been forced to tolerate and Arnhem members standing up for homelands during our Territory-wide strike

NEW SCHOOL BUILDING UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT MILIŊINBI HOMELAND

Outgoing Arnhem Executive Councillor Gwen Warmbirrirr shares a good news story about plans to improve Langarra Homelands

Langarra (Langarra) is a homeland about one hour's travel by boat from Miliŋinbi (Milingimbi). For years, the school building there was in a bad state and about to collapse, but then the community began to lobby the government to fast-track funding for a new school. They were supported in this by Miliŋinbi School's AEU NT sub-branch which took a motion to the 2021 Conference in Alice Springs. The issue was then taken up by the Full-Time Officers of the day. A year later, we received the good news that Langarra would be getting a new school building! We are looking forward to the school there re-opening in 2023, so the children can live and learn on their own country.

We are also hoping to have another outstation up and running soon at Dīpirri.

A lot of people have recently moved back there from Miliŋinbi and want to live there for the rest of their lives. The community has been talking to the hub school principal, homelands teachers and senior Yolŋu staff. We ask our friends in

the AEU NT to lend us your voices to help us lobby the Department to start a new school at Dīpirri outstation.

Thank you for your support, on behalf of the homeland communities around Miliŋinbi.



Students in Langarra will no longer be forced to learn outside (2019)

Remembering C. NAKAMARRA WHEELER

Long-standing Yuendumu member Wendy Baarda and former sub-branch president Brian Gray honour the memory of a much-loved colleague

Note: In accordance with Warlpiri protocols, the deceased is referred to by her skin name. Permission has been granted to publish her photo.

As a child at Yuendumu School, Nakamarra was a lovely, keen student. She learnt to read early and loved reading Warlpiri books. She very much valued her language and Warlpiri culture.

After school, Nakamarra became an Assistant Teacher and worked for years in the Senior Girls' class. She really cared about those young women and encouraged them to be strong and to look after themselves. Nakamarra was a great teacher, very concerned that her students would learn well and carry on Warlpiri knowledge. She often invited Elders to teach them things like hand signs or traditional ways of

making things. She was always learning herself, reading the old *jukurrpa* (dreaming) stories and writing down the hard words and their meanings. Nakamarra was a skilled hunter too - always getting lots of bush potatoes and goannas on school trips.

Her passion for her students and tireless advocacy for her language and culture drove Nakamarra in 2018 to become Chair of the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust, which reinvests mining royalties into school and community learning initiatives.

Nakamarra showed this same passion in our school's AEU sub-branch, volunteering to be vice-president and nominating herself as Conference delegate.



Nakamarra and Yamurna (Nancy) Oldfield at the 2019 AEU NT Conference in Katherine

At the Katherine 2019 conference, she spoke passionately about bilingual education. The solidarity of her fellow teachers, both *yapa* and *kartiya* (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) made her feel strong and hopeful.

We all miss Nakamarra, especially her family and her little son Royston. It is so sad to lose such a special, beautiful person.

AEU National New Educator's Network (NEN) Conference

Kelby Pointon (Woodroffe Primary School), Keeva Spencer-Wright (Bradshaw Primary School) and Sharna Richards (Ti Tree School) share their experiences of the NEN Conference, 2022. We thank Teachers' Health for fully funding one place at this event.



Kelby Pointon,
CT4, Woodroffe Primary School

Since beginning my teaching career in 2019, I have always been a member of the AEU. My first three years were spent teaching in the ACT. I was always a union member there, so naturally I joined up with the NT branch when I relocated. In the ACT, I actively participated in new educator events and regularly attended sub-branch meetings. Attending the NEN Conference really improved my understanding of union work, which was fairly limited even after participating in last year's industrial actions.

I am passionate about public education, but have learnt that without AEU work, an individual's passion is just a ripple in the ocean. Collective union work ensures that individual ripples of passion become waves. We were joined by international delegates from Japan, Samoa and New Zealand and it became evident that regardless of career stage, experience,

and location, we all face similar challenges. The Japanese delegates reported starting work from 7am, often not finishing until 10pm and teaching classes of up to 40 students. Samoan teachers must manage up to 70 students over 10-hour days and in New Zealand, while class sizes are on par with Australia, teachers only earn around \$56,000 AUD as graduates.

The conference also highlighted that one of the biggest challenges for early-career teachers in this country is inconsistency of support. First year teachers can be as young as 21 and are often loaded with unrealistic and unachievable expectations.

Even with additional release granted for graduates under our new agreement*, it remains to be seen whether all will receive it. Most delegates agreed that the pressure to wear so many different hats daily with limited support severely impacts their mental health and work/life balance. It is no wonder qualified educators, particularly those in their first three to five years, are leaving for higher paying roles with less pressure and where they can leave their work at work.

Workshops presented by delegates from across the country were informative and highly relevant. The focus was on educating and developing unionists' skills in advocating as allies for colleagues of all backgrounds, cultures, and identities.

I am excited to see what public education can achieve for Australia and our international neighbours into the future. I am hopeful that all levels of government see the importance of public education and ensure teaching becomes a desired profession that inspires commitment.

**The new EA (2021-2024) includes an additional hour of NCT for graduates and some increases for mentors. We would love to hear from 2023 graduates about the benefits of this win. Email us at aeunt@aeunt.org.au with your story.*

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AEU National New Educator's Network Conference *Continued..*



Keeva Spencer Wright,
CT2, Bradshaw Primary School
(proudly sponsored by Teachers' Health)



Sharna Richards,
CT3, Ti Tree School

The New Educators' Conference in Perth was an opportunity to learn about the strategic direction of the wider AEU and the breadth and depth of its position on topical issues. I saw firsthand how committed the AEU is to the upcoming Voice to Parliament referendum. It was extremely powerful to be able to hear directly from the team driving this campaign and how we, as union members, can support it. Significant attrition over the first five years of a teacher's career was a central concern, but the one that resonated most with delegates? Workload!

The nature of university courses, preparedness of teachers, expectations both in and out of the classroom, risk factors for mental ill health, and the difficulties of establishing a healthy work/life balance formed the heart of the conversation.

It was interesting hearing from interstate delegates about support for early career teachers under their enterprise agreements. Some reported being provided with additional release to meet with mentors and additional funding for professional development. These opportunities are not consistent across Australia, and it was enlightening to learn of these disparities and the role the union can play in helping achieve parity.

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to attend this event and connect with like-minded colleagues. It felt powerful to be in a room full of people discussing issues pertaining directly to my work and life. It was heartening to reflect upon how we can come together to support each other and to bring about change.

By attending the NEN Conference, I learned about how the union fights for the rights of teachers. The AEU supports Indigenous teachers out there and works to improve the health and wellbeing of all educators. Job security, teacher retention, salaries, workloads, and support for teachers were the focus of workshops offered.

It was good to see that the same problems are being looked at around the country. Entitlements for teachers in each state and territory are very different and I noticed that the NT misses out on a lot of rewards for first year teachers when compared to other states.

Remote schools and teachers also need more attention on a national level. The AEU recognised that this is the case for remote settings and acknowledged what remote teachers must deal with in comparison to mainstream. Many delegates were surprised that remote teachers must teach everything, are without specialists or relief and often carry higher workloads with less release.

I was proud to represent the remote NT and to share the many differences between remote and mainstream conditions with those in other states and territories.

The AEU's priorities include improving retention of teachers, lowering workloads, and improving salaries in line with rising costs of living. This conference challenged the boundaries of my comfort zone, my beliefs and made me appreciate my home and school even more.

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BRANCH CONFERENCE 2022



Brian Gray reflects on last year's Branch Conference

Two key issues dominated the AEU NT's 2022 Annual Branch Conference: the long-running crisis of inadequate funding for our most disadvantaged schools, and the complete breakdown in bargaining for a new enterprise agreement to cover the pay and conditions of around 3,000 teachers, assistant teachers, and non-contract principals. Over two days in May at the Darwin Hilton, delegates from across the Territory debated more than 50 motions on these and many other topics.

Proceedings opened with a welcome from then Acting President Michelle Ayres, an update on enterprise bargaining from former Branch Secretary Adam Lampe, and a rousing account of past strikes from former Vice-President and Life Member Stephen Pelizzo.

The first order of business established urgency for a motion committing the membership to protected industrial action. It was carried unanimously. A keynote address from newly elected AEU Federal Secretary Kevin Bates encouraged us to draw strength from belonging to the broader union movement across Australia and the world. Suitably inspired, delegates followed Federal Industrial Officer Jack Kenchington-Evans in an impromptu march to Parliament House, where chants of "Stand up, fight back!" were surely heard by everyone inside!

Another Saturday highlight was a much-praised video presentation

from former AEU NT Executive member and 2020 NT Secondary Teacher of the Year, Dan Yore, who was then studying in London. He briefed delegates on the inequity of the attendance-based school funding model unique to the NT and outlined a plan for reform.

A panel discussion on the topic followed. Chaired by Michelle, it featured three principals: Anni Adams (Ampilatwatja School), Glen Dixon (Casuarina Senior College), and Stephen Nimmo (Arllparra School). They were joined by three teachers: Celine Rohan (Malak Primary School), Gwen Warmbirrri (Milingimbi School), and Valerie Bulkunu (Shepherdson College).

They shared stories of the problems created by uncertain and inadequate funding in their schools and regions across the Territory. Conference responded with a unanimous resolution condemning the 'effective enrolment' funding formula and calling upon NT and Federal Governments to work with us to develop a model that funds for success, not failure.

Delegates returned to the Hilton for the official Saturday evening dinner, where they were treated to an entertaining speech from new Deputy Director for Regional Services in the Department of Education, Saeed Amin, and a thoughtful one from outgoing AEU NT President Jarvis Ryan. Adam and Michelle thanked Jarvis for his



*March to Parliament making stance on
the wage freeze clear*

seven years of outstanding service to our Union. They were also proud to present the 2022 award for Unions NT Delegate of the Year to Isaac Jansens of Shepherdson College, Galiwin'ku.

Many others deserve our gratitude for their contributions to this mammoth event, including our other guest speaker, ACTU Indigenous Officer Lara Watson who addressed delegates via video. We must also acknowledge those who led workshops, including outgoing Vice-President for our TAFE division, Delean Holtze, AEU Federal guests Kevin and Jack and former staff member Peter Cairns. Delean's workshop was a progress report of the revived Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program, Kevin and Jack led workshops around union engagement and protected actions and Peter provided valuable upskilling for delegates around workplace advocacy.

Finally, we owe a huge thank you to our tireless office staff, past and present, along with Executive members who made up the Conference Committee. We thank all who volunteered their time, both before and during the event to ensure everything ran smoothly.

FEDERAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2022

Gwen Warmbirrri (outgoing Arnhem Executive Councillor) and Delean Holtze (outgoing VP for TAFE) joined Women's Officer Melody O'Meara for the first in-person AEU Women's Conference since 2019

It was a pleasure to be welcomed to Wurundjeri Land in Melbourne as representatives of the NT at the 2022 Federal Women's Conference (FWC) with long-standing First Nations members Gwen and Delean.

We met in the park for a pre-conference ATSI caucus including all Women's Officers from each jurisdiction. It was a beautiful way to connect, learn a little about each other and, more importantly, enable voice and participation in the conference.

The program was jam-packed with speakers, workshops, and powerful discussion. Lara Watson (ACTU Indigenous Officer) spotlighted the Voice, Treaty, Truth Campaign while Michele O'Neill (ACTU President) was a strong advocate for all working women. Lisa Chesters MP demonstrated a deep understanding of and commitment to AEU interests, especially in the Early

Childhood space.

Workshops around how we can be better allies, intersectionality within our union, and challenges faced by young workers, were both interesting and challenging.

Planning for this year's International Women's Day events in

collaboration with Unions NT Women's Action Network (WAN) is underway, along with some other exciting ideas we hope to get off the ground. So, watch this space and keep an eye out for communication about how you can get involved.



AEU Victoria First Nations Project Officer team Alinta and Shannon with NT delegates Gwen, Delean and Melody

BRANCH CONFERENCE 2023

Palmerston to host Conference this year. Registrations and motion submissions close Friday 17 March - don't miss out on having your sub-branch represented!

This year's Conference is set to take place over the May Day long weekend at Rydges, Palmerston. Formal Conference agenda items will run over **Saturday 29 April and Sunday 30 April** with delegates strongly encouraged to join our Unions NT comrades for the **Monday 1 May annual May Day march** and associated festivities. Family-friendly entertainment will follow in celebration of the ongoing struggles and achievements of workers within the union movement.

A welcome event is scheduled for Friday 28 April from 6pm. All delegates and observers are welcome.

In line with AEU NT rules, the deadline for **Conference registration and motion submission is Friday 17 March (end Week 7)**. We recommend that, in addition

to electing your sub-branch reps if you've not done so already, you endorse a Conference delegate and begin drafting motions.

Please contact the office with any questions and keep an eye out for some sessions in support of motion writing.

How many delegates can my sub-branch send?

Each sub-branch, no matter its size, can send at least one delegate. For every 20 + 1 members you can send another delegate.

For example, a sub-branch with 30 members = 2 x Conference delegates (one because each workplace can send a delegate; another one because there are more than 20 members. If there were 41 members, this sub-branch could send three delegates).

Contact the office to request and then update your sub-branch list. All delegates must be financial members of the union at time of registration. If you want to attend but aren't sure you'll be able to make it or your sub-branch has filled its delegate quota, contact the office to discuss proxy and observer options.

All Conference related communication should be directed to: conference@aeunt.org.au

REGISTER HERE:

<https://form.jotform.com/23029788411861>

SUBMIT MOTIONS HERE:

<https://form.jotform.com/230427474139053>

We look forward to seeing delegates from as many workplaces as possible and having a decision-making body that is truly representative.

The Privileges Of Teaching To Learn

Denyse Bainbridge, a Teacher of the Deaf for over 40 years and long-term union member shares the ongoing and rewarding challenges of teaching in the Territory with Melody O'Meara



Denyse values the constant thinking, re-evaluation and learning demanded by a career in special education

Denyse always knew that general teaching was not for her. She was interested in something different. She has a sister with cognitive impairment and a close family friend who was born deafblind, so she was not surprised to feel that "special education was what I was attracted to."

In a career spanning 40+ years, Denyse has mostly worked with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, their families and schools but has also worked in the Pacific, remote NT, and distance education.

Her time in the Pacific during the 80s saw her living and working as an Australian Volunteer Abroad in the Republic of Kiribati. She will "forever value those there who taught me to appreciate different world views" and credits the experience as what "directly led me to explore opportunities in the NT."

A valuable lesson learnt out bush was realising the "Eurocentric way we have of describing locations" and that "what we call 'remote' is the centre of the universe to people living in communities. While it's often easy to take on accolades when people find out you've taught in the NT, quite the opposite is true: I am the privileged one and the longer I live here, the more I know I don't know."

Rockhampton Downs/Wogayela, a one teacher Barkly school in 1993 was her first NT experience. She speaks fondly of "one extended family of Warramungu people" and expresses gratitude for two women mentors. "They never stopped valuing their own culture and beliefs and held an inspirational regard for education despite the price they had to pay for their children to receive it." This 'price' included having to work long and hard to re-establish the school after a period of closure. She speaks highly of their patience with inexperienced staff and the many times she has witnessed this process replicated across the Territory during her career.

Since then, Denyse has delivered distance education and been an Education Advisor supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing students with SWIPS (Student Wellbeing Inclusion Programs and Services). Currently, she is supporting schools with students affected by Conductive Hearing Loss caused by middle ear infections.

Denyse's union story began at university in the Australian Union of Students (AUS) and she has always felt lucky to have commenced teaching in a 100% unionised Victorian school. Earlier in her union membership, Denyse felt like "a bit of a small fish" and describes the NT as the "catalyst" that shifted her from being a "mostly passive union member to understanding what active unionism meant."

Denyse's advice to graduates and those new to the Territory is to always say: "I'm new, I'm learning. That will hold you in good stead for a while and, over time, you can drop the first part, but never drop the second part." She cautions against the "creep of 'administrivia' in our schools and provides a timely reminder that "the collective nature of unionism can help keep this in check."

Harking back to days when her "mind was not as open as it could have been", Denyse laughs as she remembers a time at Wogayela (situated at a cattle station) when she was jogging and saw a snake track.

"Terrific, a bit of nature." Another appeared.

"Wow, there must be two snakes." The children present had to explain that it was the same snake "doing a u-turn." They knew this from the shifting of the sand. Denyse loves this story as it prompts her to reflect upon how "we all bring assumptions about the universe and its pecking order: who knows what and who holds knowledge. It takes time to learn and get off your high horse. Teaching is not a calling you can ever conquer; it requires constant thinking and re-evaluation. You learn just as much as you teach, especially if you want to keep on challenging yourself."

ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT

Keys To Success

Katharine Adams and Bradley Gill enjoy the camaraderie of solving problems together

Can you tell us a bit about yourselves and what brought you to Alice Springs?

Katharine: I'm a Senior Teacher for Curriculum and a teacher of English/Humanities. I'm originally from the UK and came to Alice Springs sort-of accidentally. I've been at CMS for five years. I love this town and the community.

Bradley: I started teaching in Portland, Victoria before moving home to Alice Springs two years ago. I teach English/Humanities. The isolation, landscape and cultural milieu of Central Australia makes it an exceptionally unique place to live and work – once I had my degree, I was keen to return to my hometown.

How do you view your role as sub-branch reps?

Katharine: Being a go-to person for staff is important and people need to know they can talk to me confidentially. Being trusted with the concerns of others and acting as a strong representative for them is an enormous privilege. We are all here to support our students, and staff need to feel supported themselves to be able to do that.

Bradley: Leading the organisation of your sub-branch, having systems in place and staying organised empowers members to be active unionists. Just like reducing cognitive load in the classroom empowers students to be active members of the school community. It is also about educating staff, especially graduates, to know that the union is us, a collection of workers. People tend to view it as based in Darwin, making decisions for us, or providing us with benefits. Correcting this misconception is an important role for sub-branch reps.

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

Katharine: I love the problem-solving involved in working together to find solutions to issues, it enables us to function as a strong staff. I also really enjoy the camaraderie!

Bradley: It is important for school improvement. If staff are happy and able to work effectively, students receive a better education. Unions are uniquely positioned to improve conditions for all, and I enjoy seeing the products of this labour.

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

Katharine: Keep in contact with other reps, and your regional council. Ask questions and for help. Get to know the reps in your region by attending regional council meetings.

Bradley: Attend Conference if you can. It's a good opportunity to learn from experienced members and to better understand the union's role. Once you see how the larger organisation operates, you better realise the role sub-branches can play.

What attracted you to education and what is it that you find most rewarding about your vocation?

Katharine: I grew up with undiagnosed learning difficulties and found school challenging. I wish I'd had a supportive adult who empathised with those challenges. I strive to be a strong advocate for students who find the traditional school environment difficult, and to ensure they know they are valued and valuable. I believe everyone deserves a quality (free!) education: it empowers and gives people choice.

Bradley: Education is a major driver of social change – particularly public education. Day-to-day, I find the opportunities afforded for creativity highly rewarding: most days you're presenting for longer than a Broadway actor. The most effective (and enjoyable) times I have are when planning units with colleagues takes on the feel of a writer's room for a TV show: people are working together to create a clear structure, but with a broader narrative arc, leading students towards a meaningful goal.



Katharine Adams and Bradley Gill, Centralian Middle School, Alice Springs

How Northern Territory teacher Deon purchased her first-ever New Car with FleetNetwork



Fleet Network Business Development Manager Zane Ryan regularly accompanies AEU NT Project Officers to school visits across the NT

Fleet Network recently helped Deon Hingston, Head of English and Humanities at Centralian Senior College in Alice Springs, purchase her first brand new car: a Toyota Hilux.

Born and raised in New Zealand, Deon is no stranger to rugged landscapes. Her teaching career has seen her go from New Zealand to Queensland to the NT, where she has worked and resided for three years.

With an upcoming move to Albany on the southwest coast of Western Australia, Deon knew it was time to invest in a new car to see her through the rest of her time in the NT and the 31-hour drive to Albany at the end of 2022. "I always bought second-hand cars," she says. "I'm on the other side of 50 years and have never had a brand-new car and I thought to myself, why not?"

Deon had become familiar with local Fleet Network Business Development Manager Zane Ryan through AEU NT events over the years. Zane works closely with the AEU NT team, often travelling between Darwin and Alice Springs to support events and to support local teachers and education staff with their vehicle needs.

When Deon started considering her next car purchase, she initially spoke with colleagues to get feedback about their experience with novated leasing. "I am probably the last person around Alice Springs to get their car through novated leasing," she says. Her colleagues' positive feedback encouraged her to look deeper into options, including providers. Already familiar with Fleet Network, she turned to Zane for additional guidance.

"With Zane, I felt like I already knew him because of his presence with the union

and around town," says Deon. In a timely coincidence, Deon spoke with Zane about her interest in getting a new car at a recent event and, later that day, Zane met with both Deon and her husband to review their options for novated leasing with Fleet Network.

"Zane had no problems meeting with us, telling us about the leasing process, the benefits, and how it was all going to go," says Deon. "We felt very informed and the tax savings we would get tipped the balance."

Once her lease was set up, Deon worked with Delivery Coordinator Emily Dudley on securing her car of choice, the Toyota Hilux, and coordinating delivery logistics. The original plan saw the Hilux arriving in Darwin for August and the Fleet Network team flying Deon up during school holidays for pick-up. The ongoing global supply chain issues affecting the Australian car market threw an obstacle into the plan when the car was suddenly made unavailable until March 2023.

The Fleet Network team worked diligently to find an available Hilux and, through its national supplier network, managed to secure one for October well ahead of the amended schedule for 2023. Emily coordinated delivery of the Hilux from Darwin directly to Deon in Alice Springs, saving Deon personal leave and travel.

Now nearly three months into ownership of her Toyota Hilux, Deon is pleased with her new car and the experience she had with Fleet Network. "I like the car, it's smooth to drive," she says. "Overall, I am very happy with everything."

If you're in the market for a car or considering novated leasing, contact Zane Ryan at zane@fleetnetwork.com.au or call 0423 454 051.



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