



Newsletter

February 2016

Association of Retired Inspector of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators

From the President



I would like to extend my wishes for a happy and peaceful New Year. Our Christmas Luncheon get-together on 4 December 2015 attracted just over 40 members and guests. Many thanks to John Allsopp for his organisation of this event. I urge you to bring along a potential new member to the next luncheon meeting, our AGM, on 6 May 2016.

Constitution

The main business item at the luncheon meeting was the unanimous endorsement of the new Constitution and a preference for the registration of *Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators* as the name, if it is available. Ray Gillies moved that the *Constitution* be endorsed. The copy tabled represented work done by Ray and the previous executive (especially Geoff Walton and Vincent Delany) and was Draft Version 8 of an exercise that began in August 2014.

This update reflected feedback from members and discussion at the AGM in May 2015. This Constitution, now endorsed, will bring us into line with the recommended requirements of Fair Trading, limit the personal liability of members, and allow more flexible financial management.

Since the meeting, your Executive has considered proposed amendments foreshadowed in the completed *Report on the statutory review of the Associations Incorporation Act 2009* and believe that they can be accommodated quite easily. The Executive has also endorsed the appointment of Ray Gillies as Public Officer and Ray has graciously agreed to take on this office.

Stewart House

For some years now, ARISSEA members have responded to a request from Stewart House to provide suitably qualified personnel to conduct an assessment of part of the Stewart House operation. On 19 August 2015, Geoff Walton, Dr Kerrie Ikin and Chris Carroll met with Stewart House CEO Graeme Philpott, Board members Tom Croker and Dr Ken Boston, to be briefed on an assessment of aspects of the Stewart House Program.

The team, led by Geoff Walton, took up the Board's invitation to audit practices against an agreed set of standards and to seek stakeholder views on the future operation of Stewart House. The team worked on site at Stewart House from 19 October to 30 October 2015, interviewing, observing the day, night and weekend activities, and attending on and off site activities.

Since the on site exercise, many hours have been given by the team to drafting a comprehensive report and this was made available to the Stewart House Board for consideration at their December meeting. The Report on future directions for the operation of Stewart House will be made available to the Board for their consideration in early February. Members will realise that this exercise equates to a significant 'in kind' donation to Stewart House by ARISSEA and I would like to thank the members of the team who gave of their time and expertise on this occasion.

History of the Institute Launch

The publication "The Institute" was launched by Professor Andy Hargreaves and author Dr Reynold Macpherson on the evening of 23 October 2015. The launch took place in the William Wilkins Gallery on Level 7 of the Bridge St Building and was attended by some 150 people, representing senior Departmental Officers, members of ISEA and members of ARISSEA. This event provided an opportunity for ARISSEA to showcase our involvement in the preparation of the history, generate publicity about our organisation and extend an invitation to eligible members to consider membership.

I acknowledge the contributions made by our liaison officer with ISEA, Alan Pratt, advisory panel members Geoff Walton, Kerrie Ikin and Alan Pratt, editorial committee Bill Grant, Chris Carroll and Grant Beard as well as the 23 members who contributed to the publication itself. It was sad that Bill Grant did not get to see the finished product – he had spent many hours in the last year working on the book and had visited New Zealand at one stage to confer with Reynold Macpherson.

This work could not have had the authenticity that it has without the generous contributions made by our members. Thank you one and all. Book orders can be placed at: <http://www.iseansw.org.au/institute.htm>

Vale

It is with sadness that I record the passing of two of our members held in high esteem across our organisation. Bill Brewer died on 11 September and Bill Grant passed away on 16 November.

Finally, I add my condolences to the families of those colleagues who have passed away and send wishes for recovery to those of our members who are battling ill health.

Chris Carroll

December Lunch



Geoff Walton and John Allsopp

From the Secretary

President Chis Carroll has reported on the function to launch the “Institute”. We prepared a hand out promoting benefits flowing from membership of ARISSEA. It presented a list of benefits from joining ARISSEA that reflect my personal experiences.

I think we need to continue to develop our prospectus and would welcome your help.

“Working towards and moving into retirement and perhaps you are thinking about:

- ❖ Contracting to provide administrative services, staff training, program reviews, professional writing ...?
- ❖ Becoming more active in community organisations and volunteering?
- ❖ Domestic and overseas travel?
- ❖ Moving home?
- ❖ Managing superannuation and pension entitlements?
- ❖ Entertainment and the arts?
- ❖ Exploring and sharing opinions about contemporary issues in education and training?
- ❖ Moving into the non-government or tertiary education sectors?
- ❖ Membership of the **Retired Senior Educational Administrators Association*** provides you with opportunities to network and benefit from sharing insights, experiences and opportunities with others who were employed as senior educational administrators within a NSW State government service.”

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Monday February 22, 2016. Please let me know if you have matters that you would like to have included in the agenda

Geoff Walton

December Lunch



Fenton Sharpe and Peg Craddock

From the Editor

As Newsletter Editor, I frequently receive suggestions and requests for the Newsletter to include articles on 'serious' educational concerns and issues. I invariably respond with "Yes please. Do you have one for me." The usual response is "I will try to put some thoughts on paper for you."

About 18 months ago, a different approach came from a distinguished Committee member of many years active membership, Laurie Craddock. He had a detailed educational report that he had written about ten years earlier that had never been submitted to the Department. It was about Aboriginal education from his own experience but he would just like to revise it before he handed it over to me. He agreed that I could edit it and use any sections that I felt fitted the Newsletter.

Laurie suffered a downturn in his health and the 'Report' remained a nebulous possibility for the future.

Laurie died in November, 2014. I did not feel that his funeral was an appropriate time to enquire about the 'Report', even though Doug Swan in his eulogy for Laurie, described him as an outstanding leader in the area of Aboriginal education.

Later at a Newsletter packing morning, Laurie's wife, Peg, told me that she had his 'Report' and she would like me to have it and use it as he had wanted me to.

After various delays I finally received the material in November, 2015. Needless to say, with extended family involvements in December, it was early January before I could settle down to find an article from the 'Report' that I might use in one of the 2016 Newsletters.

After careful consideration of the whole document, I have decided that the 'Report' is too good to condense. I intend to divide it into 4 sections, one for each issue of the 2016 Newsletters.

A number of current ARISSEA members are mentioned in the report because they were involved in the 'programs'. If any of them wish to support or question Laurie's record, I will endeavour to include their comments as attachments to the later sections.

My thanks to Peg for her kind permission. I think Laurie's story is too important not to be told and the problem is still to be resolved.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN WALGETT IN THE 1970s A Golden Age Stillborn

Laurie Craddock

I have been asked to set out how we approached Aboriginal education in Walgett during the 1970s when dramatic progress was achieved in both primary and secondary education. I do so with some trepidation. Tempted to do this in the past when I have observed so many well-intentioned programs failing, I've shied away because I couldn't satisfactorily answer the question posed to myself, "Who the hell would read it, let alone learn from the story?"

During my career I had thirty-five years of active involvement in Aboriginal education, completing my last project in August 2002. I know how difficult it is to bring about permanent change and to overcome entrenched attitudes. An oft-encountered attitude has been that successfully teaching Aboriginal students is an Aboriginal task. It is not! It is a pedagogic task that if properly approached by a genuine professional educator, will assuredly lead to success. Of course the professional educator, be she or he

Aboriginal or not, will take into account all the aboriginality factors relevant to the particular circumstances.

How was Walgett Different?

When I first went to Walgett as Assistant Principal in a large central school, my major role was to run the primary department. At that stage of my ignorance I accepted that the low scores of the Aboriginal students on group intelligence tests were responsible for their very poor academic performance.

Without any reflective thought I accepted the common view that the old culture was dead. I shudder at the memory of it all. What a load of ignorance I brought to what was a tragic situation crying out for someone to do something about it.

For the first couple of years I was submerged in my family problem of a terminally ill son, but when he passed away I decided to do something about this Walgett tragedy. I was influenced so to do by the tangible, empathic support we received from so many Aboriginal people during our tragedy. Those who themselves suffer understand suffering in others.

During the late 1960s, 35% of the Yr.6 students going on to secondary schooling were functionally illiterate. At that time Aboriginal students made up 42% of the primary department's enrolment. No prize for guessing which group made up the vast bulk of the 35%. Walgett continued to grow, a separate class 2 primary was established in 1972, and in 1976 it was reclassified class 1. Now Aboriginal students made up 50% of the total enrolment of 533. In that same year, the school's best year during my tenure, a very significant development occurred.

The then Director-General, Jack Buggie, sent an expert to Walgett to assess the standard of literacy in the school. His expert reported back that the literacy was on a par with the better schools in the state. We are talking about the school with the largest Aboriginal enrolment in NSW at that time (and for many years afterwards).

A decline set in during the following year and I'll address the associated issues below, but surely the achievements witnessed by the D-G's agent should have screamed sub-standard literacy levels amongst Aboriginal students is not acceptable in the NSW public education system.

In that same year (1976) the late Ed Gaskell, principal of Walgett High School, was halfway through the innovative program that he guided which produced secondary education outcomes that mirrored those of the primary. By the end of 1978 we had a complete model for the pre-school, primary and secondary education of Aboriginal students in the country towns of NSW, and probably over the whole state.

For a number of reasons the model was never captured and replicated. This failure reflects badly on the system that let it happen, but not on the individual officers dealing with what for them were higher priorities. Forces outside their personal control invariably drove their priorities.

Back to primary literacy. It became obvious to the district inspector and me that thinking outside the envelope, as we would say these days, was going to be necessary if we were to effect real change. The late great Tom Allport (D.I.) and I felt we were looking at an unacceptable negation of basic human rights, not to mention a disgraceful waste of human potential. I point this out because it takes this sort of motivation, and allied dedication, to tackle the Walgett type situations. The professional and personal rewards for doing so, however, are immense.

Other programs that I'll address below were initiated first, but let us stick to the literacy development. Somewhere Tom got on to a set of readers that he thought might work, and he found the funds to buy them. He was like that. We tried them in 1970 and they proved useful, but still we had a giant problem that we couldn't see the new material solving. I had an idea that I thought was worth trying.

The previous year one of the staff had returned from a vacation in Sydney with a copy of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's 'Teacher'. I couldn't see the method that she outlined working in the Walgett situation simply because of the complexity inexperienced teachers would be facing with classroom management. What was needed was an effective group methodology.

With the connivance of Tom Allport (needed in those days) I set up an experimental group of 8 year olds. Of the 24 members, 6 could struggle through "Pat has a fat cat"; the other 18 could read nothing. Nearly all were Aboriginal kids. While it was my group, Bruce Grey in only his second year of teaching, played a positive, contributing role.

This happened in May 1971, at the beginning of term II in a three-term year. 1971 was the same year that Tom and I, in association with Peter Dargin from Weilmoringle, and with the support of North West Region, launched the very significant Walgett Aboriginal Education Conferences (WAEC).

We used this group for demonstration purposes at the first WAEC. Bruce wrote on the board "The brick pier has a crack in it. The fissure was caused by lateral pressure." He asked who could read the message. There was a sea of hands so they were requested to read it together. (I can still remember the audible gasp!)

He then demonstrated by questioning that each student understood each word and could use it in another context. (He could also have demonstrated their spelling

skills.) The moment of the gasp was the high point of my career, everything after being an anticlimax. I knew it was a breakthrough of very considerable potential.

It would be misleading to suggest that the above example was representative of the literacy standard of this group of non-readers after two terms on the program, but it clearly demonstrated what could be achieved if the pedagogy was right. We had a team of school counsellors test the entire group with the TM form of the Binet as the program commenced and it produced an average I.Q. of 72. In term II the following year we ran the group intelligence test, the TOLA 4, across them and their I.Q.'s had jumped to an average of 93. Of course, we are really not talking about 'intelligence' at all.

The Critical Element of the Successful Pedagogy

Initially I thought the critical element was *experience* as Ashton-Warner talked about it, and my writings from that period reflect this view. After further extensive research I came to the conclusion that it is, in fact, *relevance* that is the key.

Experience can be a very significant component of relevance, but relevance to the learner can be established without experience, but admittedly not till a much later stage. Without the dimension of 'relevance to the learner' significant learning is unlikely to occur, particularly with Aboriginals and some other groups.

Young and inexperienced teachers frequently misjudge their students in so many ways, failing to properly apply their training work in child growth and development. Training institutions are often remiss in how they set priorities for trainees to internalise. One of the great failings of young, and too many experienced teachers, is assuming that young children will understand the relevance of the skill of reading, and will want to learn to read.

Students coming from predominantly middle-class homes where parental story reading to them has been a feature, and where "when you go to school you're going to learn to read" is enthusiastically stated and re-enforced regularly, already have the relevance of the skill acculturated before they walk in the front gate. Not so children from the homes that are currently the concern of at least one prominent politician.

Before a teacher can teach reading to a beginner, he or she *often* has to interest a potential reader in a process in which the child has absolutely no interest at all and to whom it is all a big mystery anyway. In other words *the relevance of the skill of reading has first to be established*. This is absolutely fundamental.

Fundamental, but fortunately not all that difficult, even with very educationally disadvantaged students. What we did initially was to take a simple event involving

one of the group, e.g. "Miles watches the water running along the gutter", and get across the concept that this can be expressed in the code (squiggles) we call writing.

The sentence was also visually illustrated (drawing or polaroid picture). This process was re-enforced by the group writing in colour over these sentences and illustrating them, and then using them for both reading and spelling. Once they got the idea, and it didn't take long, we introduced the language excursion.

Miles couldn't read, "Pat has a fat cat", but he had no difficulty with the above sentence. For one thing it was about him, not some Pat who was a complete mystery to him.

A strong sense of group identity was extremely important in those early days. The group included both teachers. I went off to a conference in Canberra and had my first ride on a jet aeroplane and this led to a quite successful language exercise.

The language excursion was a great innovation. Armed with notepads and pencils we went into the main street, where very helpfully the butcher's shop is labelled 'butcher', the baker's 'baker' etc.

Back in the classroom the notes were decoded and language exercises encoded. Very soon some remarkable things began to happen. Noted when they were together as a group, and occasionally as individuals, they were observed reading the words on the sides of passing vans and trucks.

Then one day Bruce and I were slightly delayed in leaving to join the group and we found them on the footpath trying to decipher the sign standing in the corner of the playground. It read, "Walgett Central School Stage 2 Building Project Construction by Hughes Bros. Wollongong" (arranged down the rectangular board). We asked what they were doing (although it was obvious) and were told, "working out what the sign says". Surprisingly the only word they didn't get was 'construction'. Not bad for non-readers only a term before. (We, of course, treated the word 'construction' on the spot and used it back in the classroom.)

Late in 1971 I received a very large research grant from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs (the forerunner of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs). This funded a number of worthwhile projects including the purchase of a complete video set with portable recorder, studio equipment etc.

This was a tremendous boon in a number of educational ways, but especially in the extension of the literacy methodology that was developing. A language excursion could be faithfully recorded and brought back to the classroom for decoding and then

re-encoding. This new methodology was largely responsible for the literacy outcome reported by the D-G's agent.

It should have been straight sailing from there on. But it wasn't!

When I went to Walgett it was common for teachers to stay 2 years, their first two years of teaching, before fleeing to greener pastures. As they became more involved in the new successful programs they began to stay longer. Five to seven years was not uncommon. At the end of 1976, eleven of the fourteen primary department staff moved and this created a minor disaster.

As I observed in North America and the U.K. whilst on a study tour in 1978, students like the majority of those at Walgett needed 'predictable others' in their school environment.

I was able to observe in the 'black country' of Birmingham ('black' referring to the grime of the industrial revolution) a school very similar to Walgett – Cronehill Primary.

The Educational Priority Area (EPA) program established under the Plowden Report had enabled the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to pay staff a higher salary in EPA schools. The amount wasn't particularly great, but it was enough to stabilise the staff. In a staff of 21 only 1 changed per year at that time ('78) whereas previously it had been as many as 6 to 9 from 18.

The Head reported that staff had come to identify more with the children, even to fight for them, and the students responded accordingly. The place was certainly humming when I was there, as was Walgett in 1976, but not in 1977. There is a clear lesson in all of this that is as relevant now as it was then.

The other major problem encountered with young teachers is the flow-on from their professional immaturity. We could demonstrate a highly effective methodology for the development of literacy, but it was radically different from what they had been shown in college, and indeed the way they were taught themselves.

You teach reading using some form of reader that someone else has designed. It can be exceedingly difficult to get round this problem, and in a year like 1977 quite impossible.

The Walgett success was built to a large extent on the commitment of the teachers that stayed on when they could have moved to a better area. Lady Plowden's committee successfully tackled the problem, admittedly in less trying circumstances, 37 years ago. Us?

The second part of this four part report from Laurie Craddock will be included in the April Newsletter. **Editor**

December Lunch



Syd Smith and John Edwards

Members say

LOST YEARS: THE GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO

Syd Smith

How fascinating it was to read Audrey Mather's account of her youthful days as a quiz kid during the golden years of radio when Macquarie Radio ruled the airwaves from the late 1930s to the 1950s. Her story brought back many happy memories of my imaginative years as a skinny youth who sadly had unrealistic ambitions of embarking on a career in radio.

John Dease, the quiz master mentioned by Audrey, was one of the five D's at the time. Who remembers Harry Dearth (The Amateur Hour, a prelude to today's X Factor), Terry Dear (Leave it to the Girls and The Amateur Hour), Jack Davey and later Bob Dyer who came across from another network? Bob was one of the few who made the transfer to TV.



Dad and Dave

It was also the age of the quarter hour serial, ones for those in the morning who were the stay at home housewife (When a Girl Marries and Dr Mac both on rival stations), one for the midday farmer and home makers (Blue Hills on ABC Radio).

And the ones that took me away from my school work like Yes What, Superman, The Air Adventures of Biggles, Hop Harrigan, Tarzan, Captain Silver and the Seahound, Chick Carter Detective, Search for the Golden Boomerang, Smoky Dawson, Mrs Obbs, Dad and Dave, Martin's Corner, Hagen's Circus, and, not to be forgotten, Police Files on a Sunday night.

Alternatively the ABC had its own entertainment for children with The Argonauts.

It was interesting to note that the same actor often took on more than one role in those never ending dramas. George Edwards, for example, in playing his part as dad in Dad and Dave was often required to talk to himself while performing triple roles as Mabel and Uncle Clarence. He accepted similar tasks in Mrs Obbs where he played the role of a woman for most of the time.

I think scriptwriters were paid about five pounds for the thirteen minutes of each episode, allowing for the commercial to fill in for the final two minutes. I recall one time when one scriptwriter cheated the system by submitting an eleven minute script, subsequently forcing the listener to endure an extended rendition of the show's theme, The Road to Gundagai.

So popular were those serials that it was claimed you could walk down an inner city street of Sydney on a summer's evening and hear without interruption the same program as you passed from one house's open door to another.



There was only one twenty-four hour broadcaster at that time: 2UW (now an FM station with a whole new brand), which basically entertained the insomniacs and shift workers.

These were the days of live broadcasts that had less efficient technical support when compared to today's studios. Announcers had to be very careful in ensuring their microphones were switched off. I remember one announcer who hosted a children's program at 5pm each afternoon, who thinking his microphone was switched off, said, "That will do the little buggers for today". Needless to say Uncle John was never heard of again.

As I marvel at Audrey's wonderful experiences as a Quiz Kid I confess I had a much less illustrious experience in radio. Quite often I would go to the 2GB studios in Phillip Street and read commercials on a program known as Teen Time. This was hosted by Keith Walsh (Speed Jordan of Bonnington's Bunkhouse Show fame).

Teenagers would take their 78RPM records into the station and have them played on air. Keith loved hurling them into the air and catching them before they hit the deck as the awe struck audience gasped in trepidation they may crash and splinter.

I remember reading one commercial very clearly:
“More to see, more to do at wonderful Taronga Park Zoo!”

I thought my career was set when I was made announcer of that week and appeared the following Sunday on a show known as Platter Chatter, hosted by Howard Craven. Howard was also known as Charlie Chuckles who read the Sunday Telegraph comics on Sunday mornings. Howard later joined the staff of 2CH but sadly Keith Walsh was electrocuted on the set at ATN7 television in the very early days of TV.

The rival to Teen Time was Rumper Room, a very similar but seemingly less organised show that was broadcast from the 2UE studios in Bligh Street. Len London would walk around the audience asking them for their name and encourage them to give an opinion or read a commercial. Once again I became announcer of the week but that unfortunately is where my radio career ended.

As a 12 year old I lived in the imaginative world of running my own radio station from my bedroom in Arncliffe. Already I had a crystal set connected to a spaghetti system of wires that arced across our roof as a makeshift aerial. Unfortunately it was disconnected one night and tangled up my mother while hanging up the washing; so this became a short lived event as well.

Nevertheless, Radio 2SU “broadcasting” on the AM band soldiered on with yours truly as chief announcer, reading the news from the daily newspaper, reviewing movies and stage plays and playing 78RPM records on a windup gramophone.

A neighbour whose brother had worked in a Brisbane radio station had already given me more than 80 vinyl records to use at my ‘station’. I still regret not keeping them.

Today you can still listen to those archival shows on CD, many of them recorded and developed by Grace Gibson Radio Productions in Leura. Alternatively you can visit the National Sound Archives in Canberra or download the site where you can hear many of them.

Listening to them today one can’t help but notice the pace of those stories appearing to be so much slower compared with the short attention spans needed for today’s TV shows. Maybe we have become unaware of how much our pace of life has become so incredibly faster since the relatively plodding days of 40s and 50s.

In some ways however there was much more to enjoy listening to a radio play lying on a bed in the semi dark and allowing your mind to conjure up vivid pictures as the story's plot unfolded.

Many of the actors of that time ended up as Hollywood and Australian film and TV stars, people like Ray Barrett, Peter Finch and Dianne Cilento. Today TV inhibits one's imagination and leaves us with no doubt of how the images appear. TV listening skills take lower priority today.

The former Resource Services Unit within the old Services Directorate of the Department actually resurrected many of these old programs in a media teaching kit in the mid 1980s- 'Radio Then and Now'. Hopefully there are still a few around in some dusty storerooms but you may need some ancient hardware to use it.

So Audrey, thank you again for reminding me of a wonderful time in my life when radio was king and broadcasting had quite a different face to today's talkback and instant on the spot reporting.

December Lunch



Merv Blanch

Members say

A Dinosaur Remembers

Merv Blanch

District Inspectors of Schools have ceased to be part of the administration and evaluation of teaching in schools, and yet in the past they were seen as essential for ensuring accountability in schools for educational standards and evaluation of school staff professionalism and promotion.

Where did they come from? How were they chosen? What were their duties and obligations? Most importantly, why were they eliminated from the system?

One can only answer these questions based on personal experiences as there was an opaque vagueness about the Education Department's expectations of District Inspectors. There was no list of duties nor a descriptor of the task itself.

We seem to have predominantly come from the resource of principals of primary schools who had risen to the level of promotion of lists three and four. Most of us had a broad experience in teaching across infants, primary and secondary students, and had shown abilities in administration and leadership. There were others, who had forsaken senior academic positions in teachers' colleges, who joined the group.

It was fortuitous the Director of Primary Education in the earlier 1960s was Owen Jones. He not only saw the leadership qualities in some personnel, but took positive steps to afford these young principals the opportunity to attend conferences and live-in experiences during their Summer holiday time at places such as Hurlstone Agricultural School and university colleges, where acknowledged leaders from diverse forums were invited as guest speakers.

These included Sir Edmund Hillary, Lady Bridget Plowden the British educational reformer, and American pioneers of experimental educational endeavours. As young principals we were encouraged to submit articles to the publication "The Leader" and Owen Jones appeared to be an unofficial editor.

There was no training to be a District Inspector. We were simply "invited to join the staff" as an Inspector of Schools. Attendance for four days at Head Office was obligatory where we were required to study two folders that explained policies and procedures. Without any introduction to our chief, the Director General of Education, we were then given a typewriter, a small suitcase and despatched to mostly rural districts with our uprooted families.

Upon our arrival some had housing available, some not, and we learnt all of our communications were to pass through an Area Director located many miles away. We would be invited to attend a meeting with the Area Director and fellow inspectors once a term. At this meeting policy matters were conveyed to us via the Director who had previously been summoned to Head Office to be briefed on political and educational changes that were being made or considered.

In our office files we learnt of the nature and scope of our local district, the number and various types and sizes of our district schools, and the names of all of our teaching personnel.

Invariably there were at least 20 one-teacher schools, three or four high schools, multiple primary schools and a range of private schools. The state schools required inspections every four years and private schools every six years. Where feasible we structured development days when teachers in charge of one-teacher schools were brought into a larger school to observe structured lessons given by infants class teachers that focussed on the teaching of reading and numeracy. It was also an opportunity to meet others with similar problems, to discuss any issues and the inspector could usually contribute as he had teaching experience in small schools.

All public schools had to be subjected to a full inspection every four years and the inspector wrote a comprehensive report on the progress being achieved in curricula objectives. A second report was written specifically on the principal's performance, both as a leader in education and as an administrative agent of the system. All primary teachers were inspected during their first year of service and again during their third year, after which they were granted full certification to be a teacher for the rest of their working years.

Teachers who did not measure up were identified, and spent another year under supervision to address any issues prior to their certification. During inspection time some teachers were identified by principals or their deputies as having talents that identified potential leadership qualities and after their inspections it was a pleasurable experience for all concerned for promotion to follow.

Considerable distances existed between District Inspectors so that opportunities to compare and contrast experiences were rare. They had been appointed to their positions usually in their early 40s (some were as young as 35), had reached the top of the promotions ladder and generally they relished the opportunity to grow further in their pursuit of matters related to education.

With very few exceptions they were university graduates, many of whom had undertaken their degrees at night while working during the day. Most were family men and an increase in salary from £3800 per year to £6000 per year provided an added

incentive to take up distant rural positions as District Inspectors. We were to be the local eyes and ears of the Department of Education, well educated and able to provide accountability to the system and the public.

We were expected to be able to speak publicly, use the press sparingly and wisely, and to provide an annual report of the district's progress in education. This report joined with the eight or so others within the administrative region, provided the Regional Director with the basis for his report to the Director General. This afforded the Minister for Education information that went to Parliament. The whole process was a reflection of accountability.

The District Inspector was informed when a panel of secondary inspectors would be visiting the district to inspect senior staff within the high schools, to not only verify the functions of the high school but to also inspect members of staff considered worthy of promotion. On these occasions the District Inspector was an essential element of the process, generally being in an informed position to assess and advise on the candidate's contribution to the school community. The District Inspector and principals held informal meetings at least once a month and these included discussions on the professional growth of any candidates for promotion.

It was customary to transfer District Inspectors to another district after three to six years, and after 3 years in Albury I was transferred to Green Valley.

In the 1960s a new suburb was created in Green Valley, just west of Liverpool, and this was the precursor of several similar developments as Sydney's population expanded over the next 45 years. Three huge high schools and seven very large primary schools were established in the area, predominantly staffed by young teachers straight from teachers' colleges. These teachers did not live in the new suburb and were predominately not from the same social background as the local residents who had been relocated from inner-city suburbs.

Many residents were single parent, low income families and many social problems arose within the schools before the area settled. As the huge primary schools were staffed by so many new and relatively inexperienced teachers, the task of inspecting them in their first and third years was not only enormous but less than satisfactory for all concerned, as each teacher could only expect half a day with the inspector during the year.

Nevertheless, the opportunities for young staff members to show initiative and innovative and essential leadership qualities were huge, and many of them quickly became so outstanding that promotions were numerous.

Over the following years challenging new sets of experiences emerged for District Inspectors. We retained our traditional roles but new duties were entrusted to us. There were fewer teachers seeking promotion because many of them chose not to take country appointments and were generally less inclined to be seeking promotion.

Others were good teachers who preferred teaching without the extra responsibilities of administrative duties or over-seeing the professional development of fellow teachers.

We found ourselves being assigned as chairmen of curriculum development committees, regional sports committees and importantly we became associated with particular teacher-advisers who were chosen for their skills and knowledge in particular areas.

I had the pleasure of working with a very talented teacher who developed many ideas that principals could use in evaluating a particular curriculum area in their schools. He worked with the staff to devise an evaluation plan, implement it, and write a report to be presented to me with a personal discussion. It was then forwarded to the Regional Director to be passed on to the Director General.

Another adviser identified a secondary teacher with special skills working with students in physical movement and dance. I was asked whether, with his permission, we could take primary school children who showed promise in movement and dance skills to the local high school to develop their skills to a standard suitable for public performances.

This was very successfully undertaken and expanded, later combined with the students' musical skills and the Minister for Education attended an initial performance. This programme expanded and morphed into the annual NSW School Spectacular that showcases the performance talent of NSW school students.

The early 1970s were the most invigorating times to be seeking new ways to teach and learn. Team teaching, lateral thinking, thinking skills, moral dilemmas, indirect questioning as well as the recognition for the need for qualitative evaluation seemed to breathe a refreshing renewal into primary teachers.

There was an increasing use of in-service and the provision of relief teachers for attendees was appreciated by the staff and public.

Courses for junior executives were formulated and implemented so that attendees were freed from school duties for a week. They lived-in at Katoomba or at a university where they were presented with hypothetical case studies which induced critical thinking and lively discussions. District inspectors had previously attended such courses and were now leading these for the young executives.

Emerging into the 1980s an increasing number of primary school teachers had a University degree and the local parent body were becoming more knowledgeable about their school and its teachers.

Both the parent body and the teachers did not see District Inspectors as necessary for the teaching staff's professional growth and development.

This was a time of big changes in the Education Department.

Some secondary inspectors who had for many years inspected secondary subject masters were now being reappointed in their senior years as District Inspectors, a role which did not always sit comfortably with them.

By the mid 1990s, I had been retired for 10 years and the role and position of District Inspector of Schools had ceased to exist in the Education Department of NSW.

Accountability seems to be a casualty of educational reform. For two decades the District Inspector of Schools who oversaw teacher training and practice have been missing, so the questions now are :

1. How are significant changes in school curriculum evaluated independently and is this process transparent?
2. Is there credible accountability within primary schools for the educational and social outcomes and how are these outcomes independently assessed?
3. Who gathers and collates the information from the schools to be reported to the Director General and the Minister for Education on the standard of education within our schools, and who oversees and determines the validity of this information?

For those who ponder these questions there has been a recent announcement that school reading programmes will now be built on the "new" concept of phonetics.

Does this sound familiar to any of my retired colleagues?

December Lunch



Doug Swan and Alan Rice

Members say

Paul Gallagher

In my reading of “The Institute” its reflection of events in the history of government educational services in NSW brought many thoughts to mind and some such thoughts related to the very constructive changes in secondary education which were introduced through the Wyndham Scheme.

I commenced service in 1951 as a primary school teacher and had over a decade of experience from which to observe the severely limited opportunities available to ex-primary pupils as they progressed into high schools in those years.

In the 1960’s which saw the introduction of the Wyndham Scheme, I was a District School Counsellor attached to a high school in the north west and from that experience witnessed the wonderful changes which occurred in high schools, giving options and choices and varied achievement levels for students and a larger, more significant respect for state high schools as comprehensive, community schools.

The new educational garden created under the Wyndham Scheme did not however have sufficient weed control and there continued to exist, mostly in city areas, some very limiting factors in the form of selective high schools and single sex high schools.

Of their very nature these schools conflict with the notion of a comprehensive community school and in operations pertaining to the placement of students there is something of a mess.

A few years ago I was made aware of circumstances wherein a young single mother was seeking placement from the regional placement authority for her Year 8 daughter.

The nearest state high school was a boys high school and the the second nearest was another single sex high school but a girls high school where some degree of selectivity precluded admission.

Placement was offered a couple of suburbs away. Surely there must be at least some considerable economic benefit in converting to co-educational high schools. The assessment procedures and regulations affecting candidates for placement in selective high schools have such outreaching and inappropriate effects as determining residential address and enrolment of children in coaching schools as early as preschool ages.

In 2017 the Higher School Certificate will have its 50th anniversary and I suggest that our Association should urge the NSW Government to institute a review of secondary education examining matters relating to single sex and selective high schools and also curriculum support for STEM subject areas.

Friends of Stewart House

The Annual General Meeting was set for 19th January 2016. Unfortunately the copy deadline for this issue of the Newsletter was set for 15th January.

Hence no information was available from the Friends of Stewart House for this issue of the Newsletter.

The Copy deadline for the April Newsletter is set for 15th March.

We look forward to the usual meeting information for the next issue.

December Lunch



Vincent and Jennifer Delany

From the Editor

I think that in the last 10 years, the most frequent email offering that I have received for use in producing the Newsletter has involved a reworking of Banjo Paterson's Clancy of the Overflow.

While I have enjoyed them all, I now wish to close this subject by including one of the submissions without acknowledgement as to its submitter or its possible source.

As my New Year present to all members may I present to all those who are present:

CLANCY@THEOVERFLOW

I had written him a text
Which I'd sent, hoping the next
Time he came in mobile coverage
He'd have time to say hello.
But I'd heard he'd lost his iPhone,
So I emailed him from my smart phone,
Just addressed, on spec, as follows:
clancy@the overflow

And the answer redirected
Wasn't quite what I'd expected
And it wasn't from the shearing mate
Who'd answered once before.
His ISP provider wrote it
And verbatim I will quote it:
'This account has been suspended:
You won't hear from him any more.'

In my wild erratic fancy
Visions come to me of Clancy:
Out of reach of mobile coverage
Where the Western rivers flow.
Instead of tapping on the small screen,
He'd be camping by the tall green
River gums, a pleasure
That the town folk never know.

Well, the bush has friends to meet him
But the rest of us can't greet him"
Out there, even Telstra's network
Doesn't give you any bars.
He can't blog the vision splendid
Of the sunlit plains extended
Or tweet the wondrous glory
Of the everlasting stars.

I'm too stressed out to be bored
As I answer all the emails
By the deadlines they contain.
While my screen fills with promotions
For 'Viagra' and strange potions

And announcements of the million-dollar
Prizes I can claim.

But the looming deadlines haunt me
And their harassing senders taunt me
That they need response this evening
For tomorrow is too late!
But their texts, too quickly ended,
Often can't be comprehended
For their writers have no time to think
They have no time to wait.

And I sometimes rather fancy
That I'd like to trade with Clancy:
Just set up an email bouncer
Saying 'Sorry, had to go.'
While he faced an inbox jamming
Up with deadlines and with spamming
As he signed off every message:
clancy@the overflow.

-with apologies to A.B. ("Banjo") Paterson

Members say
BILL MASON

Graham Sims

Bill Mason entered the teaching service in January, 1951, and retired as Assistant Director, Metropolitan North Region in 1987. He served as Inspector of Schools (Social Sciences) and at one stage chaired the Panel.

I met Bill when he was a Staff Inspector in Head Office, and had the joy of working with him when he was appointed Executive Officer of the (former) Secondary Schools Board and the Board of Senior School Studies.

I worked with him again when he was Assistant Director, Met. North Region.

Bill, rather than John Wayne, should have played the role of 'The Quiet Man', because it came so naturally to him.

I never saw him angry or flustered, and he had the rare gift of calming down tense situations, allowing the protagonists to emerge with their dignity intact.

At the Study boards, Bill had to deal with a wide and diverse group of 'interested parties', from administration and clerical staff in Examinations Division, through to senior academics and administrators.

His quiet ,courteous and supportive manner remained a constant, and he was respected by all who dealt with him.

Even those of us who thought we knew him well, had to be prepared to learn of some 'outside interest' of Bill's, ranging from gliding, to bird-breeding, to kite-making and flying, to the serious study of music, and to his 'late-onset' study of German and the many trips he and Barbara made to Germany.

Many people drift into and out of our lives. The influence of only a select few turns out to be profound and irreplaceable, in the way that I found Bill's friendship and guidance.

VALE! The Quiet Man.

Address changes

(Changes shown in Bold)

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Deaths

16/11/2015 GRANT William (Bill) Dr
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Have you contributed to your Newsletter

in the last 2-3 years?

Your ARISSEA friends may like to know:

what you've been doing,

what you are thinking or

what you remember.

**Please do not forget that new material is desperately needed for the
April 2016 Newsletter**

**Accompanying photos are most welcome,
preferably as JPG email attachments.**

Copy deadline: 15th March 2016

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