



Newsletter

April 2016

Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators Inc

From the President



On 4 March 2016, Ray Gillies (Public Officer) emailed the Executive Committee to inform us that: "The registration of the incorporated association of the Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators Inc. has been approved by NSW Fair Trading".

In short, ARISSEA has been renamed IRSEA and has incorporated with a new constitution after a long process and wide communication with members.

I welcome you to the first Newsletter brought to you under the re-badged logo of our reconstituted Institute. I am confident that this exercise provides a platform to acknowledge the importance of our past and a vibrancy to herald a confident future.

As outgoing President, I would like to thank the membership and the Executive Committee for the outstanding support given to me over the past twelve months.

I had set five personal goals for the term of my presidency:

- Refine the work on the Constitution
- Re-energise our organisation by attracting membership
- Enhance our commitment to the support of Stewart House
- Use the launch of the history of the Institute to generate awareness of and publicity about our organisation
- Review communication with our membership

I believe that the organisation has delivered in each of these areas. We now operate under a new constitution; we have worked with ISEA to attract membership and have personally approached potential members to consider joining; we have delivered two review reports to the Board of Stewart House for their consideration and way forward; the launch of the history of the Institute allowed us to circulate a flyer about our organisation; and minutes of our luncheon meetings and executive committee meetings are available and the membership data base is now a working operation.

I thank the Executive Committee for their hard work and sage advice over the past twelve months: Ray Gillies (Immediate past President); Alan Laughlin (Vice President); Richmond Manyweathers (Treasurer); Peter Robinson (Newsletter Editor); Allan Mills (Membership Officer); John Allsopp (Luncheon Convenor); and committee members Terry Burke, Alan Rice, Vincent Delany and Syd Smith.

My particular thanks go to our Secretary Geoff Walton who continues to be the lifeblood of the organisation as well as its historical cornerstone and member welfare officer.

As we approach the Annual General Meeting, I urge members to consider nominations to the Executive and committee positions. (See further information in the Secretary's Report in this Newsletter.) In line with established protocol, 2015-2016 Vice President, Alan Laughlin will move into the position of President for 2016-2017. We are fortunate to have someone of Alan's educational profile as our leader.

The incoming committee faces ongoing challenges of boosting membership and attracting women to membership and leadership positions within the Institute. Further, there will be a need to garner support for the newly established educational presentations from recognised educational leaders on matters of interest to members.

Chris Carroll

December Lunch



Ray Gillies and John Edwards

From the Secretary

The Agenda for the executive committee meeting on Monday 22 February focused on consideration of plans for our lunch meeting on Friday, 6 May 2016, ways of streamlining the membership renewal procedures for 2017 and formally minuting the decisions that have resulted in our being granted Registration under the Incorporated Associations Act 2009.

Our lunch meeting on 6 May will commence at the usual time, 12.30 pm, with a brief **General Meeting**. This will be followed by the **63rd Annual General Meeting**.

During the **AGM** members will have an opportunity to endorse the action taken by the executive committee during the last year to ensure that we were able to satisfy the requirements for *Registration as an Incorporated Association*.

Copies of the March 2016 version of the Constitution will be distributed to members attending the meeting. Copies will subsequently be sent to members who were unable

to attend the AGM. Please send me an email (geoff_walton@yahoo.com) to let me know if you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of the document.

Remember that with the exception of the positions of *President*, (Alan Laughlin accepted the nomination for and was elected Vice President at the 2015 AGM and will move into the President's role for 2016) and *Immediate Past President*, all committee and office bearer positions will be declared vacant.

To comply with Clause 16 of the Constitution, nominations for committee and office bearer positions must be made in writing. (A Nomination Form is incorporated into the mailing wrapper). To maintain our financial member status, most of us will need to pay our 2016 fee (\$15) before or at the AGM on 6 May 2016.

Lunch will be served at 1.00pm. Following lunch, starting at about 1.30pm, Dr Ken Boston has agreed to give us an opportunity to hear about and discuss aspects of the *Gonski plan for providing needs-based funding to schools* - a relevant, contemporary and controversial educational issue.

Allan Mills and Richmond Manyweathers have again been working hard to ensure that the information about your financial status of membership is accurate. (Please contact Richmond if you have a concern about the information recorded on your form.)

Geoff Walton Ph. 96396847 mob 0418 241 406
email geoff_walton@yahoo.co

December Lunch
Ritchie Stevenson



Members say

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN WALGETT IN THE 1970s

Part 2 of 4

Laurie Craddock

I'll return now to the initiatives (that actually constituted a program) put in place before the literacy development that I previously summarised. Tom had a very strong belief in the importance of making school children feel warm and secure in the school environment. School had to be a place where they wanted to come. No-one really challenged this notion; it was just that it was thought to be more easily said than done. Once again, however, it proved to be not all that difficult.

The starting point was to enhance the quality of the relationship between teacher and pupil. This ranged from such obvious strategies like teachers making direct eye contact with each group member on a regular basis and smiling (this is a basic acceptance strategy) to judicious use of effective rewards. This latter introduces for us the aboriginality factors. Cultural difference has to be fully accommodated. With Aboriginal students you don't highlight an individual for praise. You can publicly praise a group, but an individual must be rewarded privately. Highlighting an individual, even with commendation can be a cardinal sin, but if the rules are followed it all works just as effectively.

The local cultural factors that impinge on the education of Aboriginal students are the subject for a long, analytical essay and can only be briefly touched upon here. This brief summary should, however, give an overview of our Walgett scene (circa 1970s) and the approach derived from it.

Philosophical factors traceable to the old culture strongly in evidence in the 1970s:

1. Time orientation (*present/past* rather than *future* as western society and its institutions are, in the main, about. We westerners are acutely aware of the need to plan and manage the future);
2. The group is vastly more significant than the individual (note comment on rewards);
3. The 'walkabout' that had a contemporary expression, quite apart from the sociological factors involved, was a sub-conscious attempt to vary the environmental stimulus input I;
4. The sharing ethic deriving from 2. above was very strong (source of school troubles);
5. Attitude to work arose from an historically different needs basis;
6. Extended families (see 2 also) are large with strong internal supportive links;
7. Child rearing practices differ from the western model with 'uncles' (not fathers) being responsible for some roles in education of boys post age 10;
8. Different teaching-learning practices still used in the homes II.
9. The people had come from fundamentally anarchic societies that accepted organisers of tasks (a hunt, berry gathering etc.) but not leaders in the western

sense. They were, however, matriarchal (in our case) or patriarchal, and accepted respect for certain status people as fundamental III. Significant changes in this area were already occurring before I left Walgett.

I Walkabouts still occurred when I first went to Walgett. The mundane and unchanging nature of the environment was a factor in the 'migrations' that followed patterns similar to those in tribal days. For example, pupil record cards would regularly circulate through Wee Waa (cotton chipping camp) Narrabri, Collarenebri and Walgett. Coonamble might be there in place of Narrabri or Collarenebri. Children following this pattern would be from families originating from the K(g)amilaroi tribal (language) group. Those from the Eualaroi went north to Goodooga and west to Brewarrina and Bourke; not that the youngsters or their parents necessarily saw the process in these terms.

We had three tribal groups overlapping at Walgett, and a study we did of playground behaviour that paralleled an academic study being done through UNE by a local clergyman, revealed that about 80% of the fights were between Kamilarois and Eualarois, two peoples with a very long traditional hostility. The clergyman had traced the tribal origins of the families. In practical terms it was 'mission' versus 'reserve', but in reality the roots were much deeper. This knowledge aided the management of the problems. By the mid 70s the 'walkabouts' were breaking up, and re-settlement in the town eased *some* of the tensions. Paying regular rent on a town house was a major disincentive to going walkabout.

II The traditional teaching-learning procedures by which children were taught in the home environment constituted a major obstacle to learning in the school environment until the appropriate adaptations were made. The dominant teaching modality for a western cultural tradition home, and classroom, is verbal, heavily *spoken word* dominant, words poured in even where they are not needed. A child from such a home comes to school with a well-developed skill of *learning through listening*.

Aboriginal children came (and probably many still do) from environments in which the visual modality is dominant and words have a different role. The Aboriginal pupils had great skills of *learning through watching*. They were quite disadvantaged in a classroom where *listening* was the dominant teaching modality.

Adaptation of standard classroom practice to suit Aboriginal students is not all that difficult. An interesting experiment I did will serve to illustrate the point. In this one I was also interested in exploring relevance. Kay Langloh-Parker recorded the legends of the Eualaroi people and had them published. Each story was illustrated by a piece of traditional representative art. I took a class with an even split between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, all about 10 years old. I presented the story without reference to the illustration, and then tested the recall of the entire class.

The Aboriginal students had shown little interest as the story progressed, fidgeting and yawning but not being openly rude or a nuisance. The recall of the non-Aboriginal group, by now highly skilled listeners, was about twice as good as that of the Aboriginal group in what was after all focused on one of their stories.

The next day I presented another story, but this time the representative illustration was issued to both groups, and at the appropriate points of the story the picture was coloured in and briefly discussed. Now the Aboriginal children were completely involved and the recall gap closed completely. In no way were the good listeners disadvantaged by the changed (inclusive) presentation. We had already observed this with the special language group.

III It is really very important for teachers to understand the social mores and customs of Aboriginal people. Let us look at just one to illustrate the point.

Aboriginal children are taught to respect certain elders, and to show respect they are told to avert their eyes when an adult is speaking to them, particularly in a disciplinary situation. How often have I heard a teacher bark, "You look at me when I'm speaking to you!" Of course in Aboriginal terms the teacher is instructing the poor child to be insolent.

Turning a School into a Place Where Aboriginal Children Want to Be

When the Department of School Education no longer needed my services I moved on to the Faculty of Education at the University of Sydney. During my time there, amongst other things, I undertook research in the old Metropolitan North Region.

In 24 research schools it was put to me that the schools wanted to adapt their environments to make them welcoming places for Aboriginal students. Their problem was that they had not a clue as to how to go about the task. From the university we attempted to launch a program that I'll outline below, but at Walgett this is what we did. Apart from observing the very basic acceptance strategies like direct eye contact and smiling, being seen to listen to complaints and calmly talking students through the issue, being seen to respond in genuine cases of grievance, and avoiding the natural but damaging withdrawal from a child who was offensively smelly, positive bonding between teachers and their immediate charges, and also the students of the school as a whole, received great attention. Ultimately the extended family was also involved.

We began with school socials. The teacher who had returned with '*Teacher*', one Bill Calvert, had a great talent for staging events. With clever use of lighting and stage props the double classroom used for dancing would become a special experience place. One night it was an 'underwater' scene with green lights and suspended fish seemingly swimming around. There was a small admission charge that teachers often

paid from their own pockets for those that couldn't pay without any request to do so, and in a way that did not embarrass the unfortunate youngster. Teachers would use their own cars to bring their charges from more distant spots (and we had the use of the Foundation's mini-bus), supper was served and parents from the non-Aboriginal community volunteered to assist.

(I was personally tickled that the man who just a few years before had moved the Council resolution banning Aboriginals from the Olympic pool was one of the best workers even though he had no children at the school. Fortunately the ban had never been enforced.)

Another highly successful strategy was the class extended excursion. But first a little anecdote.

In all seriousness an Aboriginal lad enquired of Mr McDonald, "Sir, is a mountain as high as the levee bank?" A reasonable question from a boy who had never seen a mountain. One could add or the sea, or a beach, or a lake, or a big town, or a city with all the things that a city has. This applied to a very big percentage of the Aboriginal enrolment. This restriction of environment was a major developmental problem.

The above-mentioned Nev McDonald came up with a strategy that addressed a number of problems. He planned and executed a major excursion that gave a class a very different environmental experience, provided the basis for a wealth of language and other educative events captured and brought back to the classroom through judicious use of recording devices, and provided great bonding between him and the participants.

Then by putting on a family evening for the extended family to come and see what their children had been doing on the trip forged a vital link between the family and the school. Following this, and the very many excursions that followed the McDonald model, school attendance improved dramatically, and with it performance in school subjects. As well, if a child had to miss a day or be away for a few, a parent would generally come and explain why.

I should point out that this was before educational excursions were thought of as they are now, and before the advent of the Commonwealth funding that was later to prove of great assistance. Supper and transport were provided for the family nights following excursions. Commonwealth funds (mainly through the disadvantaged schools program [DSP]) enabled us to plan a year's excursions in advance, and even to have the teacher visit the site for planning and organisational purposes.

What Makes a School a Place Where Aboriginal Children are Happy to Be?

Back in the era that I'm discussing most of the Aboriginal students had parents who themselves had had bad or less than happy school experiences. Consequently their

natural tendency was not to support the school, or assist in the educative process. Teachers saw this as lead in the saddlebags. They proved that it's not necessarily a permanent state of being.

By making the Aboriginal students feel secure, respected and wanted, teachers established the environment in which significant learning could occur. This security was grounded in respect for the cultural differences arising from the philosophical factors listed above, and the establishment of much closer pupil-teacher relationships through strategies like those outlined.

But these in themselves would not be enough to make the school an acceptable place for daily attendance. There is another major factor *the curriculum offering*, and whether the learners perceive it to be relevant. Associated with one of the Walgett Conferences was a demonstration at Walgett High School that focused on the problems created by the 'demands of the secondary curriculum' as they related to syllabuses to be followed for the award of a School Certificate or a Higher School Certificate.

We witnessed a lesson in lyric poetry presented to a class of predominantly Aboriginal students and a lesson in the Manual Arts block with the same group in which the students worked on their own special projects. The contrast was stark and it raised several issues, most with no easy answers.

The staff of Walgett H.S. over the next few years, and with the leadership of Ed Gaskell, tackled each issue and produced a very satisfactory outcome. It would be easy to pack the curriculum with the sorts of relevant activities that would ensure high attendance, and therefore some chance of a preparation for post school.

But would this have maximised the learning potential of the more talented group whose only real problem was that the members came from a family environment that had no real appreciation of this type of learning and where it could lead. In the end through a lot of community education and involvement it was possible to push the more academically able while maintaining their commitment, and the others got as many relevant and useful experiences as could be organised. I saw similar positive outcomes in some schools in the U.S. through the application of basically the same philosophy.

As all genuine educators are aware, there is a risk in typecasting students that can lead, as it has in the Aboriginal case, to serious under achievement, and therefore waste of potential. Still, if the primary stage of a student's education is effective, the secondary school has a reasonable chance of getting its curriculum offering inline with the student's abilities and interests. So we need to return again to primary education at Walgett.

I shall now re-iterate a proposition that I first put before a national conference in Perth in 1977. The teaching-learning process is dominated by the interaction between the teacher and the learner. If the interaction is empathic, significant learning can occur. Significant learning will occur if the curriculum is relevant. In other words first get the teacher-learner relationship right, then present relevant material. Since I first proposed the above, some things have changed; for example the introduction of interactive technology to the classroom, so some modification might be needed. I still believe, however, that getting the relationship between the teachers and students (and very desirably their parents and extended family) right is an absolute, fundamental first step. I *know* that relevance is an enormously important concept.

Relevance

There were two dimensions to 'relevance' in Walgett P.S. in the 1970s. Both required informed professional decision-making.

Relevance of what is offered: The school had to set priorities in the total offering because it was impossible to do everything. The priorities had to be split into two so as to accommodate the needs of the able students and those with special learning needs. We had a lot in both categories and it wasn't an Aboriginal non-Aboriginal divide (though skewed that way in the early years). In 1970 there were 3 Aboriginal students in Years 11/12 in NSW. By 1978 we had 6 from Walgett undertaking degree courses.

Priorities for the more able group were pretty straight forward as they are in most primary schools. But those who were disadvantaged in a school learning sense by missing inputs, particularly in pre and early school years were much more challenging. The development of literacy was an obvious priority and one that was very effectively achieved. We tried always to back up the innovative things we did with research. In fact by the mid 70s each teacher was encouraged to have his or her own small research plan for the year.

Dr Betty Watts, at that time Dean of the Faculty of Education, Queensland University, with whom we formed a most useful working relationship following the first WAEC, encouraged us to look at the school with reference to the three domains, *Cognitive*, *Affective*, and *Psychomotor* (Bloom's Taxonomy). Over time Betty provided some supportive material and we took up her suggestion. Now we'll look at a few initiatives that arose from this approach.

Cognitive Domain: it seemed to me that the type of reasoning (cognitive tasks) group intelligence tests sampled by asking students to illustrate their understanding through a correct answer, was often well outside the experiential base of the student, and therefore would produce a partly misleading result. I devised a course that was just called 'Thinking'.

The activities (as concrete as possible) mirrored the thinking modes involved in the tests for that age range. I was careful to avoid what could have been interpreted as 'coaching' students to do I.Q. tests. The outcome was not that I.Q.s shot above the mean, but the bell shaped distribution curves, one Aboriginal and the other non-Aboriginal that had previously been something of a two-humped camel virtually merged.

The third part of this four part report from Laurie Craddock will be included in the July Newsletter.

Editor

December Lunch



Terry Burke with Richmond and Jeanette Manyweathers

FRIENDS OF STEWART HOUSE

As many would know, the Friends of Stewart House (FOSH), was set up as a support organisation to provide both material and financial help to Stewart House. Amazingly it has been in operation for some 78 years. Recently FOSH was able to donate some \$60,000 to support this wonderful institution. The recent Chairperson, Maureen Reeve, is to be congratulated for her commitment and dedication.

Like many organisations, FOSH, in recent years, has had difficulty in finding new executive and expanding its membership base. However, a new executive has been elected and there is optimism that the operation of FOSH will expand into new endeavours. The new chairperson is Kerryann Knox, Vice Presidents, Tom Croker and Lloyd Hogg, the Treasurer is Jane Lindsay and the Secretary, yours truly. Joan Healy continues as the IRSEA contact point.

The retired primary and secondary principals have a very strong link with FOSH and make up a large part of its membership of 160. Each year a number of social activities are organised to provide both an enjoyable opportunity to get together with old friends and also raise a little money. A summary of these for the next four months is attached for your consideration. FOSH looks forward to developing its relationship with IRSEA in the coming years. Membership is \$15 (the bulk of which goes to SH) and information and an application can be found on the Stewart House Web Site.

Alan Laughlin Hon Sec FOSH.

Activities for 2016

May

Friday May 6, Stewart House Open Day. This will be held at Stewart House. A bit difficult as the IRSEA lunch is on that day. However, contact Person, Amanda Bisset, Stewart House Marketing Manager, amanda@stewarhouse.org.au Phone No 9938 3100

June

Saturday 4th June, Rosehill Gardens Race Day, this replaces the annual Stewart House Ball. This is a corporate fund raiser, 40 tables have been set aside for Stewart House supporters. Cost \$150 per head. Contact person, Tom Croker mtcroker@bigpond.net.au or mobile 0409 926 826, contact by 29th April 2016.

July

Thursday 21st July, Lunch at Doyles Restaurant on the Beach at Watson's Bay. A great meal and enjoyable ferry trip. Cost will be \$40 which includes a \$10 donation to Stewart House. Contact Margaret Harmer (mhsydney@bigpond.com or mobile 0408 286 132) by 14th July. (More information can be supplied on ferry times, wharfs etc.)

December Lunch



Sue and Cliff Cowdrey

Members say

Congratulations Peter, on your editorial comment in the February 2016 **Newsletter** and the approach you are taking with the Craddock Report on Walgett. There is no doubt that Laurie did much good at Walgett. The shame is that the place isn't as good now as it was then, 40 years ago.

Laurie had an overall philosophy and vision for the school that worked as his reports will show. Others on staff, when Keri and I were there in 1974-75, complemented this by meeting many of the challenges within the classrooms. Keri in particular handled things very professionally with an OA class.

Trevor Harrison, as he always did, and the DI at the time, Rex Barlow, encouraged her to write about her work in a classroom with Aboriginal children. What follows is a reproduction of a Primary Journal article written 40 years ago!

It gives one account of a classroom operation at Walgett Primary School that might contribute to the professional presentations you hope to generate through the Craddock Report's focus on Aboriginal Education at Walgett.

Tony Negline

COOKING AS A BASIS FOR TEACHING ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE
Walgett Public School
Reproduced from Primary Journal Vol 2 No 3, 1976.

Keri Negline

Before attempting to initiate or to modify particular teaching strategies for any class it is necessary to understand the children in that class and to be able to identify their particular needs and problems. It is from such understanding that the selection and implementation of teaching strategies evolve. This paper outlines the procedures that are followed in my OIA Class which uses cooking as a basis for the teaching of aspects of language to Aboriginal children.

The adoption of cooking as a basis for teaching resulted from the recognition of the following characteristics of the children in the class.



Two Aboriginal students prepare food in the classroom

- (1) The children all had major learning difficulties. The development of language skills presented many problems.
- (2) The children lived in very poor socio-economic conditions. Fourteen of the seventeen children were Aborigines.
- (3) The children's attendance at school was unsatisfactory.

- (4) Antagonism amongst children was frequent and 'normal'.
- (5) The children had experienced "failure" in most areas of their formal education. This "failure" appeared to have reached the stage of being cumulative.
- (6) The average age of the class was 12 years.



Aboriginal Elder demonstrates cooking techniques to students during a cooking lesson

Having identified these characteristics, my primary objective was simply, "to get the children to school on a regular basis". The initial teaching strategy for achieving this objective was to experiment with cooking as a classroom activity on a couple of days each week. The children assisted in meeting the cost of meals by each paying 20c every cooking lesson. During the cooking lessons the children prepared the meal and later ate what they cooked.

The most noticeable immediate result of the cooking (and eating) lessons was a dramatic improvement in the attendance of the children at school on cooking days. After these lessons had been firmly established as a regular class activity, the next stage was to develop the lesson as a basis for the teaching of language.

By the time that this stage had commenced the attendance was much improved, the

children were obviously enjoying being at school, and the 'cooking' had given the 'OA' children a new status in relation to children in other classes.

The rest of the school was speaking about, and sometimes tasting, the results of cooking that the "OA" children were doing. The language teaching programme attempted to capitalise on the interest and enthusiasm that accompanied the cooking lessons.

Aspects of the programme are as follows:

Listening and Talking English

Most children like talking about food. The cooking lessons provided interesting topics for discussion. Discussion developed around such things as what food is to be cooked; of recipe ingredients and where these can be purchased; of utensils needed and how they are used; of the need for cleanliness; of cooking procedures; of who the class might invite as a guest to the meal; and of job specifications.

Visits to the supermarket for the purpose of purchasing the ingredients provided opportunities for informal talks. The preparation of the meal from beginning to end was done by the children under my supervision. Children usually worked in groups on one or more of the stages that comprise the task. The need for children to listen carefully to discussions given by me or discussed by them was soon recognised to be relevant to their ability to complete effectively any task allotted to them. Peer group expectations in this sort of situation were a significant motivating force.

Writing English

The children each wrote an invitation to the guests who varied in number from a whole class to one person, and they wrote thank-you letters to people who assisted them with their cooking. A number of parents sent in recipes; and parents of children in other classes sent along eggs, flour and sugar quite spontaneously. The children also wrote recipes, stories about what they had cooked and how.

I took photos of stages in the cooking process and when these were developed, the children attached the photos to sheets of coloured cardboard and wrote about the photos; subdivided duplicated sheets were used to assist children to draw and write about the stages in the cooking process.

Reading English

With the assistance of the school librarian a number of simplified children's cook books with colourful illustrations were purchased for the children to read and select recipes for cooking lessons. Printed recipes were used in each lesson and the children were then aware of the importance of reading the recipes carefully.

Simplified stories about the cooking lessons were written by me and printed onto stencils by use of a large print typewriter. These passages, modified when necessary for use by children of varying reading abilities, were used as part of the weekly skills lessons in reading. The cooking lesson activity thus provided a **relevant** experience for teaching reading.

Conclusion

The cooking program has been operating now for eighteen months. At present much of the assessment of pupil progress has been subjective in terms of observable changes in the behaviour of the children in the classroom and in the playground.

Aggressiveness toward each other has largely been eliminated. School attendance has ceased to be a problem. The children possess more confidence in themselves. They greet visitors to the classroom without shyness and converse with them and listen attentively to what they and other people have to say.

The children, who have experienced the program for the full 18 months, have mastered many basic reading skills. Objectively measured, reading ages of the children reveal accelerated progress. The children write more legibly. Above all else, elements of thinking required in the writing of the sequentially structured written word are evident in the writing that the children do.

Mr Inspector Allport wrote in a paper read to the Walgett Aboriginal Conference in 1974 that, "the overall aim of our schools as I see it, is to eliminate failure and the concept of failure". It has been toward the achievement of the educational philosophy underlying this statement that my cooking programme was directed, and, it was through this program that many of the children in my 'OA' class began to experience success, and continuing success, at school."

Keri Negline

Remember again, this was 40 years ago. It was innovative then and it still is. It **worked** then because the teacher concerned **worked**, was consistent in its weekly presentation, no matter how the adverse thought of confronting limited resources might have been (a fry pan at the classroom and privately owned utensils until DSP purchased and installed a stove in the second year of the program); as well as continually selecting varieties of interesting and appropriate recipes, limited finance, and the need for ongoing careful planning and organisation.

It worked because of the teacher, not because of the innovative idea alone for Aboriginal Education. As has been quoted often, it's the teacher who makes the difference. Certainly, it was that teacher, in that OA class at Walgett in 1974-75, who made the difference.

Tony Negline

December Lunch



Brent Cornish and Bill Muir

Family Life in the Home of an Inspector of Schools

Peggy Craddock

When Laurie was appointed Inspector of Schools at Moree in 1979, our family had had some experience of him being away on Departmental trips such as Principals Conferences and as the NSW representative on the national English as a Second Language Committee, which involved interstate trips (that were paid for out of family funds and reimbursed months later).

There were also Aboriginal Education Conferences in various places after he, Tom Allport and Peter Dargan had set up the annual Walgett Aboriginal Education Conference. Absences seemed frequently to be called for on family occasions, like birthdays.

The local WAEC brought many visitors who usually ended up at our place for a welcome dinner with the official dinner on another evening in town. We had become used to Secondary Inspectors having dinner with us when group inspections occurred because the then Secondary department head did not entertain. I even travelled with

them to northern towns to help the new teacher librarian, so I got to know some of them then.

When we moved to Moree, we were shocked at the state of the allocated house. It was even worse than the first house we lived in in Walgett. We were familiar with the very small house the Allports lived in Coonabarabran and the smaller box lived in by the Ingrams in Forbes.

When Keith died, we had for a number of years been visiting them at Richmond. Jean was very frail and they loved to talk about Forbes, and people, especially in the 'Inspectorate community'. Their son told us at his father's funeral that life had been difficult at first at Forbes secondary department, but managed to overcome it.

He later became a naval commander, but never forgot the years at Forbes and his father's absences, especially in flood time. The children and their mother worried every time he went on his rounds, about car accidents, flooding and all the difficulties even good drivers faced on the very rough bush roads.

Jean told me on our visits to them at Richmond that she worried particularly about the condition of the roads. In the dry, the dust could hide an approaching vehicle and even with a little rain, they could become impassable. All country inspectors would have experienced this and know the dangers of those unsealed roads, even though they tried to make light of it to their families.

Both Keith and Tom had the office in their homes, which could be a problem on occasion. The Moree house, though larger than those of the Allports and the Ingrams, did not have to have a room to be used as an office. However, it was in an extremely poor condition and in need of many repairs. It had not been occupied for a long period, and it showed.

The plumbing left a lot to be desired. The toilet had been an add-on and one story we were told was of an august personage whose name is Mr Nobody for the purpose of this article, not realising there were steps down to it, took a tumble. The plumbing to the toilet and laundry was separated from that of the kitchen and bathroom.

After the house was again occupied, we soon noticed a stagnant water odour coming from under the building. It took over twelve months to convince the Housing Commission that the plumbing in the bathroom had to be repaired. (Sound familiar to country DIs?)

Slowly we realised there would be many family occasions when he would be away on inspections. These would be lonely times for me, and the evenings would seem so

long. Even with library programmes to write or the programmes of the year 4 teachers I was supervising to examine, they seemed never ending.

One of the little irritating things for me was the persistent questioning by people I had been to school with in Armidale. What did the Inspector think of the schools in Moree? Despite my non-committal answers, the questioning continued.

One funny incident happened when I was in the new demountable library at Moree Primary, writing cards for the new Kindergarten children. A woman I had been to school with brought her grandchild in personally to get a card for him.

She told me he was the child of her “first drop” (yes she came from a very large sheep station) and as a sort of afterthought she insisted that as an old school friend, I should tell her what my husband thought of the school. My clerical assistant who happened to be there nearly had hysterics.

We worried about the long distance and the state of the roads, as did the families of all rural inspectors. Our two older boys had left home, but the two youngest attended Courallie High and for a while were sneered at for being inspector’s children. However, as Laurie moved around his district, and set up collaborative activities and they got to know him, that stopped.

It was a very difficult posting for a variety of reasons, some of which probably will be known to the readers. He was making changes they liked and were involved in local activities he had set up. Regular dinners for the education community were fun. The newsletter gave teachers a chance to outline some of their innovative programmes and this helped us all.

My colleagues at Moree primary were amused when, as Laurie was away in Sydney, I was asked to make a speech at the putting down of a time capsule at Moree East. My principal, John Curry said “go for it, that will show what Moree Primary people can do”, but to me it was somewhat embarrassing. Speech nights at the various schools in the district were things that all the partners had to go to and sitting on the stage, presenting prizes, were part of the job.

Laurie spent a huge amount of time sorting out problems in the Toomelah community and school. For example, the water supply was cut off on a few occasions. No way would he allow the teachers and children at school to go without water. He would sort it out again and again with the Shire Council and the Department. He even got Wal Murray involved. Eventually he succeeded in keeping the supply.

Classrooms were worse than substandard, and I still have the boomerang and letters the children sent thanking him when they were fixed. He set about fast tracking the

building of a new school, which was done after we left. Invited to attend the opening, we travelled up there and were delighted with the welcome.

Dr Metherall however, demanded to know what right we had to be there. It was nothing to do with him, a couple of parents and teachers put him straight.

The children resented him being called out frequently to sort out problems, but I was sympathetic. As did all the partners of inspectors. The loneliness was constant, but it was part of the role of support which had to be accepted.

Probably, this happened to others as well. On days when the temperature was almost unbearable, we would get phone calls from parents on the local farms, demanding that the schools be shut so their children wouldn't suffer coming home. He would explain but he would be rudely told to do it. If he were away, I would get the same instruction. Patiently, I would say that I couldn't do it, but the response was the same.

They would say that the children caught the bus at 7 and coming back at sundown, after walking in from the road to the farm and were too tired and heat affected to do their chores. When it was suggested that their children's welfare was their responsibility, and if they were suffering heat exhaustion, then the parents could keep them home and let them do some schoolwork, they would hang up after telling me I was useless.

When he was transferred to Blacktown North, he was not as often away overnight. However the investigation into the Bourke affair had us worried. At Model Farms High School, the two youngsters were referred to by some teachers in an unfavourable tone as inspectors kids, but they chose to ignore it after a time. **Catherine** resented being moved in her Leaving Certificate year, but the hardship posting had taken its toll on her father.

Those who have read John Dugdale's take on the train journeys to schools to be inspected, based on a song from The Mikado will know how it was for so many inspectors.

Strong and lasting friendships were made amongst the band of exceptional people who made up the inspectorate over the years. These friendships gave support to seriously ill colleagues and the luncheons are tangible reminders of fellowship and trials from the past. 'I Remember When' is a treasure of shared stories to chuckle over. That those of us who have lost our life's partner are included in these occasions is wonderful.

The cancelling of the Inspectorate has been the Department's loss. However, the friendships remain and are a lasting tribute to those who served.

Members say

Ian Vacchini

Inspired by Clancy@theoverflow etc in The Feb Newsletter, I have been considering other poems. Do you know the short version of The Man From Snowy River. It goes like this:

*There was movement at the station for the word had got around
That the colt from Old Regret had got away
And has joined the wild bush horses – he was worth a thousand pound
So we went out and brought him back.*

Address changes (Changes shown in Bold)

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

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

Copy deadline: 15th June 2016

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Are you interested in purchasing a copy of the “**INSTITUTE**”, Reynold Macpherson’s historical, social and political account of the work and influence of the ISEA?

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