



Newsletter

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No. 3

July 2019

From the President

I want to thank the members for electing me once again to the position of President of IRSEA for the 2019–20 year. I believe it is a great honour to preside over such a group and look forward to a busy year ahead as we strengthen our links with the Department of Education through Murat Dizdar, Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance, and other members of his team, and in particular Kathy Powzun, Director.



As Alan resumes the position of Immediate past president, I want to extend my thanks to him for the dedication and insight that he has brought to the role. I also look forward to the ongoing support that he will continue to offer over the coming year.

While many of our office-bearers have continued in the roles that they took on a year ago, this year we welcome one of our newer IRSEA members, Janina Sulikowski, to the position of Vice-President. I was delighted to welcome Janina, a former president of the ISEA and a long-time colleague and friend, to IRSEA last year, and even more delighted when at our AGM this year she agreed to take on the Vice-President role. Janina travels to our meetings and luncheons from Newcastle and we have already had some discussion about spreading the word about IRSEA to former colleagues in the Newcastle area who for some reason seem to have slipped through the cracks when it comes to membership.

You will see on page 4 that we still have one vacant position on our committee. The position is called 'Newsletter Editor', the title in our Constitution, but you will recall that we changed how the newsletter was put together last year by establishing a team to share the load. In the new arrangement, the 'Editor' acts as a coordinator of the project by gathering and selecting the articles, forwarding them to Grant Beard for the copy-editing and desktop publishing, and arranging with other team members for the printing and distribution. Last year Brian Davies did this. This year the position is vacant and we really need another one of our members to fill it. Please consider nominating for this position or, if you would like more information first, please contact Brian Davies.

One of the tasks that I have set myself for this year is to boost the membership. When I look at the membership lists, there are very few members who have joined in the last eight to ten years. In fact, I think I might be the youngest member of IRSEA and I retired in 2013! So where are all those recently retired senior officers? Do they know about IRSEA? Do they want the collegiality that IRSEA provides? My guess is that many are blissfully unaware that we exist and most would welcome some form of contact with fellow former colleagues. Of course, to attract new members we need to consider what they gain from joining. In line with our articles of association, I believe that we can provide members not only with collegiality with like-minded colleagues but also provide them with productive links to the profession to which they gave so much.

Our excellent relationship with the Department will, I believe, provide us with a much greater opportunity to fulfil both these benefits of membership. To this end, we have developed a welcome package for retiring senior officers, we have a current Director of Educational Leadership as our guest speaker at our August luncheon, and we are exploring ways of keeping up with the times for maintaining contact with our younger retirees who regularly use various forms of electronic and social media for news and contacts.

Both Murat and Kathy are strong supporters of IRSEA, valuing and respecting the knowledge and insights that our members could bring to the current work of the Department. One area that Murat and I discussed about two years ago was the establishment of a database of members who would be willing to share their knowledge and expertise. You might recall that after Murat spoke to one of our luncheon meetings, we asked members to consider adding their names and areas of expertise to this database. We have a small list of members who have done this.

And this leads me to a recent article in my LinkedIn newsfeed, entitled *We all need a mentor*. The article was strikingly applicable to IRSEA. The article makes the point that when we retire, we miss not only the work, but also the people, social contact, the conversation, and the fun. It refers to

traditional mentoring programs helping those newly appointed to the profession to transition smoothly and to help them reach their potential. It argues that we should think about the value that those experienced older members who have retired but still seek connection with the profession could bring. The article, written by a president of his professional association, reports on a trend that he saw where retirees in his profession were keen to let him know their thoughts on a wide variety of issues, many preferring to talk face-to-face or on the telephone. Sharing experiences and telling stories was very important for them.

The second half of the article poses the question, 'How do we as a profession look after our aging members?' It suggests that we need to put plans into action now, prepare for the increasing number of our baby-boomer colleagues who are now reaching retirement age. It finishes by suggesting that next time there is an opportunity for us to participate in an activity with our colleagues we see whether another of our colleagues would like to come along. When you receive this newsletter, you might consider sending it on to either a former colleague or a younger more recently retired one who is unaware of our group.

If you would like to read the whole article, you can find it at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/we-all-need-mentor-robert-johnson>

I look forward to a productive year, continued collegiality at our functions, and further opportunities to deepen our relationship with the Department.

KERRIE IKIN
President

From the Department

Realizing Excellence

The Director, Educational Leadership, has a key strategic role in forming collegiate, constructive, informed, and insightful professional relationships to support and guide principals to continuously improve their professional practices. The Director provides educational leadership and direction to support principals in their pivotal role of leading continuous school improvement. They ensure evidence-based decision-making is focused on improving student progress and achievement by improving the quality of teachers and through effective school planning, self-assessment, and change-management processes.

Directors of Educational Leadership have been immersed in extensive and a coordinated capability-building program to support engagement with their principals and teachers about contextually specific



improvements. This system leadership and innovative support model assists in ensuring the identification and deployment of resources, with an unrelenting focus on instructional leadership improved line of sight to achieve optimum learning outcomes.



DANIEL FRENCH

Daniel French, Acting Director in the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), has been pivotal in leading and coordinating the implementation of the self-assessment capability-building pilot with six Directors of Educational Leadership representing each operational directorate. This pilot is planned to be rolled out in Terms 3 and 4, 2019, with each principal network.

This is an example of the partnership between DELs, CESE, and Principals, School Leadership. This project is designed to building the capacity and capabilities of DELs to support schools in:

- effective SEF self-assessment, ensuring that schools are able to confidently identify strengths and specific areas for improvement and target their efforts for maximum benefit;
- strengthening capacity amongst school leadership teams for conducting robust self-assessments that accurately reflect the practices across their school;
- the building of capacity in self-assessment requiring a coordinated and rigorous approach;
- driving systemic improvement;

with a view to:

- developing a greater level of understanding of the School Excellence Framework, the Statement of Excellence, and the descriptors within each theme of the element Data Skills and Use;
- understanding evidence, its interpretation, and what constitutes robust evidence of achievement (quality not quantity), with particular reference to the element Data Skills and Use;
- developing transferable skills to support consistency of judgement across the SEF elements and domains, using the Statement of Excellence and theme descriptors.

This ensures our principals have access to more support and guidance on continuous improvement to drive better outcomes for students.

KATHY POWZUN

Director, School Operations and Performance

DANIEL FRENCH

Acting Director, CESE

August Luncheon Meeting

A NEW LOCATION—ONLY A 4-MINUTE WALK FROM TOWN HALL STATION

We have a new venue for August Luncheon Meeting: the **Castlereagh Boutique Hotel** at 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, and we have as our guest speaker **Richard Skinner**. Don't miss out! The booking-slip is at the end of this newsletter.



Richard Skinner is currently the Director, Educational Leadership, for the Port Jackson Network of schools. In this role Richard works closely with 20 principals in the inner-city area of Sydney as they develop and implement their school plans. Prior to taking up this

position in 2018, Richard had over 12 years' experience as Principal of Rose Bay Secondary College and Dubbo College Senior Campus.

NOTICE: For discussion at the August Luncheon Meeting

Secondary Panels Project—Past, Present, and Future.

Back in 2009 Laurie Craddock invited members to contribute to this project, with a view to publishing a companion to *I Remember When*, which was more specifically focused on the work and experiences of Secondary Panel inspectors. An informal working group met several times during 2010 and 2011 to consider contributions and plan further action to bring the project to fruition. Geoff Walton has inherited Laurie's file of contributions and would like to be able to include consideration of the future of the project on the agenda for our August General Meeting.



RICHIE STEVENSON AND GRAEME NICHOLLS

Secretary's Report

In May we had an enjoyable luncheon and Annual General Meeting at the Department of Education's

Parramatta premises. The Department certainly looked after us and the meeting went well. Thanks to Murat Dizdar, Kathy Powzun, and their team, including Catherine Meany.

Fred Cook did a sterling job as Returning Officer. The 2019–20 Executive Committee is shown below.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICE-BEARERS FOR 2019–20

President	Kerrie Ikin
Immediate Past President	Alan Laughlin
Vice-President	Janina Sulikowski
Secretary	Brian Davies
Treasurer	Ray Gillies
Newsletter Editor	Brian Davies (interim)
Membership Officer	Allan Mills
Luncheon Coordinator	John Allsopp
Welfare Coordinator	Geoff Walton
Stewart House Contact	Alan Laughlin
Public Officer	Ray Gillies
Committee member	Alan Rice
Committee member	Chris Carroll
Committee member	Vincent Delany
Committee member	Peter Robinson

As you see, the Newsletter Editor's position was not filled, with no nominations received. The meeting decided that the Editor's role was that of a coordinator, reflecting the need for several people to work together to produce the newsletter. Grant Beard has agreed to continue the copy-editing and desktop-publishing role. I have agreed to support the production of the newsletter on an interim basis given that I am also holding the Secretary's position. The meeting decided that the executive should seek and appoint someone to coordinate the newsletter production. To that end please see the advertisement on page 4 for an Editor. The newsletter is a critical part of our organization and much of the work can be done from home. You will also have the support of other members of the committee. Please think about taking on that role.

For the AGM our Membership Officer, Allan Mills, provided an interesting and detailed report of our membership. In May our membership stood at 167. At the same time last year the membership was 175. Membership comprised 39 ladies and 128 men. We also maintain contact with 33 widows and widowers of former members through the newsletter.

A breakdown of the age groups showed that we had the following numbers in the various age cohorts compared with previous years.

Age	2018	2017	2016	2015
Under 60	0	0	0	0
60 to 69	6	8	9	13
70 to 79	57	61	68	81
80 to 89	76	77	82	73
90 to 99	20	16	18	22
Over 100	0	0	0	0

NOTE: Numbers do not tally with the membership because we do not have the birth date of all members.

At its meeting of 17 June the Executive Committee

discussed ways to promote membership to officers who were retiring from the Department. Also our Treasurer, Ray Gillies, reported that as of 17 June 2019 IRSEA funds stood at \$4366.87, along with the \$15 397.50 term deposit that matures on 19 February 2020.

New venue for August Luncheon Meeting

In the 2018 luncheon questionnaire members supported holding meetings both at Parramatta and in the city. Our Luncheon Coordinator, John Allsopp, has done a lot of work investigating a city venue. The August luncheon meeting will be held at a new venue, the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. See the article above and the booking-slip at the end of this newsletter for details. Please note also that the August luncheon will be the first meeting at which the Electronic Funds Transfer facility will be available for the use of members.

2019 ANZAC Remembrance Service



2019 ANZAC REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

Patrick Medway, President of the Teachers' Sub-branch of the Returned Services League of Australia invited IRSEA to lay a wreath at the first ANZAC Remembrance Service held at the Department's new state office at Parramatta on 18 April 2019. This service was traditionally conducted on ANZAC Day at the Department's former state office in Bridge Street.



Mark Scott, Secretary of the NSW Department of Education, gave the keynote address. It was a most moving service, with a Crestwood High School student as Master of Ceremonies. Cadets from James Ruse Agricultural High School formed the honour guard, the NSW Public Schools Singers sang *Always Remember* and *Abide With Me* and a student from Newtown High School of the Performing Arts sounded *The Last Post* and *Reveille*.

Institute members are most welcome to attend the service so please keep this in mind for next year.

BRIAN DAVIES
Secretary

Vacancy

There is a vacancy on the IRSEA Committee. The position is called **'Newsletter Editor'** in our Constitution. Last year we changed the way the newsletter is produced, so the Editor's role is to coordinate the production. The role involves:

- Obtaining articles from the Committee and members.
- Selecting articles that are suitable for publication.
- Forwarding the articles to Grant Beard for copy-editing and desktop publishing. (NOTE. The Editor does not do these tasks and so does not need these computer skills.)
- Arrange with other team members the printing and distribution.
- The work can be done mostly from home.
- It involves four newsletters each year.
- Other members of the executive are there to help.

If you are interested, please contact Brian Davies at brian.davies09@gmail.com or on 0422 856 919.

Treasurer's Report

At the Annual General Meeting on 3 May 2019, I reported on the IRSEA's financial position for our financial year ending 31 March 2019.

We had assets of \$18 803.37 and liabilities of \$334.00. Our assets were \$3405.87 in a Society Cheque Account and \$15 397.50 in a term deposit that matures in February 2020. Liabilities were mostly subscriptions paid in advance.

IRSEA's total income for 2018–19 was \$7817.50. Expenditure was \$7816.38. Our income was from annual subscriptions, members' donations to Stewart House, luncheon meeting fees, and interest. Expenditure was on the newsletter, donations to Stewart House, luncheon meetings and meeting venue, printing, postage, and Fair Trading costs. In 2018–19, IRSEA's donations to Stewart House totalled \$3270.00.

The AGM accepted my recommendation that members' subscriptions remain at \$15 per year. This has been the same since 2007.

I would like sincerely to thank members who have sent a note encouraging me in my work as Treasurer.

RAY GILLIES
Treasurer



SARAH AND COLIN MACDONALD AND IAN FENELY

Friends of Stewart House

IRSEA continues to be a generous supporter of Stewart House and at the recent Open Day we were able to present a cheque for nearly \$2500. This was greatly appreciated. Stewart House depends on contributions from individuals and corporate sponsors to keep this critical facility operating for the benefit of vulnerable youth.

The Friends of Stewart House (FOSH) has many members from IRSEA and there are a few fund-raising events coming up that may interest you.

July 25 (Thursday). Lunch at Doyle's Restaurant on the Beach at Watson's Bay, 12.30 p.m.

The menu comprises fish chowder followed by fish and chips, accompanied by a glass of beer, wine, or soft drink, at a cost of \$45, which includes a \$10 donation for Friends of Stewart House.

October 1 (Tuesday). High Tea at Beehive Cafe, Shop 4/1A Wongala Crescent, Beecroft 10.00 a.m.

The cost is \$36 and includes high tea with unlimited tea and coffee and \$10 donation to Friends of Stewart House. An extra \$7 for a glass of bubbly!

If you are interested in one or both of these events contact Judy Brown at djbrown@bigpond.net.au (note the underscore) or Marketa Bird at dgmbird@bigpond.com or mobile 0417 275 393.

ALAN LAUGHLIN
Secretary, FOSH

Members Write

Experiencing Australia's Worst Peacetime Naval Disaster

Syd Smith

It is intriguing to see how the media can cover a news item when you happened to have been there

at the same time. Inevitably you will see the official report from a different perspective. Several years ago I submitted an article to the newsletter about my second teaching appointment to Jervis Bay Public School, but what I omitted to mention at that time was my first-hand experience of observing the events of 10 March 1964 when HMAS *Melbourne* ploughed through HMAS *Voyager* while on exercises off Jervis Bay. There is an interesting story behind this, but before I explain let me give you some background to how this all came about.

In January 1963 I took up the position of assistant teacher at Jervis Bay Public School. In those days Jervis Bay was, and still is, within the Australian Capital Territory and, to set the record straight, I had 'boarded' a naval land base or 'ship' known as HMAS *Creswell*. *Creswell* is the site for the training of naval officers, our naval Duntroon. In those days Canberra was fully responsible for its schools, except that it depended on New South Wales for its teacher supply and inspectors. Several years later the ACT invited those teachers to join its system permanently, but by then I had left the ACT and continued my career with the Department in southern Sydney.

At that time there were certain advantages to being appointed to an ACT school. First, you received a double supply of essential resources and equipment, one of them happening to be toilet paper. The school, staffed by only two teachers, had such an abundant supply of this necessity that it had become a fire hazard. 'Please take a boot load home with you when you go on holidays' the principal would implore me, but other than this minor irritation we enjoyed two pianos, two TVs, and almost any other item the school might require.

Though the school was on naval property and catered mainly for the children of naval personnel, it also welcomed children from across the border, from such places as Hyams Beach and Vincentia. Another ACT school close by was Wreck Bay, which catered for the local Aboriginal population and was administered in those days by the Commonwealth. Bob Murdoch, who later became an inspector of schools, was a teacher there at the same time. Today, owing to requests by the navy, the two schools have now combined and enjoy a much larger number of teachers.

There are many stories that I can tell about *Creswell* and Jervis Bay, but this would require more than a non-fiction publication to do them justice; suffice it to say teaching in a navy school was probably one of the most unusual experiences a teacher can have. For example, not only did a NSW inspector visit the school annually, but we also had an Admiral's Inspection. Flag Officer-in-Charge Eastern Australia (FOICEA) would come with his retinue of officers and speak to the children, only to continue with his tour of the base

where even the stones on the road were painted white and all washing was removed from clothes lines. The school often tolerated naval and army exercises where night-time war games were played using its grounds for their activities. It was not uncommon to come to school in the morning to find the jungle gym had been removed or signs of fake battle remained in strategic places.

But let me return to the *Voyager* disaster of 1964. At around 9 o'clock that evening of February 10 a group of us were having a drink in the mess when the Commander came in to tell us that he had just received a signal informing that *Melbourne* had done some damage to *Voyager* while on exercises 24 km off the coast. Minutes later a gannet from Nowra Hill (the fleet airbase) flew over to inspect the situation. Then within a few hours we heard that the *Voyager* had sunk and Captain Stevens and the Officer of the Watch were dead. Later we were to discover that over 82 crew had been killed, many of them officers from the Wardroom and a few cadets from the College. We now know that the bridge crew on *Melbourne* assumed that *Voyager* was zig-zagging to let the carrier overtake her, and would then assume her correct position. Senior personnel on *Voyager* were not paying attention to the manoeuvre. At 20:55, officers on both ships began desperate avoiding manoeuvres, but by then a collision was inevitable.

Melbourne struck *Voyager* at 20:56, with the carrier's bow striking just behind the bridge and cutting the destroyer in two. The rest of the ship sank after midnight. *Melbourne*, although damaged, suffered no fatalities, and was able to sail to Sydney the next morning with most of the *Voyager* survivors aboard—the rest had been taken to *Creswell*.

At the time I knew from conversations I had with officers that Captain Stevens had a drinking problem, and when his body was taken to *Creswell* it contained a high alcoholic blood-reading. I also recall that at a mess dinner the previous week I had met a young lieutenant from *Voyager* who boasted proudly of his drinking exploits. He could have well been on the bridge of *Voyager* that night. While it was never openly mentioned, the officers at *Creswell* felt that the *Melbourne*'s commander, Captain Robertson, should not have been blamed for the collision. Unfortunately, he was disciplined strongly at the time and never allowed to take up a sea appointment again. Robertson ultimately resigned, a broken man, to buy a pub in central Sydney.

Being on the spot at that time gave me an insight into a number of factors that were still then yet to see the light of day in the media. It was no surprise to me that eventually Australia would learn that after a four-month Royal Commission, it was concluded that *Voyager* was primarily at fault for failing to maintain effective situational awareness,

but *Melbourne*'s captain and his officers were also criticized for not alerting the destroyer to the danger it was in. Opinions like mine were that the Royal Commission had been poorly handled, and Robertson had been made a scapegoat.

Increasing pressure over the results of the first Royal Commission, along with allegations by former *Voyager* executive officer Peter Cabban that Captain Duncan Stevens was unfit for command, prompted a second Royal Commission in 1967: the only time in Australian history that two Royal Commissions have been held to investigate the same incident. Although Cabban's claims revolved primarily round Stevens's excessive drinking, the second Royal Commission found that Stevens was unfit to command for medical reasons. Consequently, the findings of the first Royal Commission were based on incorrect assumptions, and Robertson and his officers were not to blame for the collision. Unfortunately, too many years had passed and by then the damage had been done to Robertson.

But naval people are tough and can look death in the face as part of their job. A week after the collision Captain Stevens had been buried and a party was held on the beach to clear the terrible memories of that fateful incident, a sort of wake.

At one time I nearly joined the Instructors Branch of the RAN, until naval wives talked me out of it, but I certainly have no regrets in staying with the Department. I saw from my time at *Creswell* a new slant on what leadership means and was in a unique position to grow professionally and gain another perspective of life away from education.



IRSEA GROUP WITH KATHY POWZUN AND CHRIS CHARLES

First Appointments After Teacher Training in 1952

Brian Burns

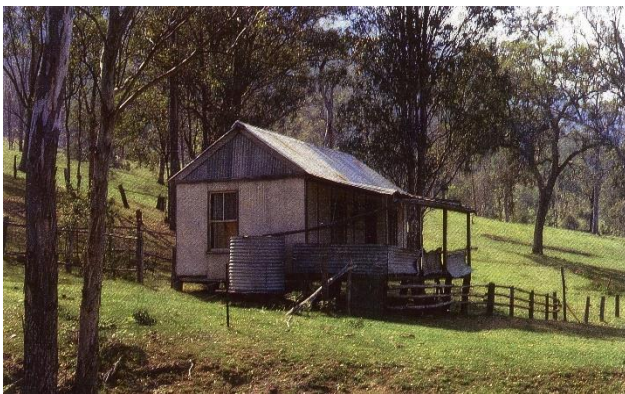
Peggy Craddock, Laurie's widow, writes that the experiences of a close friend of Laurie might be of interest to members who were posted in their first year to an isolated area. His name is Brian Burns and he was the best man at their wedding. Brian was a Small-Schools-trained teacher who eventually became a highly successful

teacher of 'challenging' students at Mullumbimby High School. Peggy prepared this on behalf of Brian Burns, who is now unable to write this himself, but remembers it extremely clearly.

Brian Burns, formerly of Mullumbimby and now Tweed Heads, writes that, as everyone in teaching knows, one's first appointment brings the realization that now at last, one is about to start one's career. For these new male first-timers in 1952, this appointment came after compulsory National Service, and began around April. Training in the Small Schools section also meant your appointment would be somewhere in the backblocks of the state.

My first appointment was to Newton Boyd, between Grafton and Glen Innes, but way out in the bush. I called the farmer who, I was told, had agreed to provide accommodation. When I alighted from the Grafton – Glen Innes bus service, he was waiting for me, and told me that the community had been told their teacher would be appointed in the following year! The school was to be put in an old house, and it wasn't ready. So, my landlord of 'Bampton', on the original Gwyder Highway (now known as the Old Glen Innes Road), and I got stuck in and cleaned it out and set it up—no desks, chairs, or supplies. Grafton Primary School sent what they could on a truck or trucks, and so the adventure began.

The schoolroom was not large enough for the total enrolment, so the desk sent as the teacher's desk, which was actually a rather long table, was leant up against a wall, and was put on the veranda for the older students to work at in fine weather. When the Christmas holidays came, the old house was demolished, and the old hayshed refurbished as the school.



THE HAYSHED

The supplies from Grafton Primary School were not as much as what would normally have been provided by School Supplies, for a newly opened school, but the generosity of the Grafton school did allow us to get school started. As the community had not expected a teacher to be appointed until the following year, it really was a challenge to provide education facilities for these isolated children. The following year I taught until April in the new

'school' and then went back into National Service. My relief teacher wanted to stay, so I went onto the Relief Staff at Tweed Heads. The hayshed school remained for quite a long time, and eventually was replaced by a school built by the Department. The enrolment soon became too small, however, so it ceased its life as a school. The building was allowed to be used by a community organization. Like so many, it disappeared from the education scenario—Billinudgel PS, The Pocket, and Ocean Shores schools are now gone. Similar schools have disappeared over the years.

I enjoyed the teaching, but the isolation was not pleasant—fifty miles from a town and no car, was a problem. I had lived on a farm all my life up till then, so that was not the problem—the loneliness could be difficult. I know of many colleagues of the time who started their careers in isolated locations where the school was poorly provided with supplies and who made a great difference bringing education to places where no school buses ran to larger towns.

[Brian goes on to talk of a young teacher who was not so well supported] . . . When the young man arrived at his school at the beginning of the year, he found an empty shell that was being partially restored by the P and R staff. The school was innocent of equipment of any kind: no board, no chalk, no cupboard, books, or records.

He rang the inspector about it; he was told not to worry, but to carry on as best he could. During this period the children were sitting on the floor or standing.

Further difficulties were encountered. In the first months, heavy rain caused irregular attendance; his work was interrupted by his absence in military camp for nineteen days and later a week spent in hospital.

To add to his difficulties, he was without adequate accommodation: he had to board at one home after another, week by week. As sometimes happens, he had no company of people his own age. He felt socially and culturally isolated; he wrote a rather touching letter to the inspector, asking for advice and help.

When he was without equipment, and unfortunately later, he took time off—three days in all—to buy equipment. He spent five pounds of his own money on school materials.

For a time he kept a roll on a sheet of paper. He marked the children present while he was in town: his plea was that he thought he was on departmental business and that therefore the children's attendance should not be penalized.

For his absence and for alleged irregular punishment, he was reported by three parents, one of whom had driven him into the town on the occasion

of one visit to buy materials. It might be noted that the remainder of the parents subsequently signed a statement that ‘considering his youth and inexperience, he did a magnificent job for our children’.

An inquiry was held. Following the inquiry, he was transferred as a supernumerary to a large central school. But after a month, he received an official letter dismissing him.

[*Brian goes on to say*] . . . The Federation sought legal advice and asked the Public Service Board for an inquiry into the facts. The Board found the charges of absence without leave and irregular punishment proved, but not, be it noted, charges of inefficiency or incompetence. The dismissal was annulled. The young teacher was reinstated.

From my own knowledge, this young teacher, who was from our training cohort, went on to have a highly credible and successful career.



GEOFF WALTON AND GRAHAM MOSELY

Students on Strike: Is Climate Change an Acceptable Reason?

Syd Smith

I was pleased to see the invitation in the newsletter to discuss current educational issues and even to raise controversial topics as well. The recent ‘strike’ by students expressing their anger at and disappointment with the Government’s failure to take more action on climate change is an excellent one for us as educators to begin discussing. I look forward to colleagues adding to this discussion.

Let me be upfront and tell you where I stand on this issue. If there is a concern that children should remain at school and not become involved in certain political issues that affect them, then my response is twofold. First, students can’t leave school premises without their parents’ permission, and the rallies have been well organized, peaceful, and part of a global movement worth supporting. Secondly, there is an abundance of evidence that shows over half the population supports reducing fossil fuels and putting more effort into renewable energy.

Little wonder young people worry about the sort of world they will have in the future if this development takes too long.

Schools support the value of scientific evidence and in the area of sustainability education we teach children to *take action for the environment*. It is simply not enough to *know* about science and the environment, or even to understand its implications. Unless we do something about it, then we are lost as a civilization and risk destroying a habitable planet. The reason students (and, for that matter many adults) attend marches, campaigns, and protests is that they feel governments do not listen to them. There is evidence that it is useless writing letters to newspapers or attending delegations to your local member because the Government has its own immovable policy and won’t listen.

One reason we have this significant rise in people-power worldwide and the growth of organizations like Getup is that people know they have little influence on our decision-makers. However, in larger numbers they can make politicians take notice occasionally. Social change is slow in Australia, partly owing to the resistance of certain power groups. Some of us may not believe in discussing politics with our students, and certainly we should not teach students to support a single political ideology, but it is more vital than ever for our students to understand how decisions are made and who have the strongest influence.

When we examine the action of students raising the spectre of climate change, it’s unsurprising to see how it fits into political discussion. A fascinating analysis by a UK social science professor, Kevin MacKay, contends that *oligarchy* has been a more fundamental cause of the collapse of civilizations than social complexity or energy demand. Control by oligarchs, he argues, thwarts rational decision-making, because the short-term interests of the elite are radically different from the long-term interests of society. This explains why past civilizations have collapsed ‘despite possessing the cultural and technological know-how needed to resolve their crises. Economic elites, which benefit from social dysfunction, block the necessary solutions. The oligarchic control of wealth, politics, media and public discourse explains the comprehensive institutional failure now pushing us towards disaster’. Think of Donald Trump and his cabinet of multi-millionaires; the influence of the Koch Brothers in funding right-wing organizations; the Murdoch empire and its massive contribution to climate science denial; or the oil and motor companies whose lobbying prevents a faster shift to new technologies.

Because we cannot save ourselves without contesting oligarchic control, *the fight for democracy and justice and the fight against environmental breakdown are one and the same thing*. ‘Do

not allow those who have caused this crisis to define the limits of political action. Do not allow those whose magical thinking got us into this mess to tell us what can and cannot be done', he concludes. There are signs, however, that we may not end up this way. Already leading entrepreneurs are going ahead and doing their own thing in spite of the tardiness of government in the renewable-energy area. There is talk about electric cars and the continual improvement in better battery manufacture to counter the push in Queensland to mine more coal and build a new thermal power station.

I am gratified that students are concerned about climate change and demonstrate that they don't want to just talk about it. If we see light in the ideas of Kevin McKay and other journalists like George Monbiot of *The Guardian*, we are raising a much bigger global issue than climate change. We are touching on the big picture of democracy itself.

Members might like to write of their experiences in their first teaching appointments or as inspectors and their experience with assisting young teachers.

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of individual members and do not necessarily reflect those of IRSEA. IRSEA accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of those views.

Valete

Derek Howland

Derek Howland passed away on Wednesday 3 April 2019. Our records show that Derek commenced his teaching career in January 1952 and in January 1979 he was appointed as an English/History inspector, based in Ballina. Prior to his appointment to the Inspectorate Derek had been Principal of Mullumbimby High School. Derek retired in November 1985.

Ern Kotlash

Ernest (Ern, Ernie) Kotlash died on Sunday 28 April 2019. Our records show that Ern commenced his teaching career in January 1957. Ern was promoted from Principal, Coolah Central, to District Inspector, Dubbo West, in 1976, and in March 1977 to the position of District Inspector, South Wollongong. In the Schools Renewal Restructure Ern was appointed as a cluster director in the South Coast Region based in Cooma. He retired in June 1994.

In a tribute to Ern, one of his South Coast colleagues, Fred Cook, has written: 'Ern was a popular leader . . . he was never too shy to stand up for Principals and staff . . . his cryptic comments and sense of humour kept Regional staff meetings on the ball; a real rascal, but always a valuable team member. He was just a good bloke'.

Gordon Edward (Ted) Roberts

Gordon Edward (Ted) Roberts passed away on Sunday 17 March 2019 at the Caroon, Kalina Nursing Home in Goonellabah at the age of 98. His beloved wife May predeceased him. Howard Brockington, who informed us of Ted's passing, commented that 'as the son of a teacher, it's not surprising that Ted continued in the profession. He taught in a variety of schools, and typical of his era, became familiar with the geography of New South Wales. Beginning from a provisional school in the hills beyond Kyogle, he progressed through central schools before being appointed to the inspectorate in the Riverina Region. By 1979 he was Inspector of Schools at Casino in the North Coast Region'. Howard goes on to say that '1979 was significant for me. It was the year I entered the Inspectorate at Grafton and the Regional Director, Alan Findlay, asked Ted to be my mentor. His wise advice and experience guided me on many occasions. As we travelled together to conduct inspections it was always a time for rich conversation—Ted was widely read and pondered the deep meaning of life in an age of science'. Ted retired on 23 January 1981.

Newsletter Notices

Get your newsletter by email

- Do you have an email address but still receive our newsletter by post?
- Would you like to see the pictures in colour?
- Would you like to be able to adjust the size of the type?

Then do as half our members do and choose to receive the newsletter by email.

To change to receiving the newsletter by email just let the Secretary know: brian.davies09@gmail.com

Contribute to the newsletter

If you would like to respond to any of the articles in this newsletter or write on other educational issues or what you have been doing or what you are planning to do, email your contributions to Brian Davies at the above email address or post to Brian Davies, Secretary IRSEA, 24 Olinda Crescent, CARLINGFORD NSW 2118.

If emailing please send text in a Microsoft Word file (.docx or .doc) or text file (.txt) and any photographs in .jpeg format. Contributions are needed by 24 October.

For Your Diary

Lunch meetings: Friday 2 August and Friday 6 December, Both at Castlereagh Boutique Hotel

Newsletter: November (copy by 24 October)

Executive Committee meeting: Monday 21 October

Do We Need to Change Your Contact Details?

If you are changing your address or other contact details please let us know. If you have provided us with an email but have not received emails over the last few months then please let us know. We might have the wrong email or your email might not be working. If you have not provided us with an email and would like to receive emails that go out from time-to-time then please let us know.

Please provide the following details:

Name:

Street:

Town: State: Postcode:

Email address: Phone no.:

Email your details to: brian.davies09@gmail.com

OR Post to: Brian Davies, Secretary IRSEA, 24 Olinda Crescent, CARLINGFORD NSW 2118.

Meeting and Lunch Booking-Slip

New Venue

Friday 2 August 2019

Please note that you can now pay by electronic funds transfer

Please complete the lunch booking-slip and return payment with your cheque (unless paying by EFT) **by 19 July** to:

John Allsopp, 23 Lyndon Way, BEECROFT 2119 (phone 9980 2114)

I enclose my payment of \$..... (at \$50.00 per head)

Your name (please print):

Guest's name(s) (if applicable):

For the above to attend the IRSEA luncheon at 11.30 a.m. for 12.00 p.m. at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel at 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, on Friday 2 August.

Please provide vegetarian meal(s).

Signed: Date: Phone no.:

If paying by cheque make your cheque to the *Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators* and cross it 'Not negotiable'

OR

If paying by Electronic Funds Transfer the details are:

BANK: Commonwealth Bank of Australia

BSB: 062300

Account number: 10466684

Account name: Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators (IRSEA)

Your reference: Your surname, initial, and 'meeting'

Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after **26 July 2019**