



# Newsletter

ABN: 78 259 388 090

No. 4

November 2019

## From the President

How quickly the year has flown by! And now, it is almost time to turn our attention to Christmas. But before that, a few notes from me.

First, a thank you and welcome to Syd Smith, who answered our call to fill the casual vacancy on the Committee and join the newsletter team with Grant Beard. Syd will start in January 2020. Many thanks also to Brian Davies who has been undertaking this as well as the Secretary's role in the interim. Also, a thank you to John Allsopp who has negotiated our new city venue at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. I understand from the Committee and from members' survey responses that it proved a very suitable venue for the August lunch. We have also now moved our Committee meetings to this venue. I was sorry to miss the August lunch, not only because it was in the new venue but also because Richard Skinner, a current Director Educational Leadership, was the guest speaker. Richard provided an entertaining and informative talk about his current role that I know brought back memories of and parallels to our former roles as Directors, Inspectors, and Chief Education Officers in the Department. Having a guest speaker at one of our meetings each year has proved a great success and the Committee is already considering a speaker for 2020 who will give us insights into current educational and Departmental trends.

Recently, a colleague gave me a paperweight for my birthday inscribed, 'I need a day between Saturday and Sunday'. He thought it described my post-retirement lifestyle (or is it failed-retirement lifestyle?) perfectly. All jokes aside, I count myself lucky that I am fit and healthy and able to continue both paid and voluntary work in education on a very regular basis. One recent paid opportunity was developing (with a current senior officer) a one-day professional-learning course about complaints management for a group of current Directors Educational Leadership. I enjoyed the opportunity and I believe they enjoyed having the time to focus solely on one aspect of their work for a whole day.

But back to Christmas. Our Christmas function is



coming up on 6 December. It is a great occasion to catch up with colleagues and enjoy some Christmas spirit. As with our August function it will be held at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel and the details and booking form are at the end of this newsletter. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

KERRIE IKIN  
President

## From the Department

The Department has an ambitious goal to be Australia's leading education system and one of the finest in the world. Key to delivering this is the unwavering focus as an education system is to ensure that all students can thrive academically and build the skills to live fulfilling life post-school.



To support this vision we need to give time back to schools and make the time at school count. The Delivery Unit, within the Strategy and Delivery Division is working across the Department to help ensure that we are focusing on continuously improving the systems and processes to reduce the frustrations and complexities, giving our schools and leaders the ability to lead and build our future leaders, teaching staff, and support staff.

To understand where there are the greatest opportunities to 'give back time', the Delivery Unit has been visiting schools, engaging with the associations and leveraging the work that was completed in the Principal Workload Study. Over the course of the last twelve months we have been working across three key works teams to drive this work:

- **Taking things off desks for our principals and school staff:** removing the need for schools to complete a school profile every year; increasing the mailbox size for principals; reducing the number of steps in Taleo candidate workflows (from 17 steps to 5); and reducing the daily cancelled/adjusted fees reports—we have shifted them to monthly from daily and giving principals the ability to run ad hoc reports as needed.

- **Improving changes that are going out:** ensuring a school-centric approach in all that we do by ensuring we are designing solutions with schools, not for schools, through early and ongoing engagement; making sure the quality of the solutions are fit for purpose and that onboarding time for changes are limited wherever possible.
- **Improving the way we deliver changes to schools:** safeguarding school time by coordinating and prioritizing work across the Department using the Master Schedule (provides visibility of all changes impacting schools for the upcoming twelve months); embedding change-free periods and ensuring that the volume of change is manageable for schools.

There is a lot more work to be done; however, as a Department we are seeing a genuine commitment from the Executive and our colleagues to embrace this new way of thinking and working and we are starting to see a positive impact within our schools.



KELLY EDMUNDS

R/Executive Director, Delivery Unit, Kelly Edmunds (pictured) has been pivotal in accelerating this body of work with a focused commitment to realizing our goals reflected in the Department's Strategic Plan.

KATHY POWZUN

Director, School Operations and Performance

## Secretary's Report

Firstly, I would like to thank Geoff Walton for looking after the Secretary's role for the last six weeks while I was away in Italy—the land of the six-day school week; it was an unusual sight for a Saturday to see school students with their shining morning faces, some creeping like snails unwillingly to school but others looking far happier.

The August luncheon at our new venue, the Castle-reagh Boutique Hotel, went well and our guest speaker, Mr Richard Skinner, Director of Educational Leadership, provided a thoughtful and stimulating presentation. A report of his presentation is on page 3.

After the meeting, the executive decided to conduct a survey about the venue with those who attended. Thank you to members for their participation in the survey. The response to the venue was very positive. Members appreciated the close proximity to

Town Hall Station and the ease of access within the building. The overwhelming response to the food was that it was very good and the facilities were generally thought to be fine with a typical comment being 'the bar was conveniently located and the seating around the bar was comfortable', while the service was seen as polite, efficient, and obliging. In summing up one, long-time member commented that it was an 'attractive venue [that] would suit us indefinitely—although once a year at Parramatta is good' and that is what the executive decided at its October meeting. The 2019 and 2020 December luncheon meetings along with the July 2020 meeting will be held at the Castlereagh and the May 2020 Annual General Meeting will be held at the Department's premises at Parramatta. Please refer to the Dates for your Diary Section on page 7.



BRIAN DAVIES, GRAEME NICHOLLS, AND GEOFF WALTON

At the October meeting Ray Gillies reported that the balance in the current account was \$4399.57; the Term Deposit was \$15 397.50. Vincent Delany reported that current total membership was 158, comprising 119 men and 39 women. On membership, it is great to welcome Graeham Kennedy as a new member. Many will know Graeham, who retired as a Regional Director.

You might recall that the newsletter editor's position has been vacant this year. The executive is very pleased that Syd Smith has agreed to take on the role from the start of next year with Grant Beard continuing his wonderful job as desktop publisher. Thanks to Geoff Walton who has helped me in the production of this year's newsletters. I would also like to thank all contributors, with special note to Kathy Powzun for making a contribution from the Department a regular feature.

Our members are generous people. At the August meeting Janina Sulikowski asked members if they would support a student she had taught at Gateshead High School, Judy Adnum, who was raising funds in support of Indigenous students and Indigenous health research. Members donated \$295. Judy has written the following thank you (page 3).

BRIAN DAVIES  
Secretary

Between September 9 and September 14, I, along with 23 other participants completed a 100 km trek along the Heysen Trail in the Ikara–Flinders Ranges. The purpose of this was to raise funds for Indigenous student scholarships and community health research to support equity for Indigenous Australians. The Ikara–Flinders Ranges are located in the arid heart of the South Australian outback, and have significant Indigenous history.

I am delighted to tell you that the Challenge team have absolutely smashed our original goal of \$100 000. We have so far raised over \$148 000 for this wonderful cause. With fundraising for the Challenge remaining open until 31 October, we are confident of exceeding the \$152 432 raised in the University's 2017 Larapinta Trail Challenge.

While the final allocation of funds is still to be determined, it is likely that your efforts will enable at least seventeen Indigenous students to be supported through scholarships at university, as well as support two health research projects to positively impact Indigenous communities.

That's at least seventeen lives changed directly and countless family, friends, and community members inspired and assisted as a result of your efforts.

This was my third trek for the university's scholarship program. It is a cause close to my heart as, without Janina Sulikowski, as my English teacher in Year 12, informing me that university entry was available for students through scholarship programs, university would not have been a possibility for me.

Thank you for your kind donations. My feet are still recovering as it was the toughest and most rigorous walk to date but knowing how generous people like you have been, it was well worth the effort. You can find out more at <https://everydayhero.com.au/event/ikara2019>.

All the very best,

JUDY ADNUM

## Friends of Stewart House

The Friends of Stewart House (FOSH) has run a series of very successful events in 2019 that have been advertised in our IRSEA Newsletter. The year is running down, but here are two events for consideration.

**November 23 (Saturday). Gosford Race Day Racecourse Road, Gosford—only 2.2 km from Gosford Station.**

**Race entry 11.00 a.m., function starts at 12.00 p.m.**

The last big FOSH fundraiser for 2019. Free entry into the races and race book. Shared platters—antipasto and dips/sticky spiced chicken, corn

salsa/Australian cheeses, dried fruit and crackers. Purchase your own drinks. Door prizes. Donation included for Stewart House **The total cost is \$75 per person. (Tables of six.)** The booking contact (asap) is Kerryanne Knox: [kknox@bigpond.com](mailto:kknox@bigpond.com)

**February 5 (Wednesday). AGM and lunch Epping Club, 45–47 Rawson St, Epping AGM starts at 11.00 a.m., lunch at 12.30 p.m.**

All are invited to the Luncheon and AGM of the Friends of Stewart House This is always a great social event for old friends to get together and enjoy both the company and great food. A few minutes' walk west from Epping Railway Station. RSVP 29 January 2020. The booking contact is Alan Laughlin: [alaughlin21@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alaughlin21@optusnet.com.au)

ALAN LAUGHLIN  
Secretary, FOSH



CATE AND IAN VACCHINI WITH COL MACDONALD

## Guest Speaker at August Luncheon

Many of our members have had extensive experience in areas such as management of principals, school improvement, accountability, evaluation, and data analysis. As such, it was wonderful to have as our guest speaker at the August luncheon meeting, someone who currently works in those areas in the NSW Department of Education. Richard Skinner is the Director of Educational Leadership for the Port Jackson Network of Schools.

Richard has spent much of his career in country NSW. He started teaching at Goodooga Central School in 1983, followed by teaching and early leadership opportunities around the Armidale area, including Guyra Central. In 2006 Richard took up the position of Principal at Dubbo College, Senior Campus and in 2013 became the Principal at Rose Bay Secondary College. In 2017 he took up the position of Relieving Director, Public Schools NSW, and then in 2018 commenced in his current position.



The Port Jackson Network in the inner-city area has a diverse group of schools including the Inner Sydney High School, with 1200 students over four-teen floors and a flexible learning environment, and Alexandria Park Community School with 1000 students K–6 and 800 secondary students.



RICHARD SKINNER AND ALAN LAUGHLIN

Richard encapsulated his role as working ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with the twenty principals that he manages, supporting and mentoring them to make evidence-based decisions using research and data analysis. Today, principals and teachers have ready access to much data through the computer-based platform known as Scout. The data include NAPLAN, HSC, attendance, suspensions, finances, a community profile, enrolment trends, staff leave, qualifications, survey results from parents and students, and so on. Scout also provides value-added information.

An issue that Richard spoke of was the effect of the strain on the enrolment-capacity of schools and the priority to take all local students. Scout’s ability to plot where each student’s home is in relation to the intake area was valuable here.

Schools use data as the foundation for the planning process, which is based on a three-year cycle. The plan is to have a strategic focus rather than trying to include everything. Richard highlighted two of the ten goals of the Department’s Strategic Plan:

- every student is known, valued, and cared for in our schools;
- every student, every teacher, every leader, and every school improves every year.

Planning is part of the drive for School Excellence (illustrated below), which incorporates needs-based funding with the level of funding guaranteed through the cycle, school development reviews, school self-assessment each year, an annual report, and a five-year cycle of external validation. Within this the School Excellence Framework provides standards to assess against and describes what the next step in improvement looks like—a familiar notion to members who worked in standards-based times.

Richard’s role is to help the principals with this work. And then, apart from all of this, there is also the management of those contentious issues that arise.

Members greatly appreciated Richard’s thoughtful presentation of the many dimensions of his educational leadership role. He was thanked by Alan Laughlin on behalf of the attendees.



## Members Write

### Recycling the Over-80s

*Laurie Dicker, Buderim*

As I have lived on the Sunshine Coast for the last eighteen years, I haven’t had many opportunities to attend the meetings of the Institute in Sydney, but I do catch up with former colleagues here or on my rare visits down south. It was a pleasure this week to catch up with the Muirs and the Gillies from the old Seven Hills office. They, together with us and Jan and John Dale, had some enjoyable meals while we caught up. The Baillies, Feneleys, and Brenners could not make it this time but we will see them next time in Sydney. This group has been meeting four times a year since the early 90s. It was so good to see that their tops are still above their bottoms. I also catch up regularly with Harry and Elaine Billington, who moved to the coast last year.

What have I been doing, I hear you ask? When my wife Judy passed away five years ago after a lengthy period of illness, I had to reassess my priorities. Sitting in a rocking chair contemplating my navel was not an option. I could have waited for God, but I felt that he gave up on me some time ago so I decided to continue doing the things that I enjoyed.

I continue to go to the gym three times a week and walk regularly to keep fit. I am not trying to impress with my Don-Athaldo-like body. Instead, while I hum the tune ‘Stayin’ Alive’, I try to avoid a repeat of a by-pass operation I had in 2008.

I enjoy travelling. I completed a full camping trip of the Kimberley and Tanami desert in 2015. This was followed by trips to Myanmar, Spain, Portugal, and France. In 2017 I went to China, Tibet, and

Nepal and reached base camp Mt Everest in Tibet. Late in the year I did Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Last year was a wine tour of Italy and France. We will be doing Japan later this year and, if the insurance company will still cover me, the UK next year.

Buderim, where I live, is a wonderful close-knit community with plenty to do to keep people interested and active. It is also the place where the elephants from western Queensland and down south come to die. But there is no excuse to get bored here. After WW2, the local community formed the Buderim War Memorial Community Association, which coordinates and promotes a number of activities and welcomes newcomers to the area. It was, at the time, unique in Australia. U3A is very strong in the area. With our perfect weather conditions, sport is very prominent, with everything from surfing to croquet. Bridge, chess, and similar pursuits are also available.

The Buderim Craft Cottage caters for over 350 people in fifteen different groups of art and craft. On coming to Buderim I took up painting for the first time in my life and enjoy every minute of it. We meet every week and the thirty members of my group give me back as much cheek as I give them. I have been a member of the management committee and helped set up a creative-writing group.



LAURIE & MARJIE DICKER, BILL & ROSEMARY MUIR,  
JOHN & JAN DALE, VAL & RAY GILLIES

It was to that writing group one day that a young 80-year-old chick from Cotton Tree called Marjie came, seeking guidance to write her life story. Always willing to help I took her under my wing and over a few glasses of wine and stale cheese sandwiches together with trips to the Adelaide Arts Festival, Sydney Opera on the Harbour, Norfolk Island, and Italy/France, we decided to get together. In February this year we took off to the Bendooley Estate in the southern tablelands and got married under the trees with a celebrant, birds in the trees and on the lake, and two witnesses.

Why, might you ask would an 84 and 80 year old want to get married for the second time? Because we wanted to, we love each other's company, and we get on famously. We are both physically, mentally,

and socially active. Marjie heads the Ladies Auxiliary for the hospital and the Friends of Buderim charity organization, volunteers at the Old Post Office information Centre and a nursing-home, and is on the executive of the BWMCA. For our own peace of mind and those of our family we did all the right things legally. It might not be for everyone, but for us it is perfect and I highly recommend it for those of similar inclination. There's still hope for some of you, and if you need advice on how it's done, don't hesitate to contact Marjie and me. Go on, just do it.

In addition to all of those activities I have continued to write. I have just completed my seventh book, but my first novel. It has taken two years. Recently someone asked me what it is like writing a novel. I said it was like walking to Perth slowly. But then the editing, rewriting, proofreading, and formatting was like walking home from Perth backwards. After that the preparation of it for publishing as paperback and e-book was like walking to Melbourne and return, backwards and naked.

The five big and two independent publishers in Australia are not interested in an 84-year-old new author. They are looking for another five or six books and won't take that risk, even though my cardiologist said I'll live to 100.

These days, with the emphasis on technology, algorithms, and artificial intelligence, the process of formatting a book ready for digital print is somewhat taxing on an author who is not tech savvy. It's like Charles Dickens meets Avatar. My normal blond hair has now turned grey. Thank goodness I had my son Rohan to assist.

Therefore I have self-published as a print-on-demand paperback and as an e-book.

The book is entitled *HARRY—The Ants Nest*, a murder mystery set in a small country town in western NSW in 1947. Harry is a detective who is suffering from malaria and a bullet wound to his leg from his time with Z Force behind enemy lines. My editor, Rose Allan, said, 'You captured my attention in the first chapter and maintained it throughout to the stunning finish'. If you enjoyed Jane Harper's book, *The Dry*, you'll love *Harry*.

If you have difficulty sleeping at night or you want some Christmas presents for family and friends, you can purchase paperback copies from Book Depository or Amazon or the e-book version from any of the major suppliers.

Finally I want you to know that Marjie and I support the world emphasis on recycling and believe that we are shining examples of that trend. While we sympathize with the number of redundancies in the funeral business we feel it better than being used as landfill.



## Selective High Schools

Tony Re

Turn back the clocks? Live in the past? In developing and implementing new educational programs and revising the curriculum for the coming decades, there are many challenges to be met. Unknown advances in technology, an ever-changing society, and a world of work that cannot be forecast are some where solutions using past practices will not suffice. One constant in preparing students to have fulfilling lives in an exciting new world is the role of policy-makers, the politicians who regularly introduce changes for purely political or ideological reasons with little or no knowledge of research to guide their decisions.

One area, though, where reflection on the deficiencies of a past practice would be useful before further changes are made is the establishment of selective high schools. The recent announcement that a new selective high school would be built in the south-west of Sydney highlights this. Rather than being done for very sound educational reasons, it has been reported that the decision was driven 'by a strong demand' from parents.



BILL MUIR, TONY RE, EULA GUTHRIE

This decision aligns with the way many major changes were made in the late 1980s. The expansion of selective schools and the introduction of semi-selective high schools, supported by successive governments, had no research foundation but was based on 'giving parents greater choice in choosing their children's school'. Although the proliferation of selective high schools has resulted in New South Wales having more such schools than all the other states combined, the standard of education in New South Wales is not greater than those states with fewer or no selective high schools.

The growth in academic selective high schools, together with the extra funding of non-government schools and systems, undermined local comprehensive state high schools, once the keystone of secondary education in New South Wales. It has even been argued that this was a deliberate strategy

of the policy-makers. Regardless of this, admission to a selective academic high school became a sign of success for many families as they avoided the perceived stigma of their children attending the local secondary school.

It is easy to regret the decisions about selective high schools made over the last thirty years and even easier to lament the changes to academic selectivity that should be made but unfortunately will not. The number of academic selective high schools should be greatly reduced to six, matching Victoria's four, to cater for the highly gifted students, the exceptional ones. Some of these students stand out from the time they commence Kindergarten. Others will emerge during their primary schooling. Very well constructed tests for identifying original and creative thinking will reveal the remainder. Finally, staff of the highest calibre must be carefully selected.

If these changes were introduced, much of the damage to local comprehensive secondary schooling could be remedied. This should be accompanied by the reintroduction of boundaries for the local comprehensive high schools, with the teachers being given high-quality training in teaching talented students, which is about to occur with primary-school teachers. The current and welcome rebuilding program must extend to the refurbishment to a very high standard of all secondary schools. Add to these a reduction in the funding of non-government schools, or even an absorption into the public system, and the New South Wales public-school system will again be a world leader under the direction of the outstanding people currently leading education in the state.

Thoughts from the past to influence the future? (The writer attended a selective high school.)

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*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.*

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ALLAN MILLS, JACK BASELEY, JOHN EDWARDS

## Valete

### Gerry Spring

Gerry Spring died on 9 July 2019. Institute records show that Gerry commenced his teaching career in February 1949. He was appointed as District Inspector, Forbes in January 1969. Notice of his appointment to the position is recorded in the July 1969 NSW Government Gazette. In January 1972 Gerry transferred to the position of District Inspector, Camden, and in June 1981 was promoted to Staff Inspector, Liverpool Region. In October 1984 Gerry was appointed Regional Director of Education Metropolitan East Region and he retired in April 1987.

### James Burton

James (Jim) William Burton died 26 July 2019. Our records show that Jim commenced his teaching career at the end of January 1950 and in January 1970 was appointed District Inspector, Cooma. At the start of the 1972 school year Jim transferred to the position of District Inspector Penrith. In January 1978 he transferred to the Shalvey District and then moved back to his former position as District Inspector of Schools, Penrith, in January 1984. Jim retired in December 1991.

Jim was 87 when he died. In December this year, he and his wife Kay would have celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

### Don Bliss

Donald John Bliss passed away on 8 August 2019. Our records show that Don commenced his teaching career in September 1950. He was appointed to the Inspectorate in January 1979 and retired in December 1988. Colleagues recall that he worked as a member of the Social Science panel and at the time of his retirement was based in Metropolitan East Region.

### Clifford (Cliff) Johnson

Clifford (Cliff) Johnson died on Sunday 15 September 2019. Institute records show that Cliff commenced his teaching career in October 1942 and was appointed Acting District Inspector, Narrabri in January 1961. His appointment as a District Inspector was confirmed in August 1961. In January 1962 he took up duty as District Inspector, Cooma, and in 1965 he transferred to District Inspector, Ballina. In March 1970 Cliff transferred to the position of District Inspector, Lismore, and in January 1972 was appointed District Inspector, Windsor. Cliff retired in October 1983.

### Neville John (Nev) Bothwell

Neville John (Nev) Bothwell died on 9 October 2019 at the age of 94. Our records show that Neville

Bothwell commenced his teaching career in January 1950. In March 1974 he was appointed as an Inspector of Schools, Secondary Social Science, based in the Hunter Region. Nev retired in August 1985. Nev's wife, Anne, predeceased him.



JANINA SULIKOWSKI, WARREN FAIRFAX, GRAEME NICHOLLS,  
GRANT BEARD, CHRIS EVANS

## Newsletter Notices

### Get your newsletter by email

The number of members receiving the newsletter by email continues to grow and these members are enjoying:

- making the size of the font what they prefer
- the pictures in colour,

as well as knowing that there is less work for volunteers who have to distribute the newsletters.

If you have an email please think of joining them. To change to receiving the newsletter by email just let the Secretary know: [brian.davies09@gmail.com](mailto:brian.davies09@gmail.com)

## For Your Diary

### Lunch meetings

Fri. 6 December 2019. Castlereagh Boutique Hotel  
Fri. 1 May 2020. Parramatta  
Fri. 31 July 2020. Castlereagh Boutique Hotel  
Fri. 4 December 2020. Castlereagh Boutique Hotel

### Newsletters

February (copy by 14 February)—but why wait until then? Send your contributions early!  
April (copy by 19 March)  
July (copy by 18 June)  
November 2020 (copy by 22 October)

### Executive Committee meeting

Monday 10 February 2020  
Monday 16 March 2020  
Monday 15 June 2020  
Monday 19 October 2020

### 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](mailto:brian.davies09@gmail.com)

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

## Christmas Meeting and Lunch Booking-Slip

**COME AND JOIN YOUR COLLEAGUES AT OUR GREAT NEW VENUE**

**Friday 6 December 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 22 November** 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 6 December.

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 **29 November 2019**