



INSTITUTE OF RETIRED SENIOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, INC.

# Newsletter

ABN: 78 259 388 090

No. 3

July 2021

## From the President

Welcome to the third newsletter for 2021 and my first as President. I am very honoured to have been elected President and look forward to working with the new Executive Committee and meeting with as many members as possible.



IRSEA is a longstanding and important organization which provides former senior officers with a vehicle to continue personal and professional collegiality and a forum to maintain our relationship and commitment to public education. The recent AGM demonstrated this high level of interest and commitment with passionate discussion and debate in response to Kathy Powzun's presentation about directions and priorities for the Department of Education. Hopefully, during the coming year we can harness this commitment and the extensive professional knowledge of members so we can contribute positively to improving school education in NSW.



KATHY POWZUN, ALAN RICE, GRAHAM DAWSON, BRIAN DAVIES

I want to thank Janina Sulikowski for her leadership of IRSEA during a very difficult period. Janina, with the support of the Executive Committee, was able to maintain commitment and impetus during the time we were reduced to ZOOM meetings. Janina will continue to provide leadership through the Executive Committee.

I would also like to welcome Lindsay Wasson as the incoming Vice-President. Lindsay has provided leadership for public education of a considerable period and I am confident that his knowledge and commitment will benefit IRSEA.

It was great to be able to meet face-to-face for the AGM and with continued roll-out of COVID vaccinations we are hopeful that we will be able to

return our former practice of conducting lunches and face-to-face meetings in 2021.

GRAHAM DAWSON  
President



## Secretary's Report

How enjoyable it was to have a face-to-face meeting with members again after such a long time. Let's hope that future meetings continue as vaccinations proceed and we learn to live with COVID.

Our 2021 Annual General Meeting went very well with 20 members in attendance and 10 apologies. Prior to the actual meeting Kathy Powzun, Executive Director of the Bushfire Relief Strategy Directorate, made a presentation on behalf of Murat Dizdar, Deputy Secretary School Operations and Performance, who was unable to be there. The presentation was about the Department's approach to school and system improvement through the School Success Model. Members appreciated the opportunity to ask questions and discuss developments in public education. Kathy was thanked both for her excellent presentation and also for her ongoing support of IRSEA, including contributions to the newsletter.

Janina Sulikowski opened the meeting and thanked Murat Dizdar and Kathy Powzun for their support and for hosting the meeting. The minutes of the

2020 AGM were circulated and accepted; there was no business arising.

A feature of this year's AGM was the proposal for a new constitution for IRSEA. Ray Gillies has worked very hard on amending the constitution and his efforts are very much appreciated. The changes are that the financial year will be from 1 January to 31 December and align with the annual membership year; that the AGM will be held between February and April rather than in May; that other luncheon meetings will be held from August to December rather than on specified dates; and that the cost of the changes would be met from existing funds. An explanatory note on the new IRSEA constitution as well as notice of the special resolution to be moved at the AGM proposing the approval of the new constitution was contained in the February 2021 newsletter. Copies of the proposed constitution were also distributed with the newsletter. The resolution 'That the new constitution of the IRSEA is approved by the members and is to be submitted to NSW Fair Trading as required' was passed unanimously with no abstentions.

In her President's Report, Janina commented that it was a challenging year with the restrictions from COVID, and that the Executive Committee had found creative ways of continuing business through Zoom and newsletters. The committee was thanked for its hard work. Hetty Cisowski, who will not be continuing on the committee next year for health reasons, was also thanked for her contributions to discussions and decision-making. Graham Dawson, as incoming President, was congratulated and wished the best, as was Lindsay Wasson as incoming Vice-President.

Ray Gillies distributed the Treasurer's Report. Total assets were \$19,070.31, the CBA term deposit of \$15,963.37 matures on 19 August 2021, and there was an operating loss of \$550.24. Also distributed was a financial statement as of 4 June 2021 showing total funds of \$19,924.91. Recommendations that: (1) the Annual Financial Report for 2020–21 be accepted; (2) the Treasurer forward members' donations to Stewart House; and (3) IRSEA member subscriptions for 2021 should remain at \$15 per annum were passed unanimously with no abstentions. It was reported that John Allsopp has become the internal auditor. Thank you to John for agreeing to do this. His audit formally reported that the financial records were a true and fair record. Several matters will be referred to the Executive Committee for consideration, including what to do about members who are unfinancial or in arrears.

The Secretary's Report noted that the Executive Committee met four times (August and October 2020 and February and April 2021). All meetings were through Zoom technology and Alan Laughlin's support in managing the technology for the meetings was very much appreciated.

John Allsopp, as Luncheon Coordinator, has been liaising with the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel with positive results, and bookings have been made for luncheon meetings on 20 August and 3 December. Syd Smith's outstanding work as Editor of the newsletter, and Grant Beard's desktop-publishing support, has been vital in this time of COVID restrictions. Kerryanne Knox, in her new role as Welfare Coordinator, has worked well in making contact with members and acknowledging the passing of members. To assist with communication, Ray Gillies proposed an IRSEA website. Thanks to Ray's work, IRSEA owns the domain name IRSEA.org.au and this project will be advanced in the coming year.

The membership officer's report from Allan Mills showed that we have 148 members, 40 of whom are female. We also maintain contact with 47 widows and widowers of former members through the newsletter.

The election of committee members and office bearers for 2021–22 was conducted by the Returning Officer, Ritchie Stevenson. Thanks to Ritchie for volunteering to do this. The Executive Committee for 2021–22 is:

President	Graham Dawson
Immediate Past-President	Janina Sulikowski
Vice-President	Lindsay Wasson
Secretary	Brian Davies
Treasurer	Ray Gillies
Newsletter Editor	Syd Smith
Membership Officer	Allan Mills
Welfare Coordinator	Kerryanne Knox
Luncheon Coordinator	John Allsopp
Stewart House Contact	Alan Laughlin
Public Officer	Ray Gillies
Committee Members	Kerrie Ikin, Alan Laughlin, Alan Rice, Chris Carroll

In conclusion, please note the dates for our next two luncheons at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel: **20 August and 3 December** (subject to Government health advice).

BRIAN DAVIES  
Secretary



GEOFF WALTON, GRAEME NICOLLS, GEOFF GEORGE,  
ALAN LAUGHLIN

## Treasurer's Report

IRSEA funds currently stand at \$3,956.54 plus a term deposit of \$15,963.37 (maturing in August 2021). Receipts since the start of our financial year on 1 April have been from subscription fees and donations to Stewart House. Our outgoings have been donations forwarded to Stewart House and the operational costs of subscription renewal notices and the publication and postage of the Newsletter.

At our AGM on 4 June, the members present agreed to a new Constitution and one of the changes altered the IRSEA's financial year to the calendar year to match the membership year. This means that subscription renewal notices for 2022 will be sent out in next January.

If you have not renewed for 2021, please note that subscriptions are now overdue and your prompt attention would be appreciated.

RAY GILLIES  
Treasurer

## Friends of Stewart House

With COVID lockdown now effecting all schools, Stewart House has had to cease operations until the all clear is given. However it should be reported that even over the past difficult 18 months Stewart House has continued to operate whenever approval has been given. It has operated at reduced capacity since October last year when staff were allowed to return to work. Stewart house has managed to accommodate over 600 children across a truncated 5 night/6 day residential program. It was planned this would continue into Term 3, and from August it was intended to gradually return to a full two-week program as more country and regional children were enrolled. Clearly this now has to be reviewed, but the staff remain committed to return to a full program as early as possible. It may interest members to know that Stewart House has implemented mandatory influenza and COVID-19 (when available) vaccinations for all staff. Stewart House remains more dependent then ever on contributions from groups like IRSEA, so please continue to donate whenever you can. The children of NSW will once again benefit from its world class programs as soon as is practicable.

ALAN LAUGHLIN  
IRSEA Stewart House Liaison Officer

## Members Write

### Myanmar—A Personal Reflection

*Graham Dawson*

Last year I wrote an article for the newsletter about the work Neville Highett and I were doing in Myanmar as part of Myanmar Education Quality Improvement Program (My-EQIP), an Australian-Government-funded development assistance program. My-EQIP is one of several major development assistance programs operating in partnership with the Myanmar Ministry of Education aimed at improving the quality of Myanmar's education system. Improving the quality of education was a major priority of the then government as, after years of isolation, education standards were among the lowest in Asia.



Neville and I, together with My-EQIP national advisers, have been working with the Department of Basic Education to design and implement a school-level quality assurance process called the Basic Education School Quality Assurance Standards Framework (BE-SQASF). The purpose of the framework was to move decision-making responsibility for improving education quality to the local level by requiring schools and education officials to evaluate school quality every three years against six dimensions: Learning and Teaching; Professional Development; Leadership and Management; Infrastructure and Resources; Financial Management; Parent and Community Participation. The findings of the review were to be used to develop School Quality Improvement Plans that would be used to guide school improvement activities. The hope of the Myanmar Government was that this, and other reforms, would help transform the very centralized, centrally directed, and poor-quality education system.



After some great work by officers in the Ministry of Education, supported by My-EQIP advisers, and extensive piloting in schools, the policy was approved and the quality assurance initiative was ready for implementation. Then the world changed.

In early 2020, COVID-19 hit Myanmar and, in one the poorest countries in South-East Asia with a very limited health system and facilities, it resulted in the closure of schools and education offices at national and sub-national levels. This meant that all education reform capacity development programs, most development working group meetings and most major reform programs ceased. In addition, companies managing development programs evacuated international advisers.

The people of Myanmar are very resilient and, despite a lack of experience and resources, the Ministry of Education moved many training programs and meetings to e-Learning mode. With My-EQIP financing and technical support, national advisers, and MoE officers transformed the face-to-face workshops developed to support BE-SQASF implementation to online and other forms of e-Learning delivery modes. This was achieved in a period of about three months with the new e-Learning programs and system ready to trial in early 2021. For international advisers who could not travel to Myanmar, this meant a lot of remote deskwork and Zoom meetings.

While e-Learning methodologies enabled information and training programs to be conducted for teachers and education officers this was not the case for most students in primary and high schools. Even basic facilities such as electricity are not available in many homes in some remote locations and few students have the computer equipment that would allow them to participate in online lessons.



This meant that a complete cohort of young people have missed a year's schooling. This will have a significant effect on an already stressed education system, as many young people will not return to schools after they re-open. In addition, the Ministry of Education will be faced with the dilemma of how to cope with a new cohort of students entering schools with very limited infrastructure and fa-

cilities and, at the same time, ensure continuing students can make up for the year of schooling they lost.

However, those issues paled into insignificance after the military conducted its *coup d'état* at the beginning of February. The devastation felt by our team was extraordinary. One of our national adviser colleagues summed it up best by asking us to all 'pray for my country'.

I will not repeat all the information about the broader events that have occurred in Myanmar since the coup as you will have heard about these in the media. Suffice it to say that the situation is as bad as portrayed in the media with over 300 civilians having been killed in the protests. The coup has also reignited many of the ethnic clashes in Myanmar's border regions and members of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), the opposition to the military, have taken refuge in these more remote locations. Schools remain closed and many teachers and principals are at the forefront of CDM.

At the international political level, many donor agencies have withdrawn funding from the country, while others are attempting to redirect funds to non-government organizations (NGO) for humanitarian purposes. However, it has become apparent in recent days that the military government is targeting NGOs, meaning that it may not be feasible for donor agencies to channel their support through them.

Some of our Myanmar colleagues in the program and the MoE have committed themselves to CDM and will not cooperate with the military government or its officials. This is a courageous position for them to take, as many public servants who have taken this stand have been charged with treason, removed from their jobs and evicted from the government housing where they and their families live. Others have taken leave or are coming to work but not taking any action. Even more worrying is that some of the young men and women we worked with are participating actively in the demonstrations and putting their lives at risk.

The military government has transferred the Director-General and Deputy Director-General of Basic Education, who were the champions of much of the reform program including the education quality-assurance system, to other positions and locations. It is not yet clear whether any of the work undertaken over the last four years will continue or even survive.

Communication with our Myanmar colleagues is not easy because of the frequent cutting of power and communications. As well, we must assume that communications are being monitored by authorities so we must be careful that we do not put any of our colleagues at risk.

At a personnel level, and I know that this view is shared by my international colleagues, I will not work with or support the military government. At the same time, however, I want to continue to support my Myanmar colleagues and teachers, principals, and students in schools. This can obviously lead to ethical dilemmas about decisions and actions, but that is a small price to pay compared with the suffering of my friends and colleagues in Myanmar.

Unless there is a major change in the situation in Myanmar, I fear the worst. At the request of my Myanmar friends, I will continue to pray for their country and its people.

The views expressed in this article are my personal views and reflections and do not represent the views of any organizations I am associated with or to whom I am contracted.

## Closure of Historical Church at Goombargan

*Alan Rice*

I recently received a letter from a former farmer from Brocklesby where we first met 62 years ago. His letter included a newspaper article under the heading of 'Closure of Beloved Church at Goombargan'. The article reported that the old Baptist church on the Goombargana Hill (near Balldale), which had been a meeting-place for the community, was sold in 2020 to an adjoining landholder. A photo of residents at the final service accompanied the article and described the event as a sad occasion as there were many memories going back over the 149 years in which it had been the centre of community life.



I met Neil Drew and members of his community in 1959 during my second year of teaching, following appointment to Fernthorpe School, a small school with 19 students, located at Ferndale Siding near Rand. My first connection with Neil was on the cricket field when my Rand team encountered the strong Brocklesby team. A youthful Neil and I were drawn together over time, being of similar age and interests, although professionally our careers were on different pathways.

A further connection with the old church resulted from visits to the small school by Rev. Bruce Hinds, the Baptist pastor of Goombargana Church, who travelled around the western part of the Albury Inspectorate conducting a monthly Scripture class in the small schools of the Albury District. His visits were relatively short, but his lessons were welcomed by students. He held their attention with dramatic presentations and was always relevant in that he had an appreciation of farm life through growing up in the Central West.

I attended the 140th anniversary service of the Goombargana Church in 2011, so the report that the church had been sold was of much interest. I thought my links with the Goombargana community as well as my experiences in the Fernthorpe community with the special Lutheran community might be of interest. These were special communities that had settled in the southern Riverina, coming from South Australia to establish new communities that preserved both their deep religious commitments as well as their cultural background. Each migrating group had been in the area for over 150 years. There were other groups who also made the journey from South Australia into southern NSW, but my focus is delimited to the two with whom I had contact.

The Fernthorpe community was engaged in wheat and sheep farming, and many families identified with the Lutheran faith. The teacher was boarded with a different family each term, and so I lived with Lutheran families for two terms. The Lutheran families were very committed to the education of their children and had hopes that they might be enrolled in the Lutheran secondary school at Walla Walla.

I learnt the story of Lutheran families and their concerns from contact with families as well as from attending public events in the area. The arrival of German settlers in the Albury district from South Australia occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century and they settled on farming land in southern Riverina, including Jindera, Walla Walla, and Germanton (renamed Holbrook in 1915). The properties around Rand were part of the Soldiers Settlement Scheme of 1916 with small holdings allocated to those returning from the First World War. Some gained access in this way, but over time farms had changed hands or had amalgamated to make farming more profitable. This helped consolidate families and special groups near one another and neighbours generally shared the workload and cost of farming.

The original settlers were first generation Australian-born Germans who remained culturally German, retaining their Lutheran Christianity and adherence to the German language. The Lutheran families in the Rand District were hard working and neighbourly, but remained part of a wider

community identifying with Walla Walla Parish, where the Zion Lutheran Church built in 1924 was categorized as a Cathedral. As such it held the Trek Wagon and much of the details of the migration from South Australia. Local Lutheran people were reasonably regular church adherents at Salem Lutheran Church, Alma Park.

A Lutheran College, St Pauls Walla Walla, was the destination for secondary education for Lutheran students and had a boarding program for students attending from out of area. The school has had notable results in statewide examinations and a record of sporting achievements. The Lutheran families in the Rand district aimed to have their children accepted into St Pauls. On taking up a Departmental scholarship at Sydney University in 1960, I learnt more about the foundations of Lutheranism when studying the Reformation.

### Have you Ever Visited the Tiwi Islands?

*Ritchie Stevenson*

I retired from the Department on my 60th birthday! It seemed time was about right! After forty years of movement up and down, and in and out of the system, the last ten years under the uncertainties of 're-structuring', I felt sufficiently equipped to undertake my own form of education consultancy and commenced a sort of 'have computer, will travel' type of deal! A little pretentious, perhaps, but being my own boss was a new experience!

By the end of the first year, I had undertaken a number of inservice tasks at a variety of schools, both state and private, in NSW and spent three months on a teacher-training project in Sri Lanka! With an executive of only two, we could nearly always manage a fringe benefit of a week or two at the end of most missions to enjoy an exotic travel experience in some new and interesting spot!

What later became a regular job, picked up through the pages of the press, was an annual contract to undertake a non-government-school census task for the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (later DEET). This was a type of audit process undertaken annually by a team of independently contracted consultants and for most involved a detailed check of about twenty or so non-government schools to verify the school's declared student numbers in relation to its subject provision and organization. Occasionally, this took me interstate—on two occasions to several private schools in Darwin.

On this particular visit I had flown to Darwin a few days before to review seven schools allocated to me by the Department. One of these schools was a large Catholic school on Bathurst Island in the Tiwi cluster of islands. This cluster also included Melville Island, and nine smaller uninhabited islands.

On the morning in question, I had made a brief flight from Darwin to Bathurst Island to reach this

school for its one-day review.



SCHOOL CRAFTS

The school is part of a Catholic school precinct and mission in Wurrumiyanga—the local small township and community now managed by the Tiwi Land Council. One portion of this precinct is used by Xavier Catholic College, which is a secondary school. The other part is occupied by Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School, which has a preschool and grades from Pre-Year 1 to Year 6. However, this school is quite separate to Xavier Catholic College and no students or teachers from this school were included in the census.

All but three of the student population of 109 at the secondary school were Indigenous. In addition to the usual six years of secondary school classes, special trade-standard workshops and catering facilities had also been provided to enable senior students to undertake school-VET courses at the school and represented an effective innovation in curriculum. In the Northern Territory all VET courses receive outside supervision and count towards the Territory's Year 12 qualification (the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training).

A first check of the rolls indicated considerable absenteeism, with a number of students absent for the full duration of the reference period (four weeks in the previous year). There are reasons for this apart from cultural issues, such as deaths in the family or community, festive occasions, and so on. Over recent years Tiwi College has been established on Melville Island. This College was established by the Tiwi Land Council with government support, and was founded on the principle of sustaining and promoting the local cultural context. Some staff at the school are drawn directly from the Tiwi community. This has caused a degree of 'competitive tension' with Xavier College, as many students move back and forth between the two schools in response to community (and family relational) pressures. This oscillation of attendance has affected continuity of attendance for some students—some Xavier College students (often with the same family name) switch schools every so often, but most return a few weeks later.



Xavier College is particular about its attendance records and has removed any students who they considered were definitely in the 'left' category at the time of the census. The school is also part of the Government's attendance strategy (Remote Area Attendance Strategy or RAAS) program. The local Catholic Education Office has advised the school to adopt a 'passive' role to this attendance situation and students are only written off the roll when there is a definite indication that the student is leaving for good.

The school also offers some of these early school leavers the opportunity to return to school at a later date to re-try some of their senior schooling. These students are notionally placed in a specially created 'Year 13' to give them some encouragement through the additional status this gives them. This school has a particularly strong sense of engagement between staff and students that is reflected in a number of imaginative and successful strategies for school improvement.

The Tiwi Islands also share a unique piece of Australian military history, being the first landfall of Japanese troops during World War II. On a late summer's morning in 1942 they commenced the largest single attack on Australia by a foreign power. Just 80 kilometers north of Darwin, the Tiwi Islands stood between the enemy and the city of Darwin. An alert coast-watcher (and ex-missionary) counted 188 planes flying low over Melville Island on February 19! An urgent message was relayed to Darwin from the mission on Bathurst Island at 9.30 a.m. advising that an unusually large air formation was bearing down on the city. Six Japanese fighters strafed the mission and an America plane on Bathurst Island's airstrip, making it the first place on Australian soil to be attacked.



STATUE OF MATHIAS

The initial message passed on to RAAF operations in Darwin was misinterpreted there to mean a flight of United States aircraft forced back to Darwin by the typical bad weather at that time of year. However, when the Japanese fighting planes appeared over Darwin about half an hour later the authorities realized these planes had set off from

four Japanese aircraft carriers some 300 kilometres away over the Timor Sea. Altogether 242 Japanese aircraft had been dispatched in two separate raids to destroy Darwin and ensure it could not be used as the base for future Allied invasions of Timor and Java.

The toll was a real wake-up call! 235 people dead, 11 ships sunk, 30 Allied aircraft destroyed, a city and country shocked! Japan lost only four aircraft, including one zero, which crash-landed on Melville Island and whose pilot was captured by a Tiwi hunter (Mathais Ampiyartilawayi Ulungura). Mathais had held his tomahawk by the blade so it looked like a gun, and disarmed the pilot of his service pistol! The first Japanese POW captured on Australian soil! Today his feat is celebrated with a life-sized bronze statue on Bathurst Island near the small township there. He and the war also continue to be remembered by the Tiwi Islanders as part of a dance depicting that first attack by the Japanese. It's now as much a part of their culture as some of the more traditional dances. More information can be found in the Patakijiyali Museum in the small township of Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island.

Occasionally, in the course of one's everyday work routine, an interesting gem of a story may present itself. I found this one rather more interesting than a blow-out on the Menindee–Ivanhoe road!

### A Case of Mistaken Identity

*Cliff Cowdroy*

We were on the long drive from Sunraysia (Mildura area) to Broken Hill in the late afternoon after a four-day inspection at Darelong High School (fictitious name). It had been a very difficult time because, in spite of the eulogy from the principal, the candidate was totally ill prepared for our assessment. We ended up counselling the boss as he was quite upset at the looming outcome and had not realized the lack of drive and acumen of his protégé. Ern Penman and John Lambert had been picked up at Mildura Airport and driven out to the school. We walked around the tennis court there on day three, ruminating as to whether the candidate's efficiency should be called into question. It was decided that the principal alone must make that move, which could be prompted by the foreshadowed inspection report.

There is only a half-baked Roadhouse at Coombah, midway between Broken Hill and the Victorian border. For us, it was a welcome break to stop over and refuel a thirsty Holden V8. After filling up, I paid with a government voucher, for in those days, in the late 1970s, plastic cards were only just emerging, and at Coombah things were all still locked in a mid-century time warp. Then recognizing that we were connected with the government in some way, the proprietor started asking questions and the dialogue went something like this:

'Where are youz from?'. I responded that my colleagues were from Sydney and I was based at Broken Hill.

He gave a nod, and retorted, 'What do youz do?'. I rather flippantly said in haste as the day was ending, 'We are DIs!'.

'Oh Good', he seemed pleased. 'Come round the back and have a drink!'

Hospitality in the Bush is a key attribute, and it is very rude out there to refuse it, so we complied and entered a sunlit room set up with urn, sink, and large kitchen table.

'What would you guys like? Beer, tea, coffee?'

We all opted for coffee, for which we were grateful. The encounter was a total break from teachers and schools. The hospitable proprietor launched in with his own fairly articulate concerns with a view no doubt of gleaned information from us.

'There's been a few druggies passing through here and I have been approached to see if Coombah could be a drop off – pick up point for their goods, drugs of course. I told the blokes that it was too exposed for that sort of thing, not that we get much traffic these days until the stone-fruit pickers arrive *en masse* before the season starts. I suppose you blokes are onto them in a big way now?'

I think the fact that being late winter and being in suits made us look quite official, but of course not officious. He went on:

'See that old silver Humber Super Snipe, the one with no tyres? Well, a chap came through and asked if he could sleep in it as his car had broken down. Having given my OK some of his mates also arrived and later they were all smoking joints in a big way. Next day I asked them to move on, saying that any smoking here is dangerous because of the amount of fuel stored on site and the traps check us out regular like. They did so after I gave them a can of petrol to send them on their way south to Pomona.'

Ern Penman said that he supposed it would be lonely out in the middle of nowhere. The proprietor said, 'Yes it is, but I keep a shotgun handy, registered of course'.

Before allowing his tale to run away with him, it was time to enlighten him as we believed he had mistaken us for a group of detective inspectors.

'We are all school inspectors who have been working in Sunraysia,' I replied, 'not detective inspectors'.

'Well,' he said, 'I suppose you blokes get a fair share of problems like these in the schools'.

We were non-committal and thanked him for the sustenance, which 'refuelled' us for another 275 km.

It had dinner been arranged that Sue, my wife, would organize at our place at 7 p.m. with drinks at about 6.30 p.m. It was Friday evening and many

Departmental people came to our humble abode, so it was no big deal to entertain. Broken Hill after hours was bereft of good cafes and restaurants, except for the Leagues Club's cafeteria-style service. After dropping John and Ern off at their motel, I arrived home to find the children had been fed and the table in the dining-room set and looking fabulous with our best cutlery, crystal wine glasses, and candelabra for a festive dinner. Only by chance did we turn on the local TV news to be told that as from midnight there was to be a total strike of regional airline staff, for an indefinite period. We managed to get Ern and John to the airport for seats to Adelaide on the last flight out of 'The Hill'.

Unfortunately, there was only one ticket left. I again said that they were DIs (the nomenclature was helpful) and had to get to Adelaide urgently. With a 'wink and a nod' they boarded the Fokker. Later Ern told me that he was sitting on a jump-seat in the toilet for the flight. They wrote a lovely letter to Sue, apologizing for the disruption and non-attendance for dinner. We had it in style, albeit a bit deflated, and consumed some southern wine from Mildura designated for our guests. The aftermath of the inspection was that the much relieved principal, on application, was appointed to Sydney and the candidate took a lateral position somewhere else in NSW.

### Footnotes

*The Climate*—The growth and distribution of drugs was a large and looming problem at all levels. My first encounter with the President of the Barrier Industrial Council, the all-powerful consolidated union that controlled a lot of 'The Hill' was not only a warm welcome, but was to become the recipient of some imparted information. He told me that if any drugs in town were found, the apprehended would be taken out of town for about 100 km and dumped to ensure that they moved on and out of reach of the city. There was no evidence of drug use to my mind in our time out there and this was also the time of the disappearance of the late Donald McKay of Griffith, which heightened everyone's awareness to the problem and, I suppose, people's wariness of outsiders.

*Small Worlds*—I knew Barbara, McKay's wife (née Dearman) quite well from our earlier days in Sydney. Her father was head of Amalgamated Wireless Australia (AWA) and her mother a science teacher. John Lambert's father was the curate to my grandfather. We lived at the rectory from time to time during the War. He was the Vicar-General/Rural Dean of the North Shore and the rector of a large parish in Mosman. The Lamberts lived in a semidetached terrace block in Ourimbah Road, Mosman, just near Spit Junction.

*Travel*—It had previously been decided that Ern and John would catch a plane direct to Sydney from Broken Hill on a Saturday, rather than flying from



Mildura to Melbourne, staying there overnight, and then getting yet another flight to Sydney; hence their journey to 'The Hill'.



KATHY POWZUN, ALAN RICE, GRAHAM DAWSON, BRIAN DAVIES

## What Keeps You Going?

Syd Smith

We all keep on keeping on in some way don't we? Maybe we are like Sisyphus pushing that boulder back up the hill, but maybe it's as Camus said, 'Imagine Sisyphus smiling'. So why do we keep at doing what we're doing? Why do most of us keep at it? Why do *you* keep going?

Here are some reasons that may apply to you, or perhaps you have a much better reason. *If so, why not tell us your thoughts and we will publish them in a future IRSEA newsletter. You may have a one-sentence answer or you can write a whole story for us. The following thoughts are not necessarily the opinions or beliefs of IRSEA; they are here just to get you started.*

- We live in a community and a world, not just a family. We have responsibilities at all levels.
- We have been privileged with a healthy environment to play in. We want children after us to also enjoy and appreciate the same things, even if not better.
- We are lucky to have the healing and creative powers of being close to nature and we want it to stay that way.
- We want good modelling, a way to live, not giving up or giving in to greed and self-aggrandizement and power. We aspire to staying focused on key values of eco and social justice and peace.
- There are better ways to live other than those rewarded by the dominant culture or the media or others with those with questionable values.
- We want to live in a way that resists and rejects the whole notion of 'can't do anything about that'. That is such a cop-out; we don't accept positions of powerlessness that the powerful put us in.
- Living opposite to the dominant societal pursuit of comfort that infects us—comfort of mind, heart, body. (No wonder obesity is on the rise.)

*Please let us know what keeps you going!! Write something for the newsletter and share it with your colleagues and friends. Send it to the editor, Syd Smith: [sydsmith@optusnet.com.au](mailto:sydsmith@optusnet.com.au).*

## David Maher Turns 90

The attached photos record the great occasion of David Maher's 90th birthday at Fingal Bay on 29 April 2021. One shows two veterans of the 'old' inspectorate and long-term members of IRSEA, Merv Blanch, now aged 95, and another of the group sitting around the table while David waits to cut his cake.

Merv and David were appointed District Inspectors of Schools in January, 1967. Merv was appointed to Albury and David to Moree, as he was the youngest of the five appointees, who included the deceased, John Farnsworth, Ron Warn, and Lance Charlton. They were inducted into the inspectorate in January 1967 by Mr Ian Pryce, the President of the Institute at the time. Merv and David's friendship now exceeds fifty years. The large photo also includes Robyn Blanch and Anne Maher who are assessing life as custodians of Merv and David, respectively, while Merv and David assess retrospectively the merits of a lump sum versus an indexed pension.

Congratulations David and so good to see so many at your special celebration.



*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

Audrey Bevan

23 April 2021

It is with sadness that we note the death of Audrey Bevan. Audrey was one of the few women working in Head Office when she was appointed to Jack Harrison's area as an Assistant Director. In December 1973 Audrey was appointed as an Inspector, Preschool.

Audrey would have been proud of the legacy she had been part of, with many women in the Department of Education enjoying successful careers in Head Office and beyond. Having entered on duty in 1948, Audrey retired in 1988—forty years of dedicated service.

It appears her funeral was a private affair organized by her children, Debra and Philip.

### Alan Beard

Alan's funeral was held on Friday 28 May commencing 2 p.m. at Lake Macquarie Memorial Park, Cessnock Road, Ryhope.

Alan started his teaching career in February 1954 and was appointed a Member of the Mathematics Panel of inspectors in June 1968. He became the Assistant Director of Staffing in 1971 and continued his career in education as a Director of Education in the Hunter region from 1981 to 1992.

He spent his retirement days happily in Warners Bay, where he enjoyed the fruits of the Hunter region. Lovely memories were received, one of which was from Geoff Walton, who remembered being a 4th and 5th Year student who had struggled with Mathematics 1 and 2, until Alan was allocated to teach his Leaving Certificate Mathematics class in 1960. Geoff fondly remembers him as breathing 'new life' into lessons by actively teaching him mathematics, and that it was OK to make mistakes as long as the students learnt from them. Alan was a guest of honour at one of the IRSEA January Annual Conference dinners.

Another one of those people where the students came first—what a lovely memory of a great teacher.

Our sincere condolences are extended to his wife, Lorraine, and their four children.

### Harry Billington

28 May 2021

Harry Billington started his teaching career with the Department of Education in 1952. His expertise and love of music gave him the opportunity to be a member of the secondary panel as a music inspector. He held this position from 1967. Harry retired in 1987 and headed for warmer weather in Queensland. He spent his retirement in the Sunshine Coast and passed away aged 91.

We send our condolences to his wife, Elaine, and their family.

### Paul Greer

Paul attended Wollongong Teachers' College, and upon graduation was appointed to Windang Public School with his wife, Clare. After some time in consultancy, Paul was appointed to Bradbury Public School, followed by Barren Central School. He returned to Bradbury Public School as Deputy Principal and from there was appointed as Principal of Albion Park Public School and then Albion Park Rail PS. His last promotion was as School Education Director at Queanbeyan, where he remained till his retirement in 2009–2010.

Paul's Funeral Service was held at Hansen and Cole, Kembla Grange, on Friday 14 May, at 12 p.m. Following on from the funeral there was an informal gathering at the German Club, next to Hansen and Cole.

### Ann Thomas

8 June 2021

We were saddened to hear of the death of Ann Thomas. We are grateful to the Mathematical Association of NSW, of which Ann was a Life Member, for the following tribute. The details are from Ann's autobiography written for MANSW's 110-year history book (2020). Ann attended La Perouse Public School and Sydney Girls' High School, where she recalls discovering the joys of creating proofs in Euclidean Geometry. She earned a science degree and Dip. Ed. at the University of Sydney and then worked for the NSW Department of Education in various roles over 33 years, including mathematics teacher and head teacher, primary mathematics curriculum consultant, curriculum team leader, inspector of schools for mathematics, cluster director, director quality assurance, and principal. On leaving the Department she worked in a number of part-time roles over fifteen years for what was then the Office of the Board of Studies. This included writing new syllabus and support documents, home schooling approvals, and various roles in the HSC Standards Setting and other panels.



In the 1980s Ann led a major initiative to improve the participation of girls in mathematics, including organizing MANSW events and managing a major grant from the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Many resources were created and collaborations established with universities and other professional teacher associations. Ann went on to be vitally involved in the governance of the Joint Council of Professional Teachers' Associations, and was an important member of many MANSW committees, including serving as President in 1987–88. She was Professional Officer for the Association in 2010–11 and continued as a volunteer in 2012. She was awarded MANSW honorary life membership in 1996, a PTC Outstanding Professional Service Award in 2012, the PTC Exceptional Service Award in 2016, and the prestigious Professor Dame Marie Bashir Medal in 2020—recognizing her tireless support and encouragement of teachers and students over more than forty years of public service.

Ann was an inspiration to a generation of teachers of mathematics. In MANSW her organizational skills were legendary and always coupled with common sense. She attracted people willing to work with her because she had a knack of seeing ways to turn the most difficult task into an enjoyable enterprise, with plenty of laughter along the way. She is sadly missed.

### For Your Diary

**Executive meetings: Monday 18 October.**

**Newsletters: November (copy due 21 October).**

**Lunches (subject to Government health advice): Fridays 20 August, 3 December.**