



INSTITUTE OF RETIRED SENIOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, INC.

Newsletter

ABN: 78 259 388 090

www.irsea.org.au

IRSEA enriches the lives of retired Senior Educational Administrators through engagement, collegiality, friendship, and support while deploying its intellectual capacity and educational expertise for the betterment of public education in New South Wales and beyond.

No. 3

July 2022

From the President

I approach the presentation of this, my first President's Report, with a deep sense of gratitude and admiration. Gratitude for the support I have received from members, and particularly from the outstanding team of Executive Committee members, who have gone above and beyond in helping to take our organization to new levels of operational success. And admiration for the superlative leadership Graham Dawson has given to IRSEA in laying new foundations upon which new opportunities for further growth as an Institute are being pursued. It has been an honour and a personal pleasure to work with Graham and to see us flourishing under his leadership. Taking on the presidency after Graham is a daunting prospect but with our new Vice-President, the exceptional Eric Jamieson, and our talented team of office holders, I am confident we will deliver ever-increasing value for our members.



Since early May we have been very active. On 10 May a number of Executive members attended the celebration luncheon, organized by Ken Boston and Ken Dixon, in honour of our widely admired former Deputy Director-General, Dr Terry Burke. This was a wonderful event made even more poignant and memorable by the moving speeches from Ken Boston, Chris Carroll, Jan McClelland, Alan Laughlin, Cathy Johnstone, and Hetty Cislowski. Remembrance, and a toast by Ken Dixon, turned into a Terry Burke special with the singing of 'Danny Boy', and then, in the best of Irish tradition, the celebrations began in earnest.

Not long after Terry Burke's function, and in the wake of the meeting, Graham Dawson and I had a meeting with Murat Dizdar (Deputy Secretary) and Raechel McCarthy. Murat invited us to speak at the meeting of Directors of Educational Leadership (DELs) at Parramatta. Eric Jamieson and I spent the best part of 17 May with Cathy Brennan's team of DELs. We spoke about the value IRSEA can offer retiring senior administrators and the prospect of their becoming associate members. From all the

feedback, our presentation was well received. Importantly, this was also a breakthrough moment, as our input on other matters discussed on the day was the first time for many years that IRSEA has been able to give direct advice to the Department on policy and its implementation. Murat has pledged to maintain such invitations to participate in DoE's 'Capability Summits' into the future. I hope to expand this aspect of our Mission and priorities as our advocacy and input role ramps up.

With a full suite of IRSEA membership categories agreed, we can now cater for a more diverse range of potential (and current) members:

- Associate Member;
- Member;
- Honorary Member; and
- Life Member.

New members

This leads me to mention the success we have had in attracting new members. At Terry's luncheon I took the opportunity to speak with a number of attendees about joining IRSEA and gave out a few application forms. From this, and other personal contact by email, phone, and in person (thank you Kerrie Ikin, Alan Laughlin, and Graham Dawson), I am delighted to welcome the following outstanding educators as new members of IRSEA: Geoff Baldwin, Ken Boston, Mark Carter, Eric Jamieson, Trish Kelly, Jan McClelland, Gerry McCloughan, Graeme Philpotts, Mandy Shaw, Dave Wasson, Diane Wasson, and Irina White.

The value of personal contact in recruiting new members cannot be overstated. We have known this all along, but our recent success confirms this with absolute certainty.

At our AGM luncheon on 6 May I confirmed that the direction and priorities established by Graham Dawson for 2021–22 would underpin our work for 2022–23. To be clear, we will continue to focus and build on the following:

1. Strengthen relationships with DoE and contribute more extensively to the discourse on education issues;

2. Membership renewal; and
3. Communication with members.

Since these priorities were promulgated, the Executive Committee has done a great deal of work to take action on them, establishing new conceptual frameworks, new strategies, and new links to give substance to our aspirations. These have been outlined in a paper I wrote with Janina Sulikowski and Kerryanne Knox, *IRSEA—A Member Value Organisation*. Approved in principle, and providing some flesh to our priority areas, the paper establishes a framework for action around the ‘3 Rs’ of *Recognition, Responsibility (and participation), and Reward*. This paper will be placed on our new website for members’ reference and comment.

As President I am proud to lead our Executive in building on these foundations and our many successes so far to create an ever more enjoyable, valuable, influential, and satisfying organization for us all.



LINDSAY WASSON

To this end, and in line with our priority action areas, I propose some new attractions/ideas for immediate attention.

- Additional casual luncheons for simple socializing, interaction, friendship, collegiality, and fun! Having experienced one of the most enjoyable events in Terry Burke’s celebration luncheon, similar style luncheons at the Kirribilli Club, but with no meeting agenda except member enjoyment, would, I believe, have strong appeal. This we will put to the test in the near future.
- Organizing our first winery visit to Mount Pleasant Winery in the Hunter as part of Kerryanne Knox’s suggested winery visits and wine-tastings strategy set out in our ‘Member Value’ paper. Mount Pleasant is suggested for our first activity as its tasting-room has been completely refreshed and has just reopened.
- Establishing an IRSEA scholarship for a promising school executive or senior educational administrator who is also an alumnus of Stewart House to undertake postgraduate studies leading to the degree of Master of Educational Administration. Discussions on the feasibility of this have already begun with Alan Laughlin, Kerryanne Knox, and Graeme Philpotts. A

meeting of the four of us to explore this further will soon be arranged. Such an idea signals our commitment to Stewart House, to the Department, and to the profession. If our first awardee were to be an Aboriginal educator, I believe we would all rejoice. Any ideas on a sponsor or sponsors for this will be welcome.

Crucially, we will also consolidate our ‘recognition’ strategy with the printing of our awards certificates for members, including Associate and Honorary members, and of our suite of outstanding service to IRSEA awards.

In 2022–23 we will see our commitment to growing our advocacy and educational influence mandate turn purpose into action at both the state and national levels. I have made the point before, that IRSEA should be the destination of first choice for consultation on policy and implementation input and be proactive in helping set agendas for improved performance in public education. This is our biggest challenge, but the first small steps have been taken. I have confidence that the intellectual and educational firepower within our membership can turn small steps into giant strides.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the strong, warm, and most welcome support of Murat Dizdar, Deputy Secretary, and Raechel McCarthy, Director School Performance, Office of the Deputy Secretary. Both have been our key contacts with the DoE and have turned that association into an alliance with IRSEA that promises even more for the role we can play in NSW public education. Thank you, Murat, and thank you, Raechel. You have become champions of IRSEA and we are immensely grateful.

2022–23 promises to be an exciting and I hope value-packed year for IRSEA and its members. As our organization professionalizes even more and as we build on our foundations and successes to date, our exceptional Executive Committee will strive to take us into an even more enriching and influential future. This we can and will do.

LINDSAY WASSON
President

From the Department



Hullo everyone. Lovely to connect with you all recently at the meeting in Sydney where Mandy Shaw and I discussed the changing nature of the director role. Upon Syd’s suggestion, I thought I would provide a summary of the main points made for the benefit of those members unable to attend.

In 2018 there was an increase in the *School Performance Director* workforce to 110 Directors in

an attempt to 'strengthen the middle layer' of leaders to support school improvement. The change of name from 'Director Public Schools' to 'Director Educational Leadership' was used to reflect the new intent of the role. The role provided an increasing ratio of support of one DEL per 20 schools, thus enabling DELs to have greater capacity to lift school improvement.



MANDY SHAW PRESENTING AT THE AGM

All new DELs attended a 40-day immersion program and were required to complete a *Certificate of Instructional Leadership* through the University of Melbourne. At the same time a 'School Leadership Institute' was established, led by Joanne Jarvis, aiming at providing a suite of evidence-based professional learning for new and spiring leaders in schools.

In 2019 all schools received system-negotiated targets to guide their work in lifting student numeracy, literacy, HSC, and attendance outcomes. DELs and PSLs are now key to operationalizing improvement in schools using the *School Success Model* and *School Excellence Cycle* as tools to identify and access support for improved outcomes.

The key differences in the role included:

- half the number of schools compared with the Director Public Schools role, enabling a more 'hands on' approach;
- school planning/targets for improvement based on Director access to more detailed school data analysis/evidence;
- no portfolios, but more time to shape educational reform across the divisions through representation on governance groups.

In terms of the effectiveness of this new role, the DEL-impact surveys completed by all principals across NSW have been largely positive and we have seen some positive shifts in student NAPLAN results. Achievement of the targets has proved difficult owing to the impact of the COVID pandemic, and some targets have been shifted one year backward to reflect this. DELs were pivotal in the support provided to schools as they responded to the impacts of COVID and recent flooding.

I have now completed one year in the Office of the Deputy Secretary role and have learnt so much about our Department's divisions and the strategic

intent of our two fabulous deputy secretaries, Murat Dizdar and Leanne Nixon. In Term 3, I embark on a new challenge as *Relieving Director Delivery Support Group 1*, replacing Lynn Gardon while she takes some well-earned leave for the rest of the year. This will involve leading the team of Behaviour Specialists, Network Specialist Facilitators, and Learning Well-being Coordinators and their staff, which includes 160 personnel across NSW. Group 1 covers an immense area from Maitland up to the Queensland border and west out to Broken Hill, then south down to the Sunraysia area of NSW. The new role will involve a lot of travel to support these staff and I am very excited to be working to support schools with large Aboriginal communities, including Wilcannia Central, where my mother was once principal.

I have asked Murat and Leanne to remain as your key contact for the Department while in this new role, which they kindly agreed to, so you haven't got rid of me yet! 😊

Please invite me to your next meeting with Eddie Woo as I would love to learn more about his work. I hope everyone is in good health and looking forward to seeing you all again soon.

RAEHEL MCCARTHY

Relieving Director, Office of the Deputy Secretary,
School Performance North

Secretary's Report

First, I would like to remind members of our upcoming meeting on **19 August at the Department of Education in Parramatta**. The Department is hosting our luncheon and it is important that as many members and their guests attend as possible. Catch up with friends and colleagues, share lunch, support our organization, and hear a presentation by Eddie Woo—top-10 finalist in the Global Teacher Prize for his love of teaching mathematics. If you cannot attend the meeting in person, then take advantage of connecting by video (see the Booking Slip on page 12 for details). Please note that the **Christmas luncheon will now be on 9 December** at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel.

Our 2022 Annual General Meeting at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel went very well, with 22 members in attendance, 4 through Zoom, and 10 apologies. Graham Dawson opened the meeting and welcomed members. Graham also welcomed Raechel McCarthy to the meeting and Mandy Shaw, retired Director of Lake Illawarra Network. The minutes of the 2021 AGM were circulated and accepted; there was no business arising.

The President, Graham Dawson, reported that 2021–22 had been a busy and successful year for IRSEA. Progress was reported on three priorities:

strengthening the relationship with the Department and contributing more extensively to the discourse on education issues; membership renewal; and communication with members. Important progress has been made in each of these areas, but more work needs to be done. Raechel McCarthy was thanked for her commitment to IRSEA over the past year.

There has also been much activity with membership, which, given our members' age profile, is critical to the future of IRSEA. Alan Mills and Kerrie Ikin completed a membership audit and the database and application forms were updated. Associate Membership was established as a new membership category to access a new group of DoE and TAFE senior officers who are nearing retirement. Current members have been encouraged to contact friends or former colleagues to join. A paper has been developed on initiatives to make IRSEA more attractive for both current and potential members.

Graham also reported on the establishment and launch of the IRSEA website (<http://irsea.org.au/>). The website will provide members with access to current information and, in the future, a forum for discussion of educational issues. Ray Gillies has done an outstanding job of establishing and managing the website. Alan Laughlin was thanked for leading and managing the implementation of online presentations and meetings.

Graham reported that Alan Rice, who has been a member of the Executive Committee for last 17 years and has served as Vice-President and President, has decided to retire from the Executive Committee. Alan was presented with a framed Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of outstanding dedication and commitment to IRSEA.



ALAN RICE RECEIVES IRSEA AWARD FROM GRAHAM DAWSON

Ray Gillies distributed the Treasurer's Report. The revised IRSEA Constitution approved on 4 June 2021 changed the previous financial year period to 1 January – 31 December. As a result, this report is a transitioning report from 31 March 2021 to 31 December 2021. Total assets were \$18 849.34. The CBA term deposit of \$14 000.00 matures on 30 September 2022. There was an operating loss of \$291.23. The report was accepted. The proposed resolution that the IRSEA annual subscription fee

be \$25 from 2023 was passed.

The secretary reported that the executive committee has met four times over the last 12 months. John Allsopp, our Luncheon Coordinator, was thanked for his fine work in organizing the luncheon meetings. John reports that COVID-19 and has had a major impact on attendance at the regular luncheons organized by IRSEA.

IRSEA was invited to lay a wreath at the Department's ANZAC Remembrance Service on 21 April 2022 at the William Wilkins Gallery of the Department's Parramatta premises. Members were also invited. Patrick Medway, President of the Teachers' Sub-branch of the Returned Services League of Australia, has been very supportive of IRSEA's involvement in the service.

Syd Smith, our newsletter editor, and Grant Beard, who copy-edits and desktop-publishes the newsletter, are to be congratulated on its quality, and are thanked for their efforts. In the last twelve months, four newsletters have been distributed. Separate copies were also sent to the widows of late members. Back issues of the newsletter are now available on the IRSEA website as well. Members are encouraged to continue to supply articles and provide feedback on articles.

An important objective of the Institute is to support Stewart House. Alan Laughlin, our Stewart House Contact, has done a great job in facilitating our connection. Over nine months in 2021, IRSEA members contributed around \$3300 to Stewart House. COVID has had a dramatic impact on the operation of Stewart House and ongoing support from IRSEA members is greatly appreciated.

Kerrie Ikin, the Membership Officer, thanked Allan Mills the previous Membership Officer for his superb records, which were most helpful. Current membership at the time was 139: 37 female and 102 male. There were also 39 widows. The majority of our members are 80 or older. This year we have established a computer record of 388 members past and present and are able to generate reports automatically and link to a member's financial status. From our records, we can now not only generate mail and email merges, but can provide a range of data about our membership for any specified date. Kerrie thanked Grant Beard for his assistance in setting up the database. At its next meeting, the executive is to consider privacy issues related to placing personal details on the website and publication of photos. *The majority of our members are now receiving the newsletter and other mailouts by email, our preferred method.*

Our Welfare Coordinator, Kerryanne Knox, reported that the last twelve months had included working together to introduce a new website that would include a Welfare section. There was an acknowledgement of members who had died since

last the AGM: Alan Beard (21.5.2021); Audrey Bevan (23.4.2021); Harry Billington (28.5.2021); Raymond Bird (14.10.2021); Terrence Burke (28.12.2021); Jack Harrison (22.9.2021); Audrey Mathers (16.12.2021); Ann Thomas (8.6.2021); and Alan Young (21.12.2021).

The election of committee members and office bearers for 2022–23 was conducted by the Returning Officer, Ritchie Stevenson. Thanks to Ritchie for volunteering to do this. The new Executive Committee is:

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

Following the AGM, Raechel McCarthy and Mandy Shaw made a presentation on the role of the Directors of Educational Leadership (DELs).

Our new committee had its first meeting on 6 June. A paper on a policy for IRSEA subscriptions was tabled by John Allsopp. Ray Gillies assisted with drafting the paper. The paper addresses the issues of payment of membership dues and services to members. Ray Gillies was appointed as Public Officer, the official point of contact for an incorporated association. Ray Gillies tabled copies of possible amendments to the Constitution. The intention is to have further meetings to develop and then submit changes to the December 2022 general meeting for the approval of members. Initial discussion included the definition of membership eligibility and the cessation of membership consistent with subscriptions policy.

BRIAN DAVIES
Secretary

up to 10 days before you would by post; secondly, it is in full colour and can be stored on your computer or iPhone. If you are unable to do this or prefer not to, then we respect your wishes. All newsletters are stored on the IRSEA's website as well. If you have not looked at the website please be surprised and log on to www.irsea.org.au.

If you wish to change from post to email, we welcome your decision. Please send your request for this change to the Membership Officer, Kerrie Ikin, at kerrie.ikin@gmail.com.

On another matter we are still seeking more input from members to contribute to the newsletter. If you have a story to tell or would like to keep us up to date with your welfare and activities or have an opinion or article on a particular subject then please let us know. **In addition, we really want to get your feedback on what you think of the newsletter.** What do you want to see or what criticisms do you have? Without your contributions it becomes a much-diminished newsletter, so please let us hear from you now. And thank you very much for all those members who have contributed articles to us over the last few years.

For contributions to the newsletter or feedback please email us at newsletter@irsea.org.au or to me at sydsmith@optusnet.com.au.

SYD SMITH
Editor



2022 AGM AND LUNCHEON MEETING

From the Editor

You may be aware that the newsletter is sent to members in two separate ways: email or post. Recently we asked members who receive our correspondence by post but who also provided an email address whether they would be happy to receive future newsletters by email, and thus far the response has been a resounding 'yes'. We now turn to those members who could receive correspondence by email, but whom we have not yet been able to contact by email, to consider email as their preferred method of communication. There are advantages of the email option: First, you receive it

Treasurer's Report

Financial position

On 8 July 2022, the IRSEA Society Cheque Account had a balance of \$5596.70. Our Term Deposit stands at \$14 000 (maturing 30 September 2022).

To date, IRSEA receipts comprise \$1935 members' subscriptions, \$2626 in members' donations to Stewart House, and \$1180 AGM luncheon contributions. IRSEA payments are \$2626 transferred to Stewart House, \$860.14 Newsletter costs, AGM meeting \$1430, Fair Trading fees of \$48, and \$59.40 for postage.

Annual subscriptions overdue

I thank members who have paid their IRSEA subscriptions of \$15 for 2022. In April I sent reminders to members whose subscriptions remained due, and I appreciate the responses.

In the past IRSEA has taken a generous view of members in arrears and continued to provide services to them. With rising costs and a sense of fairness to financial members, the executive committee has decided that newsletters and other services will no longer be provided after the end of the year. Unfinancial members are sincerely encouraged to remedy their financial status.

Annual subscription increase from 2023

The IRSEA AGM in May approved an increase in annual subscription fees to \$25 from next year. This is the first increase since 2007. The increase reflects rising costs and planning for improved services as outlined in the April Newsletter.

RAY GILLIES
Treasurer



SYD SMITH AND DAVE WASSON

Privacy

As we become increasingly electronic in our communications with you and on our website, we need to ensure that we respect your privacy. We have added privacy sections to our application form for new members. Our current members also need the opportunity to advise of their wishes regarding the following two matters.

1. IRSEA maintains a Contact Directory listing names of members and their contact details. It can be emailed and/or accessed on IRSEA's website (this feature is still in construction). Members' personal information from this Directory may be available to other members on request and/or when the member logs in to IRSEA's website. This information is strictly for members' use only and is not for further distribution.

2. The Newsletter and the IRSEA website contain photographs of members in professional and/or social settings.

Unless you have joined recently and already given

or withheld permission on the Application for Membership form, we are now asking you to fill in the two questions on page 12 indicating whether: (1) you consent to your contact details being included in the Contact Directory; and (2) whether you consent to having your photographs included in the Newsletter and on the IRSEA website.

If we don't hear from you, we will presume that you are giving consent to both items above and our records will be adjusted accordingly.

To reply, either copy the section 'Privacy' at the foot of page 12 into an email (don't forget to place an X in the boxes!) and send to the Membership Officer, Kerrie Ikin (kerrie.ikin@gmail.com), OR post it to her at 3/74 Wrights Road, Drummoyne NSW 2047. Members who receive the email version of the newsletter will also receive a Microsoft Word attachment with this form and the luncheon booking-form.

Stewart House

Operations in 2022

In Terms 2 and 3, 2022, we are inviting 40 children at a time into our 'pre-COVID' 12-day program from single country areas not serviced across the past two years. Term 4 should see us return to 80+ children per fortnight from multiple areas. Children participating in the Program must be double vaccinated and any adult on the Stewart House site must have received at least three doses of COVID-19 vaccine and the flu shot. There has been slow take-up of these placements. Caregivers are still reluctant to vaccinate or send children to Sydney

A newly created position of Chief Well-being Officer is now responsible for all aspects of the children's engagement in the 12-day program.

A new Deed of Cooperation has been struck with the Department. This sets out the services the Department provides to Stewart House, including the staffing of the Stewart House School, and also gives the Department a licence and tenure to operate on the Stewart House site.

As a result of strategic planning and review of threshold issues in 2021, Stewart House has commenced high-level negotiations with government and stakeholders on the best way forward to achieve these goals. We will, across the remainder of 2022, review expressions of interest and engage in a selective tender process with developers. School Infrastructure NSW will support this process and facilitate the transfer of the two adjacent properties to Stewart House title so as to create a larger footprint for development on the Carrington Parade site.

Salary Contribution Scheme

Unfortunately, we have seen year-on-year decline in revenue from our salary contribution scheme

specifically targeting NSW public education employees (from \$2M in 2016 to now \$1.5M this year). In the past, donations from department staff and students funded 100% of the organization's annual operating expenses. Even with strategic intervention in the early part of the last decade, resulting in a threefold increase in revenue within the scheme, we are now experiencing the effects of retirement attrition and a new generation of teachers who are unaware that *less than 10% of the current NSW Education staff make donations to Stewart House and this now only covers 30% of annual operating expenses.*

We have shared strategies with the NSW Education Department, the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, the NSW Teachers Federation, the NSW Public Service Association, the NSW Primary Principals Association, and the NSW Secondary Principals Council. All are supportive and will contribute to a new campaign.

GRAEME PHILPOTTS
CEO, Stewart House

Eddie Woo Speaker at Next Luncheon

Don't miss this one! Eddie Woo, well-known mathematics educator and now Leader Mathematics Growth, School Performance, will be speaking at our luncheon meeting at the DoE State Office, 105 Phillip Street, Parramatta on Friday 19 August. Please refer to Page 12 of this newsletter and complete the booking slip to attend. A small donation to Stewart House is requested for those attending. Looking forward to seeing you there but if you really can't make it watch it on your computer.

Members Write

Travelling through Ukraine and Russia in 1972

Syd Smith

It's hard to forget that in 1972, Ukraine, Belarus, and the other Eastern European countries were once all part of the USSR. In 1989 atlases had to be changed following the fall of the Berlin Wall when the borders between Ukraine, Russia, and all their neighbouring countries in the former Soviet bloc had to be redrawn. In the European summer of 1972 I travelled from Moscow to Berlin via Belarus, Poland, and East Germany. The conditions in Ukraine at that time were very similar to Belarus and the route I took through today's Belarus was only a few kilometres from the Ukrainian border of today. I kept a diary for all that year when I was teaching at a North London middle school. Here is the record of that trip from that diary.

Thursday 29 June

An early start from Moscow when we were hauled out of bed at 4.30 a.m., so I wasn't in great shape as the bus finally rumbled out of Moscow at 6.30 a.m. to embark on the long 720 km trip to Minsk. It's a relief to leave the dreariness of a military state like Russia with its grey draped city of Moscow. No more hearing 'Nyet' if we walked on the lawn of a city park, goodbye to thick black beer from a keg on wheels in the street, no more waiting for ages in shops while a befuddled assistant wrestled with an abacus to work out the cost of our purchase, and, finally, to escape the sour faces of people in the metro and on the streets. But even though the country between Moscow and Minsk is similarly less stimulating, at least its agriculture seems to display more wealth than the landscape we saw between Leningrad (St Petersburg now) and Moscow. The road from Leningrad was littered with Russian tanks, either broken down or out of fuel, both of which made us wonder who the enemy was. Farms along this new Belarus section are much larger and seem to specialize much more in pastoral activities—some dairying and beef activities in the main. Smolensk was halfway to Minsk, but most of us dozed for greater part of the day. We arrived at Minsk at 4.30 in the afternoon. Evidently Minsk suffered great damage in the war and the new white buildings with their familiar propaganda slogans and paintings of Lenin reinforce this starkly. As in other Soviet cities, people are everywhere in great numbers—huge crowds in every street including the back streets. I went to a post office to buy some stamps to send postcards back home, but when I tried to fasten them onto my envelopes, I noticed they had no adhesive attached to them. Instead, there was a pot of glue on the counter which the customers had to apply themselves to the back of the stamps. Living conditions are poor here and the supply of everyday necessities, including food, is restricted. That evening after settling into the camp we noticed there were electrified fences around us, not only to keep us in but to prevent the locals stealing from us. The toilets were repulsive again, like all the others in Russia. Most of us will be glad to get out of Russia tomorrow.

Friday 30 June

Up early and by 1.30 p.m. we were at the Russian-Polish border. After crossing through two boom gates and accosted by two fierce guards brandishing machine-guns, we wound our clocks back two hours. Like Finland, border countries next to Russia are keen to distance themselves from Moscow time. Only a small stream divides the two Soviet states. The weather is still very hot and humid, particularly after sitting in the bus and baking in the sun for two hours at the border. On

the Russian side of the border numerous propaganda posters were handed to us. Poland is a joyous experience to us after the repressive atmosphere of Russia, despite Russia's having strong control over this country. Poland is basically agricultural, a breadbasket if you like, with numerous small-holdings, or collective farms as they call them, mainly of oats, strawberries, market-garden products, and dairying. The roads were mainly of a concrete construction for most of the way. The number of horses pulling wooden carts was a surprise, but the Poles themselves were very friendly and generous. Some women working in the fields came up to us offering free vegetables and strawberries; they were not well off, but only too keen to offer us hospitality after we took their photo. In the afternoon we arrived in Warsaw, a brand-new city that was completely levelled by the Germans during World War II. 96 Zlotes made the British pound, but goods here are incredibly cheap. A beer for instance costs 4c to 6c.



ALAN LAUGHLIN, BRIAN DAVIES, WARREN FAIRFAX, TONY RE

Saturday 1 July

A trip into Warsaw to see a film on the construction of the city after the War. The Polish people have incredible drive—I like them! The old part of the city is being reconstructed, appearing just as it was before the war. In the new town square, we saw vocalists and violin musicians performing. We visited the tallest building in the city donated by the local population after the war. The view was great despite the thunderstorm that broke the depressive heat of the morning. I went shopping with Bev and Gillian, the two physiotherapists on the trip, and bought a cigarette box and a Warsaw spoon to take back home. The bad weather put an end to our planned barbecue, so once again we are left with wet washing. Today is the last day for our team's washing-up duty. Hallelujah!!

Sunday 2 July

A very early start again. A chap who contracted peritonitis in Russia and whom we had picked up in Minsk woke us up unintentionally at 4 a.m., so we were destined again to have an early, very wet

start. Today was a very long ride out of rural Poland, with a long red-tape delay at the East German border and a shorter trip through a slightly wealthier East Germany to finally arrive at the southern border gate of West Berlin. We passed through Checkpoint Charlie to be greeted with bright neon lights, advertising, gaily painted buildings, and all the trimmings of city life back home. Never did Coke signs and western products look so welcoming! While East Berlin still had its impressive historic buildings and sombre atmosphere, the western side of the wall must have been very tempting to those East Berliners. We are to camp in West Berlin for four nights. A nice meal at the cafe over the road and a few delightful German beers.

Observations on China—Part 2b The United States of America

Lindsay Wasson

In this my second opinion piece on China (Part 2b) and the call for a strategic shift in our thinking about China and our relationship with our superpower neighbour, I turn my focus from the stark realities of the new China to the current world's greatest superpower, the United States of America. No analysis of China's rise to superpower or 'challenger' status can be even halfway complete without addressing, in quasi-Marxist historical style, the nature and role of the 'challenged'. Please note that this opinion piece should be read in the context of my previous piece, *Observations on China—Part 2a*, in Newsletter 2, 2022, which provides the contrasting yin to this yang.

The United States of America

So, for balance, let me now provide some commentary on the USA, its historical claim to 'exceptionalism', its curious isolationism, and the history of its many and appalling foreign-policy and domestic errors. America's disastrous and wilful dishonesty in the wars it waged against communism and terrorism, and its trumped-up 'evidence' of weapons of mass destruction prior to the invasion of Iraq, for example, set it apart as a nation ruthless in its over-weening desire to shape the world on its own questionable terms and shameless in its assertion of moral rectitude. That is one side of the story. On the other hand, despite its abhorrent foreign-policy failures, the United States has been, and continues to be, the world's most technologically creative and advanced nation with its unique entrepreneurship, capacity for innovation, highly sophisticated industrial base, economic dynamism, and world political leadership.

For me, therefore, the United States is something of a schizophrenic conundrum, riven with contradictions and ideologically at war with itself.

- Historically, it has been both strongly isolationist and expansionist.
- It espouses democratic principles and asserts itself as the exemplary model of democracy. In practice, however, its democracy functions on corruption, gerrymandering, voter suppression, and dysfunctional process. Under threat from the radical far-right, alt-right conservatives (some irony here), and would-be autocrat (Trump), its democracy faltered and almost fell.
- It represents the best and the worst of capitalist society. It is both generous and ruthless, exploitative and altruistic, depending on circumstances.
- It loves its traditions, but is pre-eminent in its scientific and technological innovation.
- It is loathed and loved, held in contempt but also admired.
- It has a strong belief in its *exceptionalism*. Convinced that it has used, and uses, its power more benevolently than all others, it has nevertheless acted with hypocrisy and brazen disregard to this mantra and conducted some of the most unconscionable foreign interventions the modern world has seen.

(I'm sure I am not alone in having such ambivalent feelings about this amazing country as when a student, and later, I loved American literature, films, and music, but feared and loathed American foreign policy. I loved American history, particularly Black American history, but loathed its deadly racism and the (continuing) engineered gap between rich and poor.)

So let us examine some interesting facts about the USA that may help our understanding of current world tensions.

- On the foundations laid by the so-called 'Captains of Industry' and 'Robber Barons' in the mid to late nineteenth century (Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Morgan, etc.), the USA became, before the turn of the century, the most productive and economically powerful nation on earth.
- Unlike China, America became a colonial power (in the late nineteenth century) by annexing or acquiring Hawaii, Puerto Rico, The Philippines, Guam, parts of Samoa, and other Pacific Islands.
- American industrial might was instrumental in supporting Allied victory in WW1 and, with its mighty although late entry into WW2, was the prime allied power in determining the outcome of the war in both the European and Pacific theatres.
- The USA rebuilt West Germany and Japan and set both countries on a true and lasting democratic foundation for the first time in their histories.
- American culture became the world culture—in cinema, music, literature, fashion and so on—with profound influence on the West in particular. The products of this cultural roll-out were often magnificent, wondrous, powerful, spectacular, innovative, and moving—to this admiring consumer at least.
- American power has been projected in support of, and with direct involvement in, some of the twentieth century's worst right-wing, corrupt, military juntas, dictatorships, and regimes in South America. (The list is large: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Panama, and so on.)
- In the post WW2 world, America, in its blind and often knowingly illegal attempt to prevent the 'communist dominoes' from falling, fought against what would have been a legal, democratically elected communist party in a unified Vietnam (as was determined to take place under the Geneva Accords of 1956). The consequence of this was a disaster for the Vietnamese people, the US itself, and for its allies. Again, another corrupt regime (under Diem) was supported at unfathomable cost, instead of allowing democratic and UN-sanctioned processes to prevail.
- This pattern was repeated in more recent times in Iraq in 2003 and in America's longest war, in Afghanistan. Again, the consequences were disastrous—the complete destabilization of the Middle East, the rise of Daesh, thousands of lives lost, the creation of millions of refugees, and trillions of dollars misspent—all to no avail. Continuing turmoil in the Middle East, irreparable damage to America's reputation, and the loss of prestige, power, authority, and influence are but some of the lasting legacies.
- Unlike China, American military might and power are currently projected across the globe with, at recent estimations, some 600–700 military bases operating in over 70 countries. (Exact numbers are never disclosed.) This number includes Australia with the ultra-secret Pine Gap facility run by the CIA, and the 'rotation' of American military through its Darwin base.

Never in human history has one nation's military reach been so powerful, pervasive, and deployable. American military reach, on the scale referred to above, is rarely if ever mentioned in the heated accusations by the 'China Threat Industry', while China's '*20 points of presence in the South China Sea*' (as claimed by Peter Dutton, SMH 7.2.2022) pale into insignificance against America's 600 plus around the world with an estimated 20 or more such bases in Japan alone. It was said that 'the sun never sets on the British Empire'. And that was true. However, it can now be said that the sun never sets on US military bases around the world. And that cannot be said of the PRC and its PLA

despite recent moves into the South China Sea and into our Pacific ‘neighbourhood’.

Despite these considerable failings and yet many successes, America remains, on some measures at least, the most economically and militarily powerful nation on earth. Its leadership (despite the catastrophe that was the failed would-be autocrat, Donald Trump) is still central to world stability, progress, governance and peace. America’s leadership in galvanizing the West in support of Ukraine against the criminal klepto-autocrat, Vladimir Putin, signals the continuing pre-eminence of the USA in supporting the international rules-based order created after WW2 and the values that underpin the world’s democracies and their allies.

So, on balance, over the last one hundred years, which of the two superpowers has acted with the most predatory, expansionist, cynical, and morally questionable motives and consequences? The answer is clear to me. America’s catastrophic failures in foreign policy since WW2, along with its fractured and frail polity, signal the weakening of *Pax Americana*. American authority is compromised not least by its own internal political and economic unravelling. However, if we frame the question another way, ‘Which of the two countries has devised the most repressive, totalitarian, nationalistic, and shackled society for its people?’, the answer is very different.

Fundamentally, America is at war with itself. The ideological, racial, and economic rifts that define American society have cleaved the nation into irreconcilable tribes to such a point that the US is effectively ungovernable. Military-grade weapons in the hands of teenagers, political puppets manipulated by ‘an all-powerful terrorist organization called the National Rifle Association’ (Phillip Adams, 25–6 June 2022), and a Supreme Court determined to fashion America into the Gilead of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, are markers of the failed-state status the US has brought upon itself.

Concluding Comments

In outlining my perceptions about the current breakdown in relations between China and much of the West, several contestable issues have been explored and some insights broached. From these I would offer the following conclusions and possible directions.

- The assumption that China and America are headed into inevitable military conflict to resolve the question of world supremacy is not supported by the evidence.
- China’s fear of the West is real and based on the experience, over centuries, of humiliation, annexation, death, destruction, and duplicity by the West (and the East).

- China’s rise to economic world leadership is its likely, but not assured, destiny, but is deemed an unquestionable ‘fact’ by the Chinese leadership.
- In the contest between the US and the China superpower, neither country can make claim to the unsullied moral high ground.
- President Xi Jinping’s recent moves against the great Chinese entrepreneurs and companies, his aim for a ‘circular economy’, and his diktat over the ‘equalizing of wealth’ and ‘common prosperity for all’, envisage an even more self-reliant and self-sufficient China. Is this a return to some resemblance of the ‘socialist’ ideas upon which the original communist China was based? Or is it a ploy to convince sections of a wavering populace that prosperity for all is still a serious aim of the CPC despite recent slippage?

The world of the twenty-first century will, in time, be determined, if not dominated, by the economic and military might of China. While Australia is one of America’s strongest allies, our recent hostile posture towards China makes a long-term relationship, of the kind we enjoyed in the earlier years of the twenty-first century extremely difficult. The rhetoric must change with a more nuanced, subtle, and smart diplomacy. The election of the new federal government; the offers of an olive branch from Chinese officials, including by the new Chinese ambassador, Mr Xiao Qian; the beginnings of diplomatic dialogue between General Wei Fenghe and the minister Richard Marles at the Shangri-La dialogue in June; and the softening of the rhetoric by the Chinese government mouthpiece, *The Global Times*, give serious hope of improving relations and a new era of cooperative endeavour.



KERRIE IKIN, JANINA SULIKOWSKI, AND OTHERS

There is an old Chinese saying: ‘Yi luan tou shi’—‘Hitting a stone with an egg’. There is danger for Australia if we continue to insult and infuriate China’s leadership, for they are clear on who is the egg in this scenario. Despite the influence of the ‘China Threat Industry’ the future should not be one for pessimism about an immutable international impasse and a decades-long imperial autocracy of the Xi variety. The assumption that

the current era of fractured relations is impervious to change is completely wrong-headed. One projected scenario is worth airing. In my judgement, the confirmation of a further five-year term for Chairman Xi Jinping at the Party Congress in November 2022 may well be the precursor of a more open and accommodating China. The validation and continuity of his 'mandate of heaven', along with the need to better manage the seething discontent of the younger, better educated and more affluent demographic, should see a greater relaxation and warmth in relations with the West, including Australia, over the following years.

This is why I would argue the need to reframe how Australia, and Australian education, need to respond at this most complex and dangerous inflexion point since the Cold War. We must consider our educational directions in relation to China on near, medium, and far horizons. Vision, independence, deep understandings, and strategic forethought must guide our response. There is a national economic, social, and educational imperative to design our China and Chinese-language educational future with a minimum twenty-year horizon. By so doing we will best ensure our deserved place as a fully-fledged, China-capable participant in a China-influenced, if not China-centric, world. The alternative may well relegate the nation to the margins of history.

In my next opinion piece, I will put forward a case for optimism about China's future society, leadership, foreign policy, and relations with Australia. I will also outline some preferred scenarios in preparing Australian students and educators for a future with a more benign and collaborative China where, if we are properly prepared, our young people and our country as a whole, will be the great beneficiaries.

Feedback from members is welcome!—Ed.

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.

Welfare Report

I am very pleased to be able to contribute to this month's newsletter as I have been a little 'missing in action' for a few months when life got in the way! Elderly parent-in-laws and colds and flu have affected my very comfortable retired life. I truly appreciated the support from the executive during this time.

I am very excited about the new role that will strengthen our fraternity and encourage others to join. Some social events will help us to reconnect with people whom we haven't had any contact with

for years as well as providing a well-being component to each and everyone of us! Covid has not enabled us to move forward in this vision for IRSEA.

There have been a few members who have appreciated a phone call over the last few weeks, but I am sure that there are many members who have battled on without letting us know. There are many members who have had COVID, influenza, and other mild ailments but have heeded medical advice and are on the way to better health!

I am really pleased that we have connected with Friends of Stewart House (FOSH), so that when we have some social events there will always be a table (or two or three) set aside for IRSEA members. This will enable us to mingle as well as support an extremely worthwhile charity. The FOSH race days are always a hit!

I would like to welcome all our new members and look forward to seeing you at some time in the very near future.

KERRYANNE KNOX
Welfare Coordinator

Vale

Dr Glenice Hancock, AM

Dr Hancock passed away on 12 May 2022 in Sydney. Glenice was Assistant Director, Metropolitan North, from 1990 to 1994 following the Scott Review of 1990, which led to the first group of cluster directors being appointed. Glenice was a very popular and respected leader and established a strong foundation for the newly structured Department, which, among a host of changes, included interviews for promotion of personnel, out-of-area school enrolments for students, school councils, and the establishment of the Executive Service. It was a tough period for leaders after the Scott review as the changes came on quickly, and many have remembered Glenice as staying positive and handling the changes with professionalism and sound leadership. In the tribute to her, the family described her as '*an inspiration. Her determined spirit knew no bounds. A pioneer in her career in the Public Service and role model for female leadership ...*'

Following her departure from the Department she continued her pursuit of an academic career, finally taking up her appointment in 2001 as Vice-Chancellor to Central Queensland University. She retired in 2004 after becoming the first woman to be appointed to a Queensland university in that position.

A celebration of her life was held at Little Bay in Sydney on 31 May. Our sincere condolences to her family, in particular her daughters Kate and Penny.

Another star to shine bright in the next world.

Lunch Meeting and Booking-Slip

Friday, 19 August 2022

Come and join your colleagues at
Head Office of the NSW Department of Education,
105 Phillip Street, Parramatta

Come along and hear Eddie Woo, well-known media mathematics educator and Leader, Mathematics Growth, School Performance.

A donation of \$5 to Stewart House is requested for those attending on the day.

Please complete the lunch booking-slip below by 1 August to:

John Allsopp
3 Slade Ave
CASTLE HILL NSW 2154

Or by email to John at: john.allsopp1@gmail.com

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 Head Office, NSW Department of Education on Friday 19 August.

Please indicate in space provided if you require a special meal.

Meal type..... Number required

Signed: Date: Phone no.

I agree / do not agree (cross out one) that photographs of me in professional and/or social situations may be published in IRSEA's Newsletters and on IRSEA's website.

If you can't attend but would rather join us online on your home computer, please indicate below with your name and email address to alanlaughlin21@optusnet.com.au and we will send you details on how to connect to the luncheon on 19 August.

Name Email

Privacy

See the article on page 6. Send to the Membership Officer, Kerrie Ikin (kerrie.ikin@gmail.com), OR post it to her at 3/74 Wrights Road, Drummoyne NSW 2047.

Privacy options (Indicate preference with 'X')

Agree

Don't agree

Name:

I agree to have my personal details included in the Contact Directory and to be available to other IRSEA members.		
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