



INSTITUTE OF RETIRED SENIOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, INC.

# Newsletter

ABN: 78 259 388 090

[www.irsea.org.au](http://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. 1

March 2023

## From the President

Dear friends and colleagues. I write this, my final Newsletter report as president, with a deep sense of gratitude to, and abiding admiration for, the IRSEA Executive Committee. This extraordinarily talented, loyal, and very hard-working group has served you, our members, with an unwavering commitment to make our Institute even more collegial, enjoyable, informative, and influential in all that we do. The time and energy all committee members have devoted in making high-quality and high-value contributions to our Institute, are selflessly made and profoundly important to us all.



Thank you, team, for your loyalty and for your superlative work to make this an even greater organization. Special thanks to Graham Dawson, Past President; Eric Jamieson, Vice-President; and Brian Davies, Secretary; for your invaluable support, advice, and leadership as we have progressed our ambitious agenda. And thank you all for setting me straight when my enthusiasms needed reining in.

Since I became president in May 2022, and on the back of the outstanding presidency of Graham Dawson, IRSEA can boast of many achievements over the 2021–23 period:

- Our suite of print-ready Awards and Certificates, thanks to Graham Dawson's leadership of their development.
- Our first Associate Members.
- Our first Honorary Members in Murat Dizdar and Raechel McCarthy.
- The success we have had in attracting new members.
- The adoption and embedding of our Mission Statement to give clear focus for the Institute.
- The first purely social event at the Kirribilli Club thanks to Kerryanne Knox's organizational prowess, with more to come.
- The consolidation of our partnership with the Department through the outstanding leadership and generosity of Murat Dizdar and the

remarkable links we have with our wonderful and dedicated DoE contact, Raechel McCarthy.

- The first, and now standing invitation to attend the DoE Capability Summits, enabling regular input into departmental policy, strategy, and implementation.
- The further development of the IRSEA website, led by the wonderful Ray Gillies, which has become an elegant, sophisticated treasure-house for those seeking information on myriad aspects of the Institute.
- Stronger connections with Stewart House, thanks to Alan Laughlin's leadership and dedication.
- The recent survey conducted on the Newsletter, initiated by its hugely able editor, Syd Smith, with a view to improving this vital medium of information, ideas, articles, and reflections for members.
- A tight and highly professional database of our membership, created through the technological capabilities of Kerrie Ikin.
- The first broad-ranging sub-committee structure (modelled on the successful Website Sub-Committee chaired by Ray Gillies), a detailed outline of which can be accessed on the website.

We can be very proud of these achievements. Yet they are but prelude to the plans we have for the rest of 2023.



AWARDS PRESENTATION

LINDSAY WASSON, RAECHEL MCCARTHY, MURAT DIZDAR,  
ALAN LAUGHLIN, GRAHAM DAWSON

## IRSEA Priorities 2023

*1. Consolidate and extend the influence of IRSEA on the educational landscape both at a state and national level.*

We have had considerable success in establishing an accepted presence, representation, and policy and implementation input at the regular DoE Capability Summits. However, IRSEA is yet to be a recognized part of the educational architecture in NSW and nationally. From our now firm platform created with the work of Graham, Lindsay, Eric, Kerrie, Kerryanne, Brian, Alan, and Kim Fillingham, we now need to give clear focus to embedding our intellectual capacity and educational expertise more deeply and more broadly.

*2. Devise and deliver a systematic recruitment drive for ex-TAFE members.*

We have had little success in translating the great and largely untapped resource of retired senior administrators from TAFE into membership of IRSEA. Devising and delivering a strategy to achieve this must be a focus of our work in 2023 and beyond. John Allsopp and Kim Fillingham are ideally placed to support this priority.

*3. Ensure IRSEA becomes a Stewart House Bronze-Level Supporter from 2023 onwards.*

As IRSEA's long-established and sole charity, Stewart House, is gifted a generous amount from IRSEA members' tax-deductible donations. However, with our current donation levels, we are not yet ranked as even a Bronze-Level Supporter. After meeting recently with Graham Philpotts, Alan and I came away determined to raise IRSEA donations to a level that would recognize us as a Bronze-Level Supporter. \$5000.00 per annum would take us there.

*4. Newsletter—Act on feedback from the successful survey conducted by Syd and Eric.*

The recent survey has brought in hugely valuable feedback and suggestions from our membership. While strongly endorsing Syd Smith's outstanding work as Editor, we now have a pathway for reviewing the style, layout, and content, through a sub-committee, led by Syd, to bring a renewed and revitalized Newsletter to our members.

*5. Extend the range and number of social events for members.*

Following the overwhelming success of our first purely social event at the Kirribilli Club, thanks to Kerryanne's drive and splendid organization, it is clear that members really appreciate the opportunity for casual, enjoyable, lively, and hugely convivial get-togethers. While we have two more such events planned for this year, we should make every effort to expand our offerings to meet our members' wishes to get together, with no agendas except fun, collegiality, and socializing with colleagues and friends (along with some good food and wine).

## Stewart House



### STEWART HOUSE NEEDS OUR HELP

Stewart House is now back in full operation with 80 children coming each fortnight.

The children are some of the most needy in the state, from disadvantaged and marginalized backgrounds and often with complex personal and learning challenges.

The programs at Stewart House make a real difference in children's self-esteem and resilience, as well as providing social and emotional well-being management and physical health support including vision and dental care.

### BUT

The cost of running Stewart House per year is now nearly \$9 million.

Of this \$5.2 million is dependent on donations, salary contributions, and sponsorship.

In the last ten years money from salary contributions has fallen from \$1.9m to \$1.4m.

School fundraisers have also dropped from \$400,000 to \$200,000.

The shortfall has been covered by bequests and corporate support—all problematic.

Stewart House is embarking on a major campaign to turn this around. However:

### OUR HELP IS NEEDED NOW

We all know about Stewart House and its contributions to the children in Public Schools.

IRSEA donations each year have been over \$3000.

Let's try to take this up to \$5000, making us a 'bronze' donor.

**Donations** to our IRSEA Account marked SH are all that is needed.

#### Direct Deposit:

**BANK** Commonwealth Bank of Australia  
**BSB:** 062300

**ACCOUNT NUMBER:** 10466684

**ACCOUNT NAME:** Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators (IRSEA)

**YOUR REFERENCE:** Your surname (for a receipt if required), initial, and 'SH'

Thanks for your support.

ALAN LAUGHLIN

6. *Be generous in awarding Outstanding Service, Certificate of Appreciation, and Life Membership awards.*

With our suite of Awards and Certificates now complete and ready (thanks to Graham's wonderful work), priority should be given to a systematic program of award presentations for members who have met the criteria for these awards. The sub-committee, chaired by Graham, will formalize this process with a generosity of spirit to ensure we give appropriate recognition to members and Executive for their good work and valuable contributions to our organization.

7. *Begin planning for the key propositions put forward by Eric Jamieson in his presentation at the December luncheon.*

We will develop an approach to identify, support, and celebrate NSW public schools doing great things in education. It is anticipated that this will be a multi-faceted approach, ideally in partnership with the DoE (at least in part), and perhaps seeking other sponsorship to recognize and celebrate exceptional practice in schools. This will be a key priority for 2023. In leading this process, Eric will aim to have public education recognized and celebrated through some of our schools reaching the finals, and hopefully winning, in the international **World's Best Schools** awards. (I wish to acknowledge Eric's contribution to this section.)

In conclusion, I wish to say that holding the presidency for 2022–23 has been a unique and humbling experience. To lead an organization of the state's most outstanding and revered retired senior educators has been a special honour for me and one I am deeply grateful for having.

When Eric Jamieson, friend, colleague, educational partner, and exceptional educator takes over the presidency at the AGM on 31 March, I and all who know him, will celebrate the fact that IRSEA will be led by one of the greatest educators, not only in NSW, but acknowledged as such globally. He is that good! Eric, I pledge my unstinting support to you in your new role as I assume the supportive role of Immediate Past President.

Best wishes to all members, the Executive Committee, and to the new President-elect. May our Institute continue to flourish and thrive for the benefit of members and for public education in this state.

LINDSAY WASSON  
President



## From the Department



Hi All,

I hope you are all well and had a lovely Christmas with your families. It was so fantastic to see four of our IRSEA members attend our recent Term 1 School Performance Summit at Parramatta on Wednesday 15 February and I was really pleased that Murat Dizdar used this opportunity to introduce them to the large audience, recognizing their valued past contribution to education and ongoing legacy.

I thought in this newsletter I would provide you all with an update on the **Rural and Remote Educational Strategy 2021–24**. My current role as Relieving Director Delivery Support Group 1 means that I am deeply invested in seeing this strategy come to fruition as I provide support to many schools in rural and remote areas and recognize the fantastic work happening in these schools. I am also a proud HSC graduate of Condobolin High School, meaning that my siblings and I have benefited from a country education.

This strategy strives to ensure every child in regional NSW has access to the same quality of education as their metropolitan counterparts. There is a compelling case for change in this area with lower rates of student attendance, HSC retention, and preschool enrolments. I know that many of you have had the privilege of working in rural and remote communities and would share our Department's commitment towards closing this educational gap.

The strategy has four key areas:

**People:** Supplying students with high-quality educators who are aware of localized needs.

**Practice:** Equip teachers to deliver a broader curriculum that is contextualized to the needs of local communities.

**Participating:** Empowering schools to address student well-being needs through stronger connections with communities.

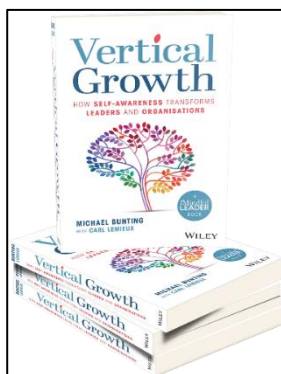
**Partnerships:** Create more productive partnerships with higher-education providers, vocational education, and local industry.

A wide range of initiatives have been devised to address these key needs, including offering pre-service teachers more opportunities to undertake their final practicum experience in rural areas, providing tailored teacher professional learning to build teacher and leader capacity and improved school access to technology. Stronger partnerships have been created with more localized universities, TAFE, and employers so that all students have access to improved post-school pathways.



This is exciting work for our Department and we are committed to co-designing and consulting with community (including Aboriginal community) on what will make a difference in rural schools. For more information visit

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/rural-and-remote-education-strategy-2021-24>



As discussed in my last newsletter, I will regularly share what I am currently reading to improve my own leadership capacity. This month I am reading *Vertical Growth* by Michael Bunting. *Vertical Growth* provides tools to harness leaders' personal self-awareness to bring sustained leadership growth. It is a

very easy read and highly recommended.

I look forward to seeing you all again soon at your Annual General Meeting on 31 March. Many thanks to Lindsay for the invitation

RAEHEL MCCARTHY

Relieving Director Delivery Support Group 1



ERIC JAMIESON PRESENTING AT THE DECEMBER LUNCHEON

## Secretary's Report

With this being the last newsletter before the new executive is elected at the Annual General Meeting, I would like to thank Lindsay Wasson for his leadership and hard work as the President. Lindsay has enhanced our interactions and links with the NSW Department and been very active in promoting membership and the profile of our organization.

This is the first time that our Annual General Meeting will be held so early in the year, on **31 March**, as a result of the financial year's now being from 1 January to 31 December. Critical to our organization is the election of the next executive for 2023–24. Chris Carroll has indicated that he will not be continuing on the executive. I would like to

thank Chris for all his wonderful work on the committee, including as President of IRSEA.

It is very important that members consider being part of the executive. A nomination form is on page 13 of this newsletter with information on the positions on the executive that you can nominate for. Please note that if you would like to dip your toe in the water, there are Ordinary Committee Member positions that you can start with. You also might like to help someone else to nominate. I can remember Ian Vacchini, years ago, subtly placing a nomination form in front of me with his well-known persuasive approach. The nomination forms have to be sent to me by **Friday 24 March**—details are on the form. The nominee must sign the form, but if you have any practical problems with the nominator or seconder signatures then send to me and I can help. Executive membership is not just for people who don't have to travel too far. We would like to involve people from across our membership through technology links to the meetings. Please join us.

There has been a change to this year's diary. At the general meeting in December, members unanimously decided that they would like to add another general meeting in May and that all the general meetings should be held at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel on the first Friday in May, August, and December. I would like to thank John Allsopp, our Luncheons Coordinator, for all his great work on this. The 2023 dates for your diary are now:

- Friday 31 March—Annual General Meeting
- Friday 5 May—General Meeting
- Friday 4 August—General Meeting
- Friday 1 December—General Meeting

Our executive committee meeting dates for the rest of the year are: Monday 24 April; Monday 26 June; and Monday 9 October. I would like to remind members that they can attend executive meetings as observers. If you would like to do so, please contact me at [secretary@irsea.org.au](mailto:secretary@irsea.org.au). You would be most welcome.

At our last executive meeting on 13 February, Kerrie Ikin, our hardworking Membership Officer, reported that we currently have 132 members. You might know someone who is eligible who you could encourage to join. Also at our last meeting, Ray Gillies, who does such a fine job of managing the website, reported on what has been added to the website. Members are encouraged to make use of this great site at <http://www.irsea.org.au>. We don't have the software to know how many visit the site. It would be helpful if you had a moment to just send me at [secretary@irsea.org.au](mailto:secretary@irsea.org.au) a 'yes' or 'no' as to whether you have been onto the site. It would be much appreciated.

BRIAN DAVIES  
Secretary

# Treasurer's Report

## Annual subscriptions were due on 1 January

I thank members who have paid their IRSEA subscriptions of \$25 for 2023. Many members took the opportunity to include very much appreciated donations to Stewart House.

In February I sent reminders to members whose subscriptions remained due. Thanks for your responses. I encourage unfinancial members to pay their subscriptions as soon as possible.

Newsletters and other services will no longer be provided to members who have been in arrears since 2020. Members who have been unfinancial for the last two years are also putting their IRSEA services at risk.

## IRSEA finances are sufficient to meet current commitments.

On 20 February 2023 the IRSEA Society Account had a balance of \$10,797.26. Our Term Deposit is valued at \$10,101.65 (maturing 14 October 2023).

To date, IRSEA 2023 receipts comprise \$2160 members' subscriptions, and \$2087 in members' donations to Stewart House. IRSEA payments are \$2172 transferred to Stewart House, and \$44.40 for postage and stationery.

RAY GILLES  
Treasurer



CHRISTINE TASKER AND JANINA SULIKOWSKI

# Chris Bonnor to address the AGM

This is a meeting not to be missed! Come to the AGM Luncheon on **31 March at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney**, meet with your colleagues, and hear from Chris. Details and booking slip on page 12 of this newsletter.

**Chris Bonnor AM:** is an education writer, speaker, advocate, and retired NSW secondary principal. Former President of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council and author of *The Stupid Country*. Chris says:

We've witnessed almost three decades of often frenetic school reform, but by most measures overall student achievement hasn't improved. Have the reformers got it wrong, or are they only looking at half the problem? Will equity funding and school-level reform ever deliver as we expect? Chris Bonnor points to the increasing social segregation of enrolments, both between and within the school sectors—something that must urgently be fed into conversations about school improvement. Together with co-author, Tom Greenwell, he proposes substantial change to how we provide and resource schools, and who and how they serve. Theirs is a balanced solution; it might upset both public and private educators in equal measure, but doing nothing is no longer an option.

# Newsletter Survey

My thanks first to **Eric Jamieson** who set up the structure for professional layout of the survey and collected your feedback for the Executive to consider. Thanks also to the 35 members who responded to the survey in January (just under 20%). Most responses were by email by simply clicking on the SUBMIT icon, which indicated, unfortunately, those receiving the survey by post were less likely to respond at all (only 4).

Overall, members are generally happy with the newsletter, and many find it the only way to communicate with IRSEA and discover what is happening or gaining any news of their colleagues. Some find the column format harder to read, but others are happy with the column structure. A number requested 'a more modernized appearance' but did not offer examples of what this might be, except to present more colour and images perhaps. Some suggested by dividing the newsletter into different sections this would enhance its appeal (e.g. *Reflections, Observations, Opinion Pieces,*

*From the Archives of the Department*.) Articles from the Department are appreciated, including the latest educational policies relating to learning, curriculum, and policy initiatives. Articles about 'what people are doing or have done, their recollections of their time working in the Department, interesting places they have visited' etc. were all welcome, but they also need to be short, perhaps 400 words maximum in length. Some thought the format is a 'bit dense' now, perhaps a new font or a revised layout would help, but no specific examples were offered. Some asked us to tell them when the newsletter would appear on the website and to provide more details of decisions made by the Executive. Most Executive decisions and plans are incorporated within the reports of the president and secretary, of course, but this suggestion will be considered further.



Where then do we go from here? A sub-committee will be established to review suitable new developments that should be implemented for the newsletter. Once again thank to those who took the time to offer suggestions. The feedback has been very valuable.

SYD SMITH  
Editor

## Members Write

### Early Life Outback Queensland Trip.

*Norm Robinson*

I was born in the Dirranbandi Hospital, Queensland, on 15 August 1934. My Baptismal Certificate has written across it *'baptised in hospital, not expected to live'*. My first memory as a child is about 1938 when Dad was assistant manager of the 500,000 acre 'Wyora' sheep station about 150 km west of Cunnamulla, which ran at least 100,000 merino sheep and had a 40 stand shearing shed that I clearly remember being in at shearing time.

My older and only sister and I were schooled by correspondence lessons at the long kitchen table supervised by Mum. Then in 1940 we were both boarded in Cunnamulla and attended the Cunnamulla State School.

Then in 1941 up to the end of April 1942 we were sent to Charleville 250 km north of Cunnamulla to attend the Charleville State School. We used to travel by train from Cunnamulla to Charleville. There is no longer a train from Cunnamulla to Charleville. Why not? Well, the train line runs beside the Maltida Highway from Cunnamulla to Charleville and at about 9.00 p.m. on 5 September 2014 the Angellala Creek viaduct 30 km south of Charleville was blown up. A truck carrying 52.8 tonnes of ammonium nitrate was involved in a single vehicle incident with the truck hitting the road bridge and crashing, spilling diesel. When the diesel wet the ammonium nitrate there was an explosion equivalent to 15 tonnes of TNT, and so powerful that Charleville residents thought there was an earthquake. The explosion was measured as a seismic event measuring 2.1 on the Richter scale. Thankfully, not a life was lost in the largest explosion in Australian transportation history. The Queensland government has decided not to replace the rail viaduct, which is only about 100 m in length. Consequently, there is now a 250 km bus trip from Cunnamulla to Charleville on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

In Charleville my sister and I lived in the Church of England Girls' Hostel run by nuns. On the edge of the street just outside the hostel grounds was a water standpipe. American soldiers used to come and fill up their water tanks at this standpipe near our playground, and they use to give us boys chewing-gum. Of course, we now know that from

1942 to 1946 the United States had an Army Air Force Base just outside Charleville consisting of 3500 soldiers. They modified the Charleville Airport into a crucial, strategic, but secretive base. My youngest daughter, Helen, who lives on a farm north of Ballina but works in Goonellabah near where I live, often comes to see and stay with me because I'm a widower. My other two children are in Bathurst and Penrith.

Helen was interested in seeing the places where I was a young child, so we planned a trip to outback Queensland. We left on Saturday 3 September and arrived back in Goonellabah late on Saturday 10 September—Helen's actual 55th birthday. We only had a week because Helen had to return to work on Monday 11 September. Day 1 was from Goonellabah to Goondiwindi via Tenterfield. Day 2, Goondiwindi to Nindigully for lunch. Built in 1864 this is the oldest pub in Queensland. From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century it was a Cobb & Co changing station. These days it is very much used by truckies. Then onto Thallon to see the painted silos on the way to Dirranbandi, where I was born. In Dirranbandi I had my photo taken by an artwork in the park called the Dirranbandi Dandy. This is made entirely of horseshoes, depicting the rural nature of the area. From Dirranbandi we then had a long drive for a stopover in Cunnamulla.



Day 3. A tour of Cunnamulla with photos followed by a 250 km drive to Charleville. We had lunch 160 km north Cunnamulla at the historic small village of Wyandra at the Post Office and General Store. Then onto Charleville where we did a grand tour of this town including several museums and the information centre at the railway station from where I left Queensland for New South Wales in mid-April 1942. Dad resigned his position at

'Wyora' station and was taking the family back to Mum's home town of Bingara where they were married in 1930 to join the army, so he collected my sister and myself at the Charleville railway station on the way through. In Charleville we also saw the state school and where the Church of England Girls' Hostel was located in 1940s. The whole block is now a Retirement village.

Day 4. Charleville to Bourke. We visited the Bourke Cemetery to see the grave of Fred Hollows, a New Zealand – Australian ophthalmologist, who became famous for his work in restoring the eyesight of over one million people in Australia, including 460 Aboriginal communities, and other countries. Fred requested that he be buried in Bourke. The Aboriginal community has placed a large polished rock by his grave. My Rotary Club donates hundreds of dollars each year to the Fred Hollows Foundation.



Day 5. Bourke to Moree via Walgett and Collarenebri for an overnight stop to see my brother and wife.

Day 6. Moree to Narrabri where I had a tour of Narrabri High School at which I was Deputy Principal 1974–75 after leaving the Inspectorate. That night I attended the meeting of the Rotary Club of Narrabri, where I was inducted into Rotary on 16 May 1974.

Day 6. Narrabri to Inverell via Bingara, where I placed flowers on my Mum's grave. She died on 18.11.1944 with double pneumonia when I was 10, leaving five children aged 4–11. Overnight in Inverell, where I was a teacher 1957–66 and O.C. of the Inverell High School Cadet Unit for ten years. Two of my former cadets were killed in Vietnam. Each year on Vietnam Veteran's Day on 18 August I place a wreath in memory of them on the Lismore Vietnam War Memorial.

Day 7. Inverell to Lismore to my home for Helen's 55th birthday party at my home. Altogether, we had travelled 2800 km in my Mazda 2. It was a perfect trip down memory lane.



MURAT DIZDAR ADDRESSES THE DECEMBER MEETING

## **The Arts of Battle and Strawberry Farming**

*Geoff Baldwin*

Great writers on the strategy and tactics of conflict—von Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli—all focus on the framing and positioning of conflict, rather than on hand-to-hand engagement. This is because the way in which each side orchestrates the conflict is a far more important determinant of the outcome than is individual valour on the field. And thus it was in the 1984–85 staffing formula industrial dispute between the NSW government and the NSW Teachers Federation.

The focus of the dispute was Bega High School and the refusal of a maths teacher, Dick O'Neill, to comply with a direction to transfer to Bombala High School when his position became surplus to requirements at Bega HS, as a consequence of changes to the staffing formula introduced by the Labor government through its unconventional Education Minister, Rodney Cavalier. Despite being, on the surface of it an argument about an individual teacher, the dispute resulted in state-wide disruption of secondary schools for the first few months of 1985. Newspaper advertising, and rolling strikes, made it a front-page issue.

Although Dick O'Neill became, briefly, a household name, in truth he was, in the words of Bob Dylan, only a pawn in the game.

### **The genesis of the dispute**

Rodney Cavalier was of migrant stock, and a member of the NSW ALP 'soft left'. He had been appointed Minister for Mineral Resources but had been, not long before I arrived in the then Department of School Education, promoted to the Education portfolio. A trade union organizer of my acquaintance, who had joined Cavalier's staff when he was Minister for Mineral Resources, told me that he had resigned when Cavalier was promoted, because he had no wish to tangle with 'the cheeky chalkies'.

However, Cavalier had no such reservations. Displaying a managerial mindset and steadfast



determination lacking in a long line of predecessors on both sides of politics, he (with the backing of Premier Neville Wran) introduced significant reductions in the secondary schools' staffing formula. Announced in 1984 to take effect from the start of the 1985 school year, it was estimated that the new formula would result in around 100 'nominated transfers' (usually called 'forced transfers') as the new formula cut teaching allocations at a number of schools.

The Federation was stunned. It was aligned with the ALP Left, to the extent that it eschewed membership of the largely right-wing NSW Labor Council (now Unions NSW) and could not believe that a Labor government would dare to do what Liberal governments had shied away from, especially through a minister from the Left.

However, the Federation was quietly confident that it could spike the Government's guns. It announced that it would support every member who refused to accept a forced transfer that resulted from the new formula. Under the applicable legislation, a teacher failing to comply with a direction to transfer was, unless establishing 'reasonable' grounds for that refusal, liable to dismissal. The Federation could not, and did not wish to, recommend refusal, but having promised to 'support' teachers subject to threatened dismissal, it did not need to do so.

The Federation did not expect refusals *en masse*, but it reasoned (probably correctly) that even a Liberal government (let alone a Labor government) would not dare to dismiss a dozen or more teachers, each of whom would presumably have been a competent and generally well-regarded teacher.

Perhaps a month out from the transfer deadline, about thirty teachers ordered to transfer had not yet signalled acquiescence. A fortnight out, the number was around ten, and a week out it was, from memory, three. With a couple of days to go, only one was left.

### Enter Dick O'Neill

Dick O'Neill was a middle-aged, two-year trained, maths teacher. He had been at Bega HS for some years and, pretty clearly, he expected to stay there until retirement. He and his wife had bought a small farm and settled in the hamlet of Quaama, outside Bega. They grew strawberries. O'Neill was directed to transfer but refused. And the Federation stood behind him—of which, more later.

When it was clear that neither he nor the Federation would back down, O'Neill had to be accorded his right to establish, if he could, that he had reasonable grounds for refusing to accept the transfer. That came in the shape and form of an audience with the Director-General (then Doug Swan). The audience was in Swan's office in Bridge Street. O'Neill was accompanied by Federation

General Secretary Vic Baueris. I was in attendance, together with an amanuensis.

I actually felt sorry for O'Neill. He was not so much like a deer in the headlights as like a village soccer player suddenly teleported into the middle of Wembley Stadium. He talked about his strawberry farm, and about how, if he stayed on the farm, in mid-winter the 100 km drive over Brown Mountain to Bombala would be made hazardous by fog. He said nothing whatever to challenge the basis for the transfer, which was that, under the new formula, Bega HS had to lose a teaching position, and as O'Neill was qualified to teach maths only to Year 10 level, he was the one to go. Baueris sat, expressionless, a man who had known this was how it would play out but had still somehow hoped for a miracle.

O'Neill was dismissed, and battle was joined.

### The shifting ground

When it first ran the battle ensign up, the Federation had envisaged some sort of mass civil disobedience. Not only would the government not allow the Department to dismiss twenty or so perfectly competent teachers, but also the simple fact of widespread resistance would send a message to the public that the Department and the Minister had somehow got it wrong. The Federation was punting that the impenetrable complexity of the secondary school staffing formula would prevent the Department and the Minister from being able to explain to parents and the wider public why a resisting teacher should be required to accept transfer.

The lone protester was an entirely different matter. No matter what rhetoric the Federation came up with, it bore the appearance that it was O'Neill who had got it wrong and been sent to the naughty corner for disobedience.

The collapse of the expected broad resistance also allowed the government to send a simple message. Obedience to directions was a good message, but an even better one, aimed at parents, was that teachers have a fundamental obligation to serve where they are most needed. Every teacher who signs up knows that this is the deal. Neither the State budget nor the school system itself would survive if teachers could, with impunity, resist a direction to transfer from a school where they were not needed to one where they were.

When rolling strikes started, the Department countered with advertisements to this effect. Of course, the dispute escalated through the NSW Industrial Commission, with a final decision in the Department's favour: Mr O'Neill had no reasonable grounds for refusal, so that his dismissal would not be overturned. (In presenting this case I had the invaluable assistance of one Jack Hurley, a seasoned secondary schools inspector. Jack spoke



with a gruff yet authoritative tone. Given a toga and a laurel head-adornment he would have passed for Julius Caesar. No assertion or question about the staffing formula, however searching, and whether from the Federation or the bench, ever threw him.

With judicial relief out the window, it was a good old-fashioned arm wrestle, with the Federation simply hoping that the rolling strike disruption would eventually cause the Premier to tell the Minister to back down, to stop the bad publicity. But Cavalier was having none of it, and Wran never missed an opportunity to 'sit the Federation on its arse', as he put it.

### The denouement

O'Neill had, of course, stayed dismissed; and the Federation, anxious to pluck something from the ruins, started to negotiate about returning him to Kanahooka High School, in the Illawarra. What his personal circumstances were at this time I do not know. Had these negotiations succeeded, he would obviously have needed to leave Quaama, but as I understand it the strawberry farm was a hobby farm rather than a commercial enterprise which, by itself, might have sustained him and his wife.

Cavalier and Wran stood firm: the principle at stake was the duty of a teacher to serve where directed, and teaching at Kanahooka HS was the wish of the Federation, not the Department.

Cavalier's determination was underlined by an event when both he and Wran were out of the country. Penrith MP and Deputy Leader Ron Mulock was Acting Premier and the Federation, sensing that he might be more amenable than Wran or Cavalier, made approaches. Cavalier, suspecting the same thing, had asked me to contact him if there were any sign of Mulock compromising. When I became aware that this was on the cards, I rang Cavalier in France, and alerted him. Cavalier said to me 'Mate, I want you to tell Mulock that if he budes an inch, I'll cut his nuts off'. Not having ever even met Mulock, I was unsure as to the likely consequences of my doing exactly as Cavalier had asked but, through a senior staffer I did know, I got the message through, and the line was held.

And thus, to adopt T. S. Eliot, the saga ended, not with a bang but with a whimper.

It is not just with hindsight that I say that, at the point when the numbers of those refusing transfer had dwindled to a handful, the Federation should have struck its colours. While staying with the party line, Federation President Barry Manefield said at the time that it was a silly dispute, with the Department and the Federation battling it out 'like a couple of dinosaurs'. The hidden allusion to negotiation was clear, but it was a time at which the seeking of peace talks was anathema to the Federation.

Emblematic of this attitude was the Federation's ongoing refusal, long pre-dating the O'Neill matter, to prioritize its demands in negotiations about claims with financial consequences. The Federation's line was that it was the government's job to fund everything that was (in the Federation's view) needed; and that it was not going to give the Minister of the time a get-out-of-jail-free card by providing a basis for saying that the Federation did not think some particular thing was all that important. Cavalier, however, announced that he would no longer talk with the Federation until it was indeed prepared to prioritize its demands and, after a few months of staring, the Federation blinked.

I have long been absent from this arena so I cannot now speak with any first-hand knowledge, but it appears that the approach of the Federation and the trade union movement generally is much different now from what it was then. After the Howard-era workplace relations law reforms, modified by the *Rudd Fair Work Act 2009*, the industrial relations landscape has changed greatly.

But, as any old warrior knows, there's nothing like settling down in the leather armchair with a glass of port, and recounting battles past. Details may change but, as Sun Tzu observed, the underlying principles remain the same.



NEW MEMBERS AT THE DECEMBER MEETING

## MEETING THE QUEEN'S MOTHER

*Cliff Cowdroy*

During exchange teaching in the United Kingdom, fellow teachers from across the Commonwealth were invited up to London to a garden party and reception at Kensington Palace. My colleagues from Canada had purchased a brand-new Ford export model with left-hand drive due for shipping back at the end of our stint there. We drove up to London from the West in a hair-raising fashion, especially on roundabouts, but we finally made it.

The garden party was restricted to those sponsored by the League of the British Commonwealth and Empire, and the process of walking forward to meet Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, all went smoothly. We were directed to stand on a mat in front of her and shake hands on the signal from an

equerry who also announced our name and country of origin.

No sooner was I back in the classroom, than the headmaster called me into his office to say that a package had arrived with the Royal Crest on the envelope. It was a summons or invitation to attend High Tea at Lancaster House with Her Majesty, the Queen Mother. This meant additional time off School, another trip to London, and overnight accommodation there. In those days in the 1960s steam trains were still in use and travelling up to that metropolis from the West country took a good few hours. On this occasion it took much longer, because the season's being winter the track points had frozen over outside of the city of Reading on the Great Western Line.

There was only one other passenger in the compartment, a Mrs Flexner, an exceptionally well-dressed woman, who had a broad American accent. She informed me that she was a Consul of the USA based in Cardiff. As the train was stationary for a long time she suggested we go into the dining carriage for lunch on her 'shout'. In typical British fashion we were advised that 'Darlings everything is off', meaning off the menu, except bacon and eggs with coffee. We had no choice and opted for that meal while snowbound. Fortunately, the train did eventually move and I finally got to London the day before the function. As a member of the Royal Overseas Club at Green Park, I was back in familiar territory.

Nearby was Lancaster House, which is (or was) a Royal Residence with enormous rooms and very high ceilings. I was vetted going up the steps of the portico and again in the foyer before being ushered to one of a number of round tables set for high tea. The Queen Mother entered the room with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and occupied the seat next to mine. We all stood up, having been briefed on protocols in not initiating conversation, as that was the prerogative of the Queen herself. The table was also occupied by two people from Rhodesia and two from Northern Ireland. Once seated we sat down and waited to see what would eventuate. Her majesty suggested (by stating the obvious) that we should all have tea, and we were duly catered for with the best of British in terms of teacups, cutlery, cakes, muffins, scones, and other delights.

The Queen seemed ill at ease initially and kept fingering her large string of pearls, but she did initiate the conversation round the table. She addressed me (on her left) by asking about teaching in Australia and what differences I had noticed with teaching in the UK, and then went on to ask about our beaches, how well they were enjoyed, and asked about our lifesaving tradition and its effectiveness.

The Rhodesian couple said very little possibly because of the post-colonial upheavals being experienced and the disruption to schooling in that part of the African continent that was to become either Zambia or Zimbabwe or some other name. The signal to conclude the gathering was at the response of the chap from Northern Ireland. The Queen rose and thanked us and said the conversations were enlightening and suddenly walked off with her minder.

Why was I chosen? Possibly because they wanted someone to represent New South Wales at the function, but also possibly because the 'powers that be' had noted my surname and confused it with Cowdray, the then Lord being the richest man in England. His name was often spelt with an 'o'—Cowdroy (but no relation). I never was able to ascertain the reason.

The Queen Mother was interested in Australia, asked pertinent questions, and put us at ease. She seemed to easily digest our responses because she led on to other general topics. The Rhodesians were guarded given the political circumstances surrounding their country and its future as being expounded by Sir Roy Wilenski. The Northern Irish were also guarded because the 'Troubles' there were constantly being reported in the British press and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was listening carefully to their responses, again mainly focused on teaching methods. They played it safe.

*PS. It was not a true exchange because of leave granted from Haberfield Demonstration School. Upon return and having submitted the customary report, I was interviewed for secondment to the ABC and worked there in the division known as State Education in Radio and Television for five years.*

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

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## Valete

### Colin Cameron

Colin Cameron passed away in early 2022. After completing his teacher training at Armidale Teachers' College, Col was appointed to Cobar High School in 1964 as a teacher of mathematics. Returning to Sydney, Colin saw service as a teacher and head teacher in several high schools, including Ibrox Park Boys' High School, Dulwich Hill High School, and Sydney Technical High School. In 1970 Colin gained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of New England with a major in mathematics.



Colin pursued his interest in educational administration and was appointed to the position of Chief Education Officer—Staffing, located at the Department's Head Office in Bridge Street. During this time in his career, Colin was assessed by the Australian Council for Educational Administration and was accredited as an Educational Administrator and admitted to professional status in the field of School Administration. Colin retained his position as a Chief Education Officer until a departmental restructure saw Staffing relocated to Western Sydney. Colin returned to a school setting as Deputy Principal, Blakehurst High School.

In retirement, Colin enriched his life through a number of lifelong passions. In particular, his love of opera and classical music and his enjoyment of travel, both domestic and international, brought him much joy. He was a Founding Member of the Australian War Memorial Foundation. Throughout retirement Colin very much enjoyed and valued IRSEA membership. He always looked forward to receiving the newsletter and ardently read each edition. He often talked about and asked after former colleagues and friends.

### Bob Winder

Bob Winder passed away in November 2022. He was born in 1930. Bob was privately cremated, so unfortunately there was no chance for colleagues to bid him farewell. We can all raise a glass to Bob at our next meeting or gathering—a fitting reason for a round of drinks!

Robert Winder entered the Department of Education in 1948 and despite being a good teacher was getting a reputation as a highly organized young man. Bob worked with Doug Swan and Bill Nay as a senior administrator. In fact, some people will remember him as 'Doug Swan's right-hand man'. Although appointed as a Director-General, it was a very short time in office as the Government changed and Terry Metherell breezed in with the untimely goodbye to Bob. Bob retired and went to live in Terrigal and enjoyed the Central Coast life.

I was so sad to learn of Bob's passing. He was so supportive to me when I was appointed to Gunnedah as DI from 1975 to 1981. He would often chat to me about the work in schools in the Gunnedah inspectorate, even later when I moved into Bridge Street in the early 1980s. He was such a genuine encourager to me. I often met up with his dad, Mal, in Gunnedah where he had retired; we even had a couple of rounds of golf! Mal won of course. I would think it would be quite fitting to improve on the very short notice seen in the SMH. Bob was a man of integrity, a leading educator of distinction, and of course, a country boy who valued students, teachers, and educational leaders alike.—*Fred Cook*

I first met Bob at Coonamble in 1956 when I was teaching at Wooleybah and he visited Coonamble to deliver an art advisory workshop. He and I always shared a harmonious working relationship, and I was honoured that even in his retirement he chose to attend

my retirement dinner in Tamworth. Bob was a product of Gunnedah High School and was proud to re-visit the school with me. I think he was one of three in his LC year. His Dad, Mal, was headmaster of Gunnedah South Public School. Mal died in the Motor Registry Office while waiting to renew his driving licence at 93 years of age. I suspect that he had a soft spot for the North West because he asked me to find an occasion for him to visit the Region prior to his retirement. We did. He officially opened the new Community Hall at Walcha Central School. I have had no contact with Bob in recent years, sadly.—*David Maher*

### Fran Leacy

Fran Leacy was born on 30 May 1936 and retired in September 1961. It is wonderful to hear people comment on her professionalism and her positive outlook on education and the students' lives for whom she was making decisions. Some of our colleagues remember great conversations with Fran and her helpfulness in a range of situations.

During the period when the Department embarked on independent-school registrations, Fran was remembered for her contribution to the inspection team there. Her primary background gave a different perspective from other team members.

In her death notice her family remembered her as a 'loyal and devoted friend to many', indicating that her positivity and glass-half-full approach must have continued in her retirement to attract a wonderful friendship group.

Fran was a most personable and supportive member of the Met South West team during my time. It is unfortunate but you tend to move down different paths and I had not seen Fran since about 1990. I remember her as a positive, professional lady who was extremely dependable and always helpful. I enjoyed discussions with her and knew that she was there to help and be part of the team.—*Alan Laughlin*

### Joan Smith (nee Martin)

Joan was a regular visitor at our IRSEA lunches until she went into a care home in Goulburn. Joan was a Social Science Inspector. Many of you would have known her as the professional assistant to Rusty Mullholland when he was the Regional Director of Metropolitan East.

Joan spent her last few years reading avidly to expand her mind and keeping interested in what was happening in the world.

Obviously, Joan was a great organizer to keep a Regional Director efficiently performing a range of duties as well as managing an office.

Joan was a lovely person and will be missed by her family, particularly her nieces, whom she had a strong connection with throughout her life.

Her funeral was held on Monday 21 November at 10 a.m. at St Mary's Catholic Church, North Sydney.

### John Barrie Miller

John Miller was a well-known PE Inspector from 1981 and a popular lecturer at the then Ku-ring-gai College of Advanced Education from 1988 until his retirement in 1994. John also worked at the Board of Studies for a number of years.

### Reg Sams

Reg Sams graduated from Newcastle Teachers' College at the end of 1959 and began teaching at Woodglen Public School, near Delegate, in 1960. He came back to Sydney in 1964 to find his bride and was then promoted to Deputy Principal, Marayong Heights Public School. Reg returned to the country in 1972 and was appointed Deputy Principal, Quirindi Public School. He also became Principal of Walhollow Public School and manager of Caroon Aboriginal Reserve, Principal of Kandos Public School, and then Principal of Mudgee Public School until 1985. Reg's senior positions included Cluster Director of Teaching & Learning and Director of Resources, Bathurst, Director of Schools, Mudgee, and in October 1995 Director Assisting the Assistant Director-General. Reg retired from the Department of Education in 1997 at the age of 58. A lovely memory is from a colleague, Cheryl Buckley who writes:

Reg will be remembered for his dry sense of humour, his quiet tolerance of all and as a truly valued mentor to

many young teachers and principals. Reg often described himself as 'Just an old Primary Principal', but from my understanding Reg was never 'just' anything . . . in fact it's obvious from his story that he was a pillar of public education.

Our condolences are extended to Jan and his two children, Craig and Julie-ann, and their families. Reg passed away on 9 November 2022. We thank the family for the information provided. Rest In Peace, Reg. We need authentic educators in our system like Reg guiding us.

### Bill Robertson

Bill passed away in early February 2023. Our sincere condolences go to his wife Ann and family who live at Smiths Lake in NSW. On his retirement Bill became a minister of the Church and was loved as a respected member of the local community. During his career he was a Science Inspector, but he is best remembered for his successful management of the Library and Resources departments that operated out of North Sydney and Burwood. As a senior member of the Services Directorate Bill provided valuable advice and welcome leadership to the development of teaching kits, assisting in the operation of library boxes to isolated schools, and with Colin McDonald and Trevor Harrison played a vital part in resourcing schools with equipment and learning materials.



MEMBERS AT THE DECEMBER MEETING



## Please Nominate For Our Executive

### IRSEA 2023–2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

We, the undersigned, being financial members of the Association, nominate:

Nominee: .....

As an ordinary committee member AND/OR for the specific position of (please specify):

Position: .....

Nominator: .....(signature): .....

Seconder: .....(signature).....

I acknowledge and accept this nomination:

Nominee (signature): .....

PLEASE RETURN TO BRIAN DAVIES **BY FRIDAY 24 MARCH** for the election to be conducted at the AGM on Friday 31 March 2023.

([brian.davies09@gmail.com](mailto:brian.davies09@gmail.com) OR [secretary@irsea.org.au](mailto:secretary@irsea.org.au) OR to 24 Olinda Crescent, CARLINGFORD NSW 2118)

**NOTE:** Please contact Brian Davies if you need assistance in obtaining signatures.

#### Executive Positions to be Elected

- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Newsletter Editor
- Membership Officer
- Welfare Coordinator
- Luncheons Coordinator
- Stewart House Contact
- Ordinary Committee Members

(Note: The President and Immediate Past-President positions are filled by succession)

# AGM Lunch Meeting and Booking-Slip

## Friday, 31 March 2023

**Come and join your colleagues at  
The Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney**

**Guest Speaker Chris Bonnor AM:** Education writer, speaker, advocate, and retired NSW secondary principal. Former President of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council and author of *The Stupid Country*.

**Please note that you can now pay by electronic funds transfer.**

Please complete the lunch booking-slip below and return payment with your cheque (unless paying by EFT) **by 17 March 2023 to:**

**John Allsopp**  
**3 Slade Ave**  
**CASTLE HILL 2154**

Home telephone number is (02) 8677 3156. Email: [johnallsopp@optusnet.com.au](mailto:johnallsopp@optusnet.com.au)

I enclose my payment of \$.65.00..... (at **\$65.00 per head**) for the 2 course main meal with bread roll and coffee, tea, and petits fours.

**Your name** (please print):

.....

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

.....

For the above to attend the IRSEA luncheon at 11.30 a.m. for 12.00 p.m. at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel at 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney on **Friday 31 March, 2023**.

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

Meal type..... Number required .....

Signed: ..... Date: ..... Phone no. ....

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

*OR*

**If paying by Electronic Funds Transfer the details are:**

**BANK** Commonwealth Bank of Australia

**BSB:** 062300

**ACCOUNT NUMBER:** 10466684

**ACCOUNT NAME:** Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators (IRSEA)

**YOUR REFERENCE:** Your surname, initial, and 'meeting'

Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after **24 March**.

*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 by Zoom on your home computer, please indicate below with your email and we will send you details on how to connect with the luncheon on 9 December.**

Name ..... Email .....