



IRSEA NEWS

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*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, Australia, and beyond.*

FROM THE PRESIDENT

ERIC JAMIESON



It is a wonderful privilege for me to be writing my first column as IRSEA President. I thank members for your confidence in me to continue the superb work of so many before me. When Sir Isaac Newton spoke of standing on the shoulders of giants in 1675, his message was of collective learning—our unique human ability to share, preserve, and build upon knowledge over time. For IRSEA as for Newton, our creative and developmental capacities depend on learning from, and building on, the work of those before and around us.

What seems like a very short time ago, I remember attending my initial IRSEA meeting at the 2022 AGM. I recall being more than a little starstruck being in a room with people I have admired greatly from my time with the Department. Some I knew very well, others I had been involved with in some way or other, while there were those who I had not met in person and yet their names were legendary during my formative professional years.

The resounding memory I have from that meeting was of people who had literally been educational heroes to me, continuing to provide yet more encouragement and support to NSW public education and each other.

On the shoulders of giants indeed!

WHAT'S THE NEWS

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Upcoming Events

- 5 May: IRSEA Luncheon
Castlereagh Boutique Hotel
- 6 June: Social Luncheon
Kirribilli Club
- 26 June: Committee Meeting
Castlereagh Boutique Hotel
- 8 August: IRSEA Luncheon
Castlereagh Boutique Hotel

The Importance of Mentors

Running through my mind on a regular loop since that day are the memories and meaning of the support and collegiality I, and so many others, have benefited from over many, many years. This is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding features of public education in NSW. The value of mentors, dear friends, and colleagues has made for an unforgettable experience of enjoyment, growth and fulfilment in a profession that is at the forefront of societal development.

I would like to pay special mention to members of the IRSEA committee who are tireless in their efforts to preserve and extend the legacy of outstanding educational leadership. While there are many who deserve mention, for now, I would like to highlight the incredible leadership of Lindsay Wasson, Graham Dawson and Brian Davies, who have been generous and inclusive in helping me to understand the rich culture of our organisation. The thinking behind the design of leadership roles is quite brilliant, ensuring continuity and pursuit of a collectively developed strategy that is thoroughly embedded in the ideals and principles of the organisation. While absolutely daunting, the role of President is certainly made much easier through the ongoing guidance of such formidable educational leaders.

It is reassuring to have Lindsay Wasson continuing to guide in his key leadership role of Immediate Past President. Lindsay has been an incredible mentor and inspiration to me for the past 21+ years. He has been the leader who has contributed more to my development, confidence and belief than any other. I am eternally grateful for the difference he has made to me in life. It continues to be a thrill to be inspired by such a supremely gifted man.

It is also a delight to have Gerry McCloughan as a co-leader in the role of Vice President. Gerry brings boundless energy, passion, thinking, creativity, warmth and commitment to our organisation. I have had the privilege of working very closely with Gerry for many years in a range of capacities. He is a dear friend who I greatly value and admire. He will contribute significantly to the organisation.

The Power of Our Unique Voice

Members of IRSEA uniquely bring to education deep insight, wisdom, thinking and a demonstrated capacity to lead, impact and make a significant difference to hundreds of thousands of young people over a sustained period of time. Collectively, we continue to have the opportunity to help guide and inform educational development at a time when it is greatly needed.



I dreamed I was a butterfly, flitting
around in the sky; then I awoke.
Now I wonder: Am I a man
who dreamt of being a butterfly,
or am I a butterfly dreaming
that I am a man?

Zhuangzi



Mechanisms have been nurtured through Lindsay and Graham, with outstanding support from Murat Dizdar and Raechel McCarthy, for us to be represented at regular summits involving key NSW educational leaders. We have been warmly embraced during these events. Murat has made it clear to all that our voice continues to be highly valued in the ongoing development of NSW education.

There are many ideas that are being generated in which we can support and inform the development of public education. For my part, I would love to see us work collectively to pursue such ideas and design initiatives that will turn our thinking into further action.

Acting NSW Secretary of Education

In further Department related news, it is wonderful that Murat Dizdar has been asked to lead NSW public education in an acting capacity. Murat is an outstanding educator and leader. His is an inspired placement at a very exciting and important time for education in Australia and worldwide.

ANZAC Day Ceremony

Continuing the theme of IRSEA involvement with the Department, it was wonderful to have two of our members, Lindsay Wasson and Brian Davies, participate in the NSW Department of Education ANZAC ceremony on Thursday 20 April 2023. Lindsay laying a wreath on behalf of IRSEA was highly significant given he did so under the honour boards including the names of his father and grandfather, who both served in wars.

I greatly look forward to what lies ahead for all of us. Very best wishes to all.

THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AN UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS

from Raechel McCarthy

Hi all

Fantastic to see so many of you at your recent AGM in March. I want to get to know more IRSEA members so will ask if I can be placed at a different table next face to face meeting so I can hear more about your amazing careers in education and give you the opportunity to ask me questions about our current NSW Department of Education. I highly value my association with IRSEA I take on a lot of the advice provided by members as I continue to strive for more senior leadership positions within our department which have a positive impact on student learning outcomes.

You would have noted in recent media that we have a new Minister for Education and Early Learning; Prue Car MP and I was excited to meet her recently while attending the Royal Easter Show teacher stand in my new role as Relieving Executive Director Regional Rural and Remote Education Policy. The intent of the stand was to provide information on opportunities to teach in rural areas and inform members of the public about the work of the Directorate.



Department Update (continued)

All teachers were offered a free barista coffee made by regional and rural hospitality students. 2300 coffees were served to show thanks to our hard-working teachers and I was proud to present an Agricultural Innovation Award to Hermidale Public School, a small teaching principal school whose students grew a lucrative wheat crop using donations from local farmers.

Regional Rural and Remote shared this stand with representatives from the Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships Directorate (AOPD) led by Executive Director Karen Jones. AOPD sits within Education and Skills Reform and aims to increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture, ensuring every Aboriginal child and young person achieving at their maximum potential. The Directorate aims to achieve this through a variety of key initiatives including but not limited to:

- Promotion of Aboriginal English as an additional language/dialect
- Encouraging schools to develop their own Reconciliation Action Plan
- Establishing Aboriginal Learning and Engagement Centres in a number of schools with high Aboriginal student populations to support HSC retention
- Promotion of Aboriginal leadership opportunities within our department
- Support of additional programs such as Clontarf (mentoring program for Aboriginal boys) and the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) who provide mentoring, wellbeing and support services to Aboriginal girls.

As usual, I conclude my report with an educational leadership book recommendation based on what I am currently reading. Paul Dix's "When the adults change everything changes" outlines how school can build authentic behaviour management practices on a stable platform, resulting in shifts in daily rules and routines and how "the adults in the room" respond to the angriest learners.

The book also outlines shifts in restorative practice and shifts in how we appreciate positive behaviour. I started this book while in the Relieving Director Delivery Support role as so many principals had recommended the book to me and have found it very useful in responding to the behaviour of my own two unruly teenage sons (15-year-old and 19-year-old). You may have wondered why I have seemed to have so much grey hair these days!

**WHEN THE
ADULTS
CHANGE
EVERYTHING
CHANGES** **PAUL DIX**
SEISMIC SHIFTS IN SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR

Hope you are all well and I look forward to seeing you all later in the year at a face to face meeting.

Regards
Raechel

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORT

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2022-2023

AGM President's Report

In his final report to IRSEA as outgoing president, Lindsay Wasson spoke of IRSEA's achievements and possible future directions.



The members thanked Lindsay for his tireless, energetic and strong leadership over the last 12 months.

He said that since becoming president in May 2022, and on the back of the outstanding presidency of Graham Dawson, IRSEA can boast of many achievements over the 2021-2023 period:

- The adoption and embedding of our Mission Statement to give clear focus for the Institute
- Our newly developed suite of Awards and Certificates to recognise members, contributors, and champions of our organisation
- Our Awards and Certificates are print-ready thanks to Graham Dawson's leadership of their development
- The expansion of our membership categories leading to:
 - Our first Associate Members
 - Our first Honorary Members in Murat Dizdar and Raechel McCarthy
- The success we have had in attracting new members
- The first purely social event at the Kirribilli Club thanks to Kerryanne Knox's organisational 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 indispensable 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 impressive 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.

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Congratulations to Our Inaugural IRSEA Award Winners

Presented by Lindsay Wasson



Alan Laughlin



Chris Carroll



Kerrie Ikin



Geoff Walton



Ray Gillies



Peter Robinson

AGM President's Report (continued)

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

Some Pointers to the Future (but not wishing to pre-empt anything Eric may have up his sleeve):

- Influence: Consolidate and extend the influence of IRSEA on the educational landscape both at a state and national level
- Recruitment: Devise and deliver a systematic recruitment drive for ex-TAFE members along with a parallel and energetic focus on ex, or soon to be, DoE retirees
- Stewart House: Ensure IRSEA becomes a Stewart House Bronze-Level Supporter from 2023 onwards
- Newsletter: Act on feedback from the successful survey conducted by Syd and Eric and refresh the Newsletter
- Social Events: Extend the range and number of social events for members. (Do we need to have a business focus in all luncheon meetings at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel?)
- Awards: Be generous in awarding Outstanding Service, Certificate of Appreciation, and Life Membership awards
- Promote NSW Public Schools and a more holistic approach to Learning and a NSW version of World's Best Schools competition: Begin planning for the key propositions put forward by Eric Jamieson in his presentation at the December Luncheon.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2022-2023 (continued)

AGM Secretary's Report

Brian Davies, who has provided years of efficient, committed administrative support, gave a detailed account of the past year.

- Since the May 2022 Annual General Meeting, the executive committee met three times (6 June and 17 October 2022; 13 February 2023). The usual four meetings in twelve months had not taken place due to the two month shortened time span, with the Annual General Meeting for 2023 being held earlier, as a result of the alignment of the financial and membership years to 1 January to 31 December. It is expected that there will be a return to the four meetings in the next twelve months. All meetings were through ZOOM technology and Alan Laughlin's support in managing the technology for the meetings has been very much appreciated.
- At its last meeting in February, the Executive committee decided that the next two executive meetings would be held at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel as a trial, with a technology link for any country members. The location for executive meetings is to be reviewed after those two meetings. This decision followed on from the resolution that was passed at the General Meeting of 9 December 2022, that general meetings be on the first Friday in May, August and December in addition to the Annual General meeting to be held earlier in the year. This means that there will be an additional meeting so that four meetings will now be held.
- All general meetings are to be held at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel rather than one meeting being held at the Department's premises at Parramatta. Thanks were recorded to John Allsopp, our Luncheon Coordinator, for all his work in making these changes. This means that for the rest of the year the lunch dates will be: Friday 5 May 2023; Friday 4 August 2023; Friday 1 December 2023.
- The committee has continued to look at ways of strengthening relationships with the Department of Education with executive member attendance at the Department's Capability Summits. These provided the opportunity to meet with Directors of Educational Leadership.
- Over the last year, amendments to our constitution were required under Fair Trading with their new model constitution, and by our own organisation's changes such as the new membership categories. Ray Gillies is thanked for his substantial efforts in managing these changes with our new constitution submitted to, and registered by, NSW Fair Trading in December.
- Membership renewal is also a focus, including the need to acknowledge and attract those with a TAFE background.
- At its February meeting the Executive supported IRSEA becoming a Stewart House Bronze-Level Supporter from 2023, given Stewart House's urgent financial situation. Alan Laughlin has done much work in this area.

AGM Secretary's Report (continued)

Members are reminded that they are welcome to attend executive meetings as observers. If you would like to do so, then please contact me at secretary@irsea.org.au. Our executive committee meeting dates for the rest of the year are: Monday 24 April; Monday 26 June; and, Monday 9 October.

Our Newsletter Editor Syd Smith conducted a survey of members in January/February 2023 about the IRSEA newsletter. Thanks were recorded to Syd and Eric Jamieson for their work on this. The response rate was good with members generally happy with the newsletter. Suggestions for possible improvements were collated. It was recommended that a sub-group be established to review the comments of members and bring proposed changes for improvement to the executive.

In the area of communications, along with Syd Smith, Ray Gillies has continued to do an enormous amount of work on our website. Members are encouraged to make use of this great site at irsea.org.au. We do not have the software to know how many visit the site. It would be helpful if you can send in some feedback.

The nominations for the IRSEA Executive Committee for 2023-2024 are:

Committee Position	Nominations for 2023/2024
President	Eric Jamieson
Immediate Past-President	Lindsay Wasson
Vice-President	Gerry McCloughan
Secretary	Brian Davies
Treasurer	Ray Gillies
Newsletter Editor	Syd Smith
Membership Officer	Kerrie Ikin
Welfare Coordinator	Kerryanne Knox
Luncheon Coordinator	John Allsop
Stewart House Contact	Alan Laughlin
Committee Members	Alan Laughlin, Janina Sulikowski, Graham Dawson, Kim Fillingham

THE YEAR IN REVIEW, 2022-2023 (CONTINUED)

AGM Secretary's Report (continued)

On 21 April 2022 IRSEA laid a wreath at the Department's ANZAC Remembrance Service. Our then President, Graham Dawson, and Vice-President Lindsay Wasson both attended, with Graham laying the wreath. The NSW Department of Education and the NSW Teachers' RSL sub-Branch once again invited members to the Service, which this year was on Thursday 20 April at 10.15 am for a 10.30 am start at the NSW Department of Education, William Wilkins Gallery, Level 1, 105 Phillip Street, Parramatta. Lindsay Wasson laid a wreath on behalf of IRSEA.

AGM Membership Officer's Report

Kerrie Ikin announced that we have 130 members: 34 females; and 96 male. In additions we have 29 widows who wish to stay in touch and receive our newsletter. On a very sad note, we lost a number of members - 8 in all. Our deepest sympathy to the families of those members. On a happier note, this year we have added two new categories: Honorary Member and Associate Member.



The age range of members is very significant. Apart from 4 who have not provided this information (but do not fall into the lower age ranges) the majority of our members are 80 or older.

The majority of our members are now receiving the Newsletter and other mailouts by email. Email is now the preferred method of communication for all future members. Nevertheless, we understand that for some, email is simply not an option. Six of our 29 widows receive the newsletter by email, the rest by post. A new application form for membership has been developed as well.



COMMITTEE REPORT UPDATES

Treasurer's Update: Ray Gillies

Please see the annual financial report for 2022 provided separately.

On 21 April 2023, the IRSEA Society Account had a balance of \$10,859.06. Our Term Deposit was valued at \$10,152.86 (maturing 14 October 2023).

This year to date, IRSEA 2023 receipts comprise:

- \$2,410 members' subscriptions
- \$2,212 members' donations to Stewart House
- \$2,405 in payments for lunches at general meetings.
- IRSEA expenditures were
- \$2,287 transferred to Stewart House
- \$2,100 invoice for AGM lunches and technical equipment
- \$267.70 costs of the March Newsletter,
- \$50 NSW Fair Trading fee
- \$104.90 for postage and stationery.

Annual subscriptions were due on 1 January 2023 and payable by 31 March 2023.

Stewart House Update: Alan Laughlin

Stewart House is now back in full operation. Some 80 children from across the state are able to come to this outstanding institution for health and well being support every fortnight. As you know these children are among the most disadvantaged and marginalised in our community. The impact of the COVID lockdown and associated health concerns has caused significant disruption over the last few years. Stewart House is an affiliated Health Organisation and operates under NSW Health protocols.

The advice re appropriate health action had included double vaccination for all those students attending, as well as staff. However, the Board of Stewart House acknowledges that this may be a difficult requirement to continue indefinitely for students.

This restriction will be lifted from mid-year (June 5), although this restriction will still continue for all adults involved in the program. The health outcomes will be closely monitored. A number of schools should find this decision helpful and IRSEA members could certainly provide this advice if required.

The issue of ongoing funding remains a chronic problem. Salary contributions are falling and targeted school fund raising activities have also declined. As detailed in our last newsletter there is a shortfall of \$700,000 per annum in operating costs. This has been covered by bequests, but into the future this shortfall must be found by increased donations.

IRSEA members are well aware of the magnificent work done at Stewart House and have always been generous in their support. You are encouraged to please keep this support going and if possible increase your contributions.

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.

AGM: GUEST SPEAKER

Waiting for Gonski

Presented by Chris Bonnor

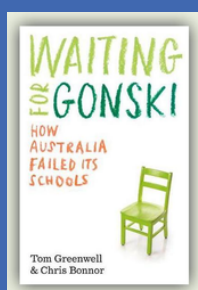
Following is a summary of a talk delivered by Chris Bonnor AM at the recent Annual General Meeting and lunch of IRSEA on March 31 at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel in Sydney. Chris Bonnor is an educational writer, speaker, advocate and retired NSW secondary principal, a former President of the NSW Secondary Principals Council and author of The Stupid Country and co- author of Waiting for Gonski. Chris raises the issue that despite frantic school reform over the last 20 years, overall student achievement hasn't improved. He asks have the reformers got it all wrong or are they looking at half the problem? The full text of his presentation can be found on the IRSEA website: www.irsea.org.au.



Chris had a close look at the Big Picture schools in the USA. He was impressed, both there and also here, at how a personalised learning design could be so successful, including in the things we don't sufficiently do and measure: like re-engaging kids, love of learning, rigorous learning, future focus, family participation, post-school destinations and much more. He did not think there is a NAPLAN test for all those and in fact, innovative schools seem to exist almost in deliberate defiance of orthodoxy in what schools are and do.

Chris has been energised by both Gonski Reviews because they promised to shift the dial, firstly on equity (that was the first review) and secondly, on the way we do school itself (the second review). Alas, it was not to be, or at least not to be enough. And in all this time he was grieving at what was happening to public education, something that was, in hindsight, quite easy to see. We have all lived our careers through this time.

My School data has long shown that we have a well-established hierarchy of schools, a hierarchy in terms of both socio-educational advantage and student achievement. The strong association between SES and achievement is now well known -Kevin Donnelly seems to be the last living Australian in denial.

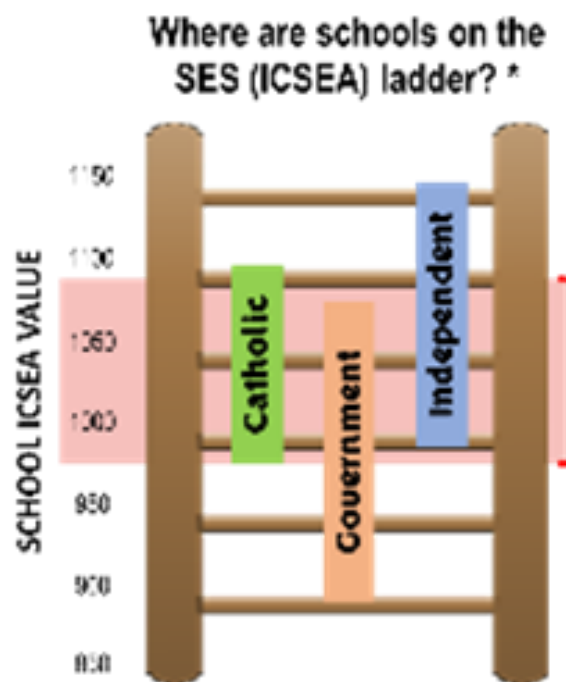
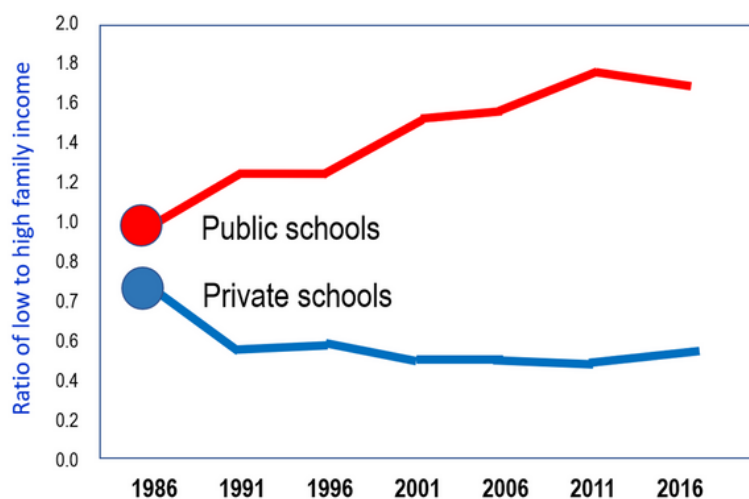


ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED: 2022
AUTHORS: CHRIS BONNOR & TOM GREENWELL

The views expressed in this book and in this presentation are not necessarily those of IRSEA

Waiting for Gonski (continued))

The family income divide between public and private secondary schools Australia, 1986 to 2016.

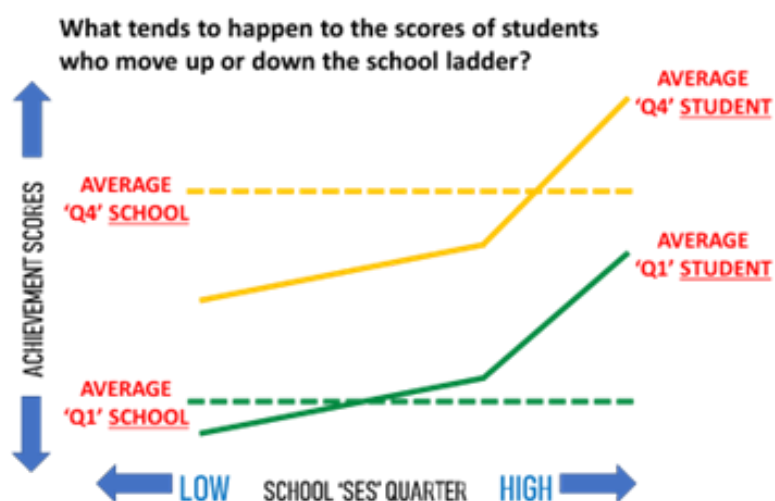


The graphs above show the separation of school enrolments as indicated by the ratio of low to high income families, as well as where the school sectors lie on the ladder. Chris used 'SES' as a better-known descriptor. In the context of schools, it is actually SEA - socio-educational advantage - but there is consistency between the two measures. The pattern shown on the SES ladder repeats in almost every community. There is enough overlap, in the shaded area, to make interesting comparisons of money going into schools and results coming out. The differences between the sectors in that shaded area are quite small.

It is that student resource which has shifted from low to high SES schools, and in the process has especially created our growing enrolment segregation and associated inequity and underachievement. It is worsening in very measurable ways, year by year.

The result is that we are concentrating the strugglers together, mainly in public schools. Other sectors are not compelled to enrol them. This increasing concentration is closely associated with our overall decline in student achievement - through what we know as the peer or compositional effect in schools and classrooms.

The NSW discussion paper showed the impact of school SES, created by its enrolment, on student achievement. This very simplified graph shows the changed performance of Q1 and Q4 students who attend schools further up, or down for that matter, the ICSEA ladder.



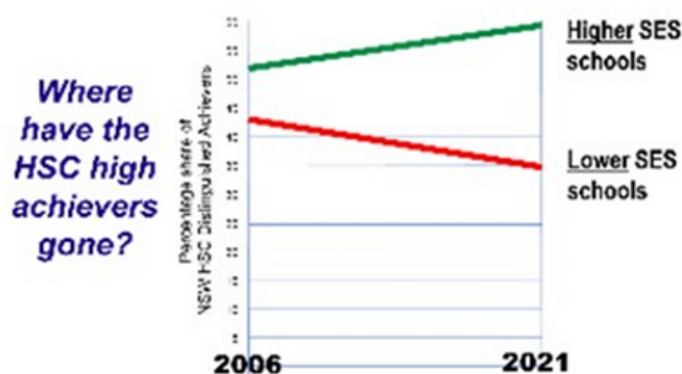
Waiting for Gonski (continued)

These findings certainly haven't slowed the rollout of more selective schools. And the paper itself seems to have disappeared. Lower ICSEA schools are increasing their proportion of lowest quarter (Q1) kids and losing their Q4 kids. The graph is our PISA performance. There is a close association between the two graphs. Association isn't the same as cause and effect, but the shifting location of high achieving students tells us as much, if not more, than does comparing NAPLAN over time. It suggests that it's not only what schools do that matters, it's likely to be more about which students are going **where** to school.

In NSW, potential Distinguished Achievers (DAs) have abandoned low or even middle ICSEA schools and have taken their high scores elsewhere. This enrolment shift also shows up in changes in school size and enrolment composition. Even leaving the private sector aside, our public high schools in NSW tell the story. In 2006 DAs in our schools were spread 55% in high, and 45% in low ICSEA schools. The spread is now 72:28. The split between Sydney and the bush used to be 83:17, it is now 94:6. Our low SES schools have been residualised to the hilt, almost everywhere.

But what's happened in the last two decades is that the circumstances have changed. And changed in ways that policy makers, school authorities and even high-profile school and system leaders may not understand, or even want to know. And if they do, they are reluctant to advocate for bigger system and structural change. That shows up in high-level reviews going back to Gonski, even to Karmel in the 1970s, and most recently to the Productivity Commission.

Near the end of Waiting for Gonski Tom Greenwell and Chris propose: 'What in Australia, would be a radical change - but in many other countries is quite ho-hum, because they are doing it already?' That is a long story in itself. And in his last chapter Chris poses the question: What if we don't? If we don't, we'll get more of what we have.



**BY ANY STANDARD,
CONTINUING WHAT WE HAVE IS UNCONSCIONABLE**

Chris Bonnor

EDUCATION: MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Outstanding School Leadership

by Tony Re

On our IRSEA web page is an article I have written on the Characteristics of An Outstanding School Principal. Last year, a good friend was acknowledged nationally for outstanding leadership as a school principal. After the announcement, and with some persuasion on my part, the principal agreed to change a project that we had arranged. I now wanted to examine the reasons that staff members had for their principal being honoured this way. As I knew most of the staff quite well, I had an opportunity that is not usually available to obtain personal insights from staff members about the characteristics of their principal that warranted a national award.

Research into the characteristics of an outstanding school principal is surprisingly scant, often lacking solid evidence. From articles I analysed, I found ten common characteristics. I decided to use a version of Hugh Mackay's non-directive group discussion rather than my usual technique of open-ended and closed surveys supplemented by individual and group discussions. I was hoping to reveal that these ten characteristics would emerge in the group discussions.

At the start of each group discussion, I merely informed the group that they should talk about the reasons they thought made their principal outstanding. I held my breath with the first group, not knowing whether discussions would flow without my intervention. And flow they did with just one minor intrusion by me although I was tempted to comment on a number of occasions. Habits die hard. I took notes throughout supplemented by an unnecessary voice recorder with only one person preferring that I did not use it.

The staff confirmed in the discussions that their principal did indeed display the ten common characteristics of an outstanding school principal. Five other characteristics were repeatedly mentioned throughout the discussion in each group. Following are the fifteen characteristics.

Ten Characteristics from Articles:

1. High level communication skills
2. Vision for the future of the school
3. Vision for academic success of all students
4. Courage
5. Passion
6. Establishes a collaborative, responsible and safe environment
7. Encourage risk taking
8. Cultivate leadership in others
9. Utilise data and resources
10. Life-long learner

Outstanding School Leadership (continued)

Five Additional Characteristics from the Group Discussions:

Listening skills, Visibility, Flexibility in approach, High expectations for all in all areas, and Compassion

Feedback from people to whom I have sent a copy of the article has been positive and interesting ranging from *All principals should keep the lists on their desk and refer to them daily* to *I have yet to have had an outstanding principal*. One questioned whether "Listening Skills" should be separated from "Communication Skills". I argued that each group stressed this and, in my experience, I have encountered numerous leaders whose listening skills diminish the higher the level they reach in an organization. Others believe that the lists can apply to other professions and occupations. Another suggested that the lists could be useful for selection panels.

I thought about expanding the project to involve other schools and their principals. But I doubted whether the technique I used could have been replicated satisfactorily elsewhere. At the school where the project occurred, the staff and I had trust in each other and knew each other reasonably well. No additional task was thrust upon teachers. Not only did the principal cooperate fully and willingly, the principal provided relief to allow staff members to participate in the interviews during school hours. A bonus for the principal was the separate personal report that I wrote that was similar to a performance appraisal.

Try a self-review. I have and it can be quite thought-provoking, revealing areas that could not be classified as 'outstanding'.

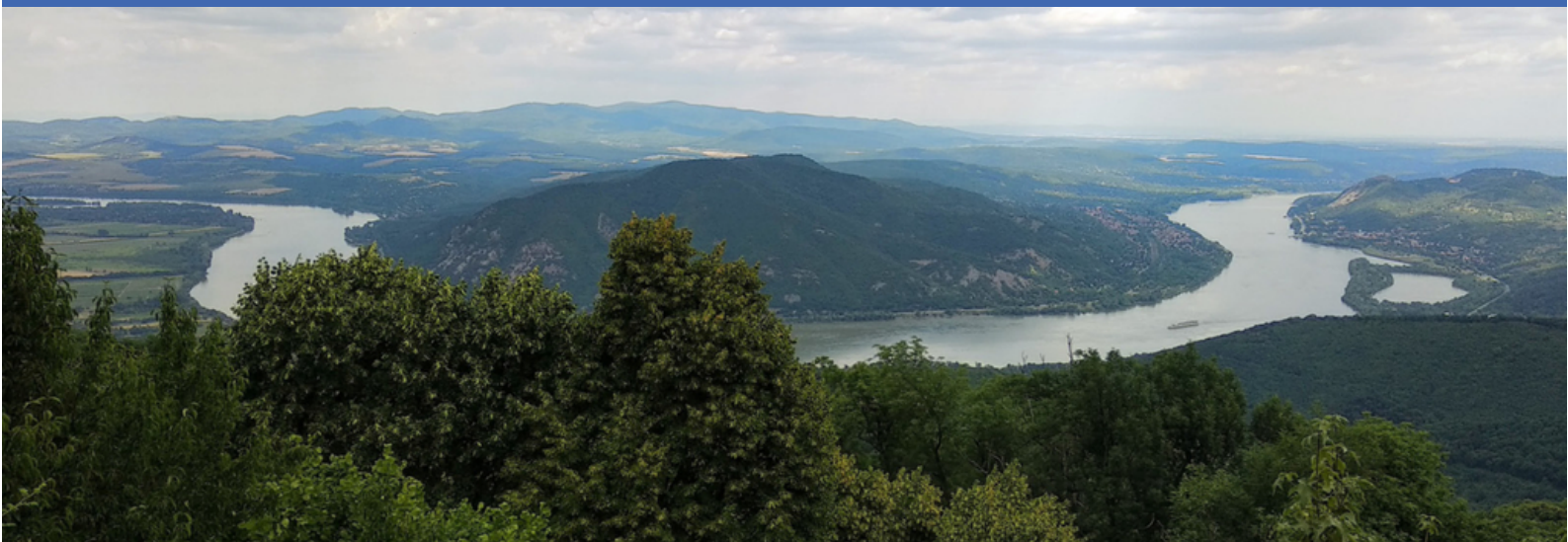
Memory Lane: Member Bill Nay's Farewell Chorus

Please let us know if you recognise any of these fine people!



Speaking for the Planet

by Syd Smith



If you were told that someone like a private self-funded educator could introduce an environmental / sustainability education program and work with schools to assist in successfully implementing their curricula, would you consider it a potential success for global implementation? You might think it possible at a local level but wonder about its relevance to the international scene. Well, in this case this is a story about an Australian program that has grown worldwide, thanks to the creativity and vision of a former NSW teacher and environmentalist who has established a network from Australia to Asia and Europe. The program, described here, is another example of how Australia is a world leader in sustainability education and can have a major influence on world educational developments.

Environmental and Sustainability Education programs have been in our schools for a long time. Over the years they have grown and changed with the times to become an established part of the Cross Curriculum Priorities in the Australian Curriculum. Its major successes have been in primary schools but now a new secondary schools' initiative has arrived from an external source. The program, known as Speaking for the Planet (S4P) presents a welcome option for secondary schools to consider.

What exactly is Speaking for the Planet?

The crux of Speaking for the Planet is that science will provide us with the knowledge we need for a sustainable world, but the arts can change the world. Speaking for the Planet aims to provide space, opportunity, and acknowledgement for young people to express their hopes and concerns for the future. The program was introduced because young people do have hopes and concerns for their future and they want others to hear and know about them.

Speaking for the Planet exists because Phil Smith, (no relation) its creator believes speaking up and out is an essential means to creating a world worth living in. Speaking for the Planet exists to build advocates for planet Earth and the species on it.

Speaking for the Planet (continued)

Speaking for the Planet (S4P) was offered to select secondary school principals for the first time in 2013. It's a creative arts-based competition for young people and invites them to express themselves and their ideas about what makes a sustainable world by undertaking specific activities:

- Speaking (prepared and impromptu)
- Drama (impromptu)
- Art (prepared and Impromptu)
- Writing (prepared and impromptu).



The use of video, poetry, song and memes assist in the performance and management of these activities. In other words, sustainability education offers a new face that is no longer restricted to the Science and Geography learning areas but, of course the program still takes in those areas. The difference is that all areas of the curriculum are covered now. In addition, a new Kids 4 The Planet competition has started for primary aged students and includes an impromptu group-based STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) category.

What does the program focus on?

As already noted, Speaking for the Planet focuses on sustainability issues. Over the past decade the competition has used themes and topics relevant to local and global issues. They are drawn from:

- World Environment Day Themes
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Local Priorities (bushfires, development issues, river protection)
- Local Campaigns (e.g., Lake Pedder in Tasmania)

A support package is prepared for students prior to the day of their attending the competition.

What are some ideas students have provided?

Students have made suggestions about alternate energy, food miles, soil, water quality, pollution, poverty and local shopping. One speech from a student proposed a National Left- Overs Program that involved underground transport of city leftovers to country farms. Another ironically proposed we train animals to pick up litter to keep our streets clean. One student said, "In this world we put profit above people, greed above need, and the rule of gold above the golden rule. We are using Mother Nature as a credit card with no spending limit, driving animals away from their homes and leading them to extinction never again to see their uniqueness."

Speaking for the Planet (continued)



In the impromptu drama section one group of students began a skit in the present and then took the audience 400 years to the future and into the dreams of a climate change sceptic. In another, students played chess and linked it to climate change.

Another group performed the story about the bosses of a large company who destroyed the resources supplied by Nature and then asked Nature to come back. Nature said, "Yes, but there will be conditions."

And finally, one student urged the audience to make a Copernican shift: put the capacity of Earth at the centre of our dreams instead of insisting that the planet satisfy our desires."

How did Speaking for the Planet start?

Phil Smith, Founder and CEO of S4P is a former secondary English History teacher who worked for the NSW Department of Education and later transferred to the NSW Dept of Environment in the 1990s. Here he worked with me in establishing the Sustainable Schools Program which was a joint arrangement between the NSW Department of Education and the NSW Department of Environment. The Department of Environment provided the funds to the then Curriculum Directorate to jointly manage the Sustainable Schools program.

Speaking for the Planet was first introduced to schools in 2013 in the Sutherland Shire with support from the Sutherland Environment Centre. Since then, local government councils across NSW have paid for teacher release enabling students to attend an S4P competition day.

Speaking for the Planet (continued)

Initially, half a dozen councils took it up and provided financial support to schools. Now invitations go out to all councils in NSW to support the initiative in their local areas. It has run in both city and regional areas. Funding and support were also obtained from outdoor retailer, Paddy Pallin and other sponsors to provide for prizes and additional costs.



Since its introduction at Jannali Girls High School in 2013, Speaking for the Planet has evolved to include primary schools (Kids for the Planet), universities and adults (Adults 4 Planet A).

How did the program evolve?

- In 2017 Lakemba Public School hosted Kids4 the Planet competition and has hosted it ever since.
- In 2018 New Zealand (Aotearoa) and the Canterbury Branch of the NZ Association of Environmental Education collaborated to establish an S4P competition in their local schools. This continues every year now.
- In 2019 S4P inspired an inaugural youth event that was supported by the Chaipattana Foundation and held in conjunction with the World Environment Education Conference (WEEC) in Bangkok. A parallel conference was also held in Prague in 2022 and another will be held in Abu Dhabi in 2024.
- In 2020 the Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning Victoria hosted its first S4P in Victoria.
- In 2021 and 2023 Golden Path Academics hosted competitions in Vietnam. In 2023 a new model will be piloted. The competition will invite Vietnamese students from around the world to participate.
- In 2021 Net Waste hosted the first Adults 4 Planet A competition.
- In 2022 the first global S4P took place. As a pilot program, invitations were sent to contacts around the world. Young people from eight different countries participated: Hungary, India, New Zealand, Spain, Thailand, Vietnam, Turkey and Australia.

For most of its first ten years S4P events were live – held in community halls or council chambers. In 2019 COVID forced a rethink. Since then, many of the S4P events have been online. In the future, S4P competitions will be a mixture of online and live events.

Final Comment

The S4P program demonstrates the powerful influence of how an Australian devised curriculum program can inspire and encourage other countries to participate, particularly when its model is relevant to all countries and people alike. The work of Phil Smith has grown across the world and continues to expand because of its relevance and provision of a voice for the next generation. Phil has been living in Vietnam for the last two years and has developed other programs with government and private organisations there.

More information can be found at: <http://speaking4theplanet.org.au>

STORY FROM THE PAST

What Could Possibly Go Wrong? *by Geoff Baldwin*

"Seemed like a good idea at the time" is a common rueful reflection when bright ideas go pear-shaped. This one was, fairly clearly, never a good idea. But it's a cautionary tale, set in the context of Schools Renewal.

A previous tale of the Department of School Education in the 1980s centred on the indefatigable Rodney Cavalier, the last Labor Minister for Education before the election of the Greiner government in 1988. This one has its roots in the pledge of the Premier and the incoming Minister, Dr Terry Metherell, to turn the school system upside down, so that schools would be managed, not by a centralised bureaucracy, but instead by the principals and the school's community, through an advisory board. ("Upside down" is not just a colourful metaphor: at one point either Metherell or the Liberal Party's education policy guru, Dr Brian Scott, said something to the effect that, in a new organisation chart, the Director General would be at the bottom and school principals at the top.) Some admirable motives lay behind this concept but, as is frequently the case, the problems lay in transition.

Here, the underlying issue was that, despite the size, cost and impact on the local community of schools, school principals were called on to make fewer decisions than the proprietor of the local corner store. Despite having annual budgets sometimes in the millions of dollars, with staffs in some schools numbering in the dozens, and using substantial built infrastructure, schools were resourced according to formulae determined and administered by the Department. So principals generally had neither training nor experience in that kind of management.

Complicating this was the fact that schools were actively encouraged to start earning their own income, if not quite by seeking sponsorships, but engaging financial support, and looking for ways to earn income. This kind of thing is now uncontroversial, but in the case of Condell Park High School, in Sydney's southwest, it didn't quite go to plan.

The first signs of smoke

The first anyone in the Metropolitan South West Region knew of what had happened was when a staff member who had been reading the Bankstown Torch (the local newspaper) found, under some general heading about "what happened at Council last week", an item saying that Bankstown Council had rejected an application seeking permission to set up a waste disposal facility in the grounds of Condell Park High School. The item being a mystery to everyone, the Region's Finance Director was despatched, armed with the office video camera, to investigate.

I am not now familiar with the school, but at the time the schoolyard had a substantial area of vacant, unmade, ground, abutting Bankstown Airport. On arrival at the school, the Finance Director (who had rather poor eyesight) could see, in the direction of the airport, a long line of triangular orange flags. He had the camera on and was delivering a running commentary: "I'm getting bit closer...can see the flags and fenceposts...getting up close now...oh, shit!!"

What Could Possibly Go Wrong? (continued)

This was because he had come to the edge of a hole. And not just any hole. Like an excavation for an Olympic swimming pool, it was 100 metres long, but also 30 metres deep. As far as I know, the Finance Director didn't actually ask anybody at the school about this: he just returned to base and reported. It turned out to be no easy thing to find out exactly what had happened, and there are a couple of details that I never quite figured out, but broadly it unfolded as follows.

Have I got a deal for you!

One of the enduring mysteries was how this encounter even happened, but while out and about one weekend, the school's Head Teacher Sport had got into conversation with the driver of a waste disposal truck. Neither do I know quite how the conversation developed, but the long and short of it was that between the truck driver, contracted as I gathered to a developer, and the HT Sport, it was about the large tract of land in the school yard which was unused (and indeed unusable because it was a bit like a freshly plowed but rocky paddock).

The resulting plan was this: the developer's excavation company would dig a giant hole, into which waste would be dumped. It would be clean waste, so no problems. When the tip was full and compacted, the area would be made good and turfed to make a sporting field, and using the excavated soil a turfed spectator hill would be made, having the additional benefit of being a shield from the westerly winds coming over the airport. Win-win!

The HT Sport, enthused, got the Deputy Principal and the Principal onside. A contract with the developer was executed. The signatories were the Principal and Deputy, the HT Sport, and the General Assistant. (The last-mentioned because the waste had to be dumped at night, so the General Assistant had to unlock and lock the gates as required.) I don't know to whom at the school, and when, it occurred that the approval of Council would be needed, but an application was made. And duly rejected.

The Regional ADG, I, and others, knew nothing whatever of the above (beyond the Council decision) until, a few days later, the Principal made an urgent request for assistance. The developer had filed process in court, suing the signatories for \$250 000 for breach of contract. They were sued "jointly and severally", meaning that recovery could be pursued against all or only one. It might be thought that nothing could have got worse, but it did.

The "clean" waste

The waste was, of course, not clean at all. It contained, among other things, asbestos and polychlorinated hydrocarbons. As a result, it had to be dumped at night. As soon as it was discovered that toxic waste was involved, the schoolyard was crawling with men in moon suits, and with them came the media. I was sent by the Regional ADG to the site, to deal with them. The ADG had asked for a report on which outlets were represented, which was pretty much all of them. (I recall being on the verge of saying that Frontline was there too, when I realised that this was the satirical TV show, and the wearer of the "Frontline" cap was an ABC camera operator.)

What Could Possibly Go Wrong? (continued)

A few days later, on the Hinch program, a driver, with face obscured and voice distorted, spilt the beans about the night-time operation. Toxic waste would be dumped each night, then covered with a thin layer of excavated earth to hide what lay beneath. (A bit later, investigators concluded that a factory had been buried: the Just Juice plant at Yennora, which had been demolished.)



There were other issues. To what toxins might staff and students have been exposed? The signatories to the contract were beside themselves. The Teachers' Federation jumped in: this was what happens when schools are pressured to earn money. All sorts of dire things were threatened if the four were not bailed out. A minor complicating factor was that the HT Sport had talked with the driver about knocking down a fibro extension on the HT Sport's house, which the driver generously offered to bury in the tip, turning one of the defendants into one of the polluters.

The fallout

Obviously, despite the culpability of the developer, litigation and the attendant publicity, was out of the question. The developer's claim had to be settled. While there was an informal arrangement with the Army base at Holsworthy under which earthworks were carried out economically because that provided the engineering units with experience; that was also out of the question: this was remediation requiring specialist skills. The "free" new sporting field was the most expensive "free" field in history.

It was clear that, had the litigation not been settled and the damage repaired, the Teachers Federation would have had a cause celebre with which to attack Schools Renewal. So, in the grander scheme of things, the decision was not a hard one to make. But no-one (save the poor General Assistant, who could scarcely have resisted signing and for whom I felt sorry) asked "what could possibly go wrong?". And that's an important question to ask.