



# 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 with great delight that I introduce another wonderful edition of IRSEA NEWS. Editor Syd Smith has continued his fine work in producing a highly interesting, informative, varied, and entertaining publication that I am sure will bring joy to readers. In addition to a full range of contributions, we are honoured to have a feature article from Dr Ken Boston, former NSW Director-General of Education and proud IRSEA member. Ken provides fascinating insight into Gonski funding and the imperative for organisations such as ours to continue to advocate to governments for its full and ongoing implementation.

Wishing all members an enjoyable read. I hope to see as many of you as possible at our Members Christmas Luncheon on Friday, 1 December 2023 at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, Sydney. Details can be found at the end of this newsletter. A reminder, also, to consider nominating fellow members who have provided distinguished contributions to IRSEA for an Outstanding Service Award. Once again, the nomination form is included later in the newsletter.

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## Upcoming Events

1 December: IRSEA Members  
Christmas Luncheon  
Castlereagh Boutique Hotel

Following is a proposal that I presented to the IRSEA Executive outlining an approach for IRSEA to contribute to the recognition and promotion of outstanding practice in NSW public schools.

## PROMOTION OF OUTSTANDING, CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE IN NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### How can IRSEA play a contributing role?

#### Context

During a recent conversation with a leading Singapore education leader, she asked me about the state of Australian education. She spoke of Singapore's great admiration and respect for education here, sharing stories of visits by teams of their senior leaders to our shores in the early years of this century. They integrated thinking and ideas gained from those visits into their transformative re-imagining of a highly progressive Singapore education system that has seen them occupy the upper echelon of international assessment rankings for a considerable time. I have been very fortunate to lead two study tours of Australian teaching award winners to Singapore and can attest to the excellence of their thinking, systems, and structures, particularly in relation to the ongoing training and development of their teachers and school leaders.

After both sharing our stories and singing the praises of each other's education systems, she then pivoted back to her original question about the current state of Australian education, only this time she was much more to the point. She said that observing from a distance, the last decade has seen what appears to her to be a narrowing of our approach to learning. The once expansive and imaginative exploration of leading edge thinking and creative initiatives, for which we were so admired, seemingly replaced by an obsession for national assessment of a particularly limited and limiting style. She went on to ask forgiveness if she was out of line but observed that we have tied ourselves to very basic evidence-based practices that have only served to exacerbate the problem. She was dismayed that the stream of creative ideas and approaches that previously flowed freely from Australian education has now run dry.

It was fascinating to hear such an insightful perspective from an international educator about our system. Even more so considering her love affair with

Australian education, including a 2-year stint in her earlier teaching years in one of our schools. Sadly, she was echoing thoughts that have been troubling me for some time, particularly given my recent experiences in education systems in other countries who are pursuing much more ambitious thinking and design for learning. By contrast, Australia's education policy makers have doggedly pursued a formulaic, reductionist approach that is not even achieving the aims for which it was seemingly designed, to improve results in national and international assessment. I wonder to what extent our current teachers and leaders experience the awe and wonder of teaching and learning that I fell in love with so many decades ago? The number of early career teachers abandoning the profession may go some way to answering my question.

It can be very challenging to break free of a paradigm to which we have become so attached. There can be contradictions and tensions that are obvious from the outside yet are defended tenaciously by those in its midst. When I have posed the question of much needed transformation of secondary education, the response inevitably refers to "hands being tied" by HSC, universities, and ATARs. Ironically, more than 25,000 early university offers were made to students last year. It seems the universities are not so tied to the HSC after all.

The positive news is that we have a new state government, a Premier with a deep understanding of education, an Education Minister who appears determined to liberate school teachers and leaders in their approach to teaching and learning, and a Secretary of Education who is an educator of the highest quality, as well as being a creative, imaginative, and courageous leader with a powerful moral imperative. Together with a highly impressive new Australian Education Minister, the enablers are in place to reimagine the future of education in our country, so that my Singapore colleague can once again be inspired by Australia's important contribution to an education provision that prepares young people to lead in a rapidly changing world.

*"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."*

*Mary McLeod Bethune, Building a Better World: Essays and Selected Documents", p.61, Indiana University Press*

## A Proposal for IRSEA

As the global landscape continues to evolve at such a rapid rate, it is imperative that education develops in tandem. In an era of extraordinary technological advancements, globalization, and shifting societal norms, our traditional educational paradigms are facing unprecedented challenges.

IRSEA is well placed to leverage the pressing need for a fundamental shift in our education systems by advocating for innovative strategies that will better equip learners for the complexities of the modern world. It is our conviction that through comprehensive, forward-thinking reform, education will meet the demands of the 21st century and prepare individuals for a future full of possibilities, equipped with the skills, understanding, flexibility, and adaptability that are necessary to thrive.

## Why IRSEA?

IRSEA has the capacity to play a key contributing role to recognise, support and inspire educational practice that features highly progressive thinking and action in schools. IRSEA is gifted to have a membership with the capacity to propagate and showcase exemplary teaching and learning in NSW Public Schools. To have such practice affirmed by highly respected members of the profession who have served at very senior levels in the Department, will undoubtedly contribute considerable prestige to the very best education has to offer in NSW.

## The Possibilities for IRSEA

Highlighting outstanding practice serves to shine a light on that which is exceptional and showcase educational initiatives that can inspire others. Through the immensity of expertise and experience, totally unencumbered by the trials and tribulations of every day realities, IRSEA has the capacity to recognise, encourage and guide schools doing great things, to become leaders and models of the extraordinary.

This proposal aims to leverage existing opportunities, both nationally and internationally; to showcase educational practice that bridges the gap between mainstream and exceptional; and to inspire schools to redefine existing paradigms to explore possibilities that inspire profound shifts in perceptions and educational practice. By fostering a culture of innovation and excellence in education, IRSEA can serve to catalyse a transformation that supports

schools to boldly develop thinking and action necessary to thrive in an expanding future.

This would be achieved in partnership with the NSW Department of Education. Outstanding schools would be identified by the Department, with IRSEA mobilising its membership to work alongside senior leaders in the Department to support schools in tangible ways, coaching them in their ongoing development, while supporting them for recognition far beyond their local communities.

Showcasing NSW public schools on a global stage, for instance, could serve to inspire generational uplift in progressive learning engagement throughout the NSW and Australian education landscape.

## International Aspirations for NSW Public Schools

**The World's Best School Prizes** are the world's most prestigious education awards, giving inspirational schools a share of a \$250,000 award and a global platform to celebrate success, share best practices, and learn from each other.

Such a platform provides schools throughout the world with recognition for the pivotal role they play in developing the next generation of learners and for their enormous contribution to society's progress.

The five World's Best School Prizes were founded on this very belief, celebrating schools that not only champion the best in education but also drive societal change.



As an example of what is possible, following are the Top 3 finalists for each category of the World's Best School Prizes 2023. These schools have showcased resilience, innovation, and a deep commitment to

their communities. Their stories demonstrate the boundless potential of education to shape a brighter future.

<https://t4.education/blog/worlds-best-school-prizes-2023-top-3-finalists-revealed/>

The **Global Teacher Prize** is another example of a highly prestigious opportunity to nominate and promote outstanding educational practice on an international level. In recent years, NSW public teachers, Eddie Woo (Cherrybrook Technology High School) and Yasodai Selvakumaran (Rooty Hill High School), were each recognised as Top 10 finalists. To add a further Australian flavour, Hugh Jackman presented the Top 10 finalists and ultimate winner of the award in 2019, the year that Yaso was recognised.



Through these awards and initiatives, we can showcase the excellence of NSW public schools on a global stage, inspiring greater engagement within the profession. By recognizing and promoting outstanding educational practices and creating a culture of innovation, we can elevate education in NSW Public Schools to new heights, ensuring that our students are well-prepared for an ever-changing world.

Imagine if IRSEA were to become the organisation for championing NSW Public Education, by identifying, supporting, and nominating its schools and teachers to participate in such prestigious opportunities.

### National Aspirations for NSW Public Schools

Similarly, there are many opportunities within Australia for teachers and schools to be recognised through national awards and by applying for grants to further their innovative practice.

Australian Schools Plus is one such organisation that was established for this very purpose. It was created by a group of pioneers, led by David Gonski, to

address equity gaps and to promote high quality education. Already, many of our teachers have been recognised through their national teaching awards. In addition, a considerable number of schools have benefitted from School Plus education grants.

### What role could IRSEA play?

A significant challenge that currently exists is that there is a lack of general awareness amongst NSW public schools of the opportunities that abound. Participation is piecemeal and is not embraced in any systematic way. As such, it is not widely recognised throughout the NSW public school system.

IRSEA could play a key role by helping to introduce a structure that integrates such opportunities into the life of the Department. Establishing systems and processes that identify and promote schools and teachers could serve to bring greater awareness and legitimacy to these opportunities, hence promoting outstanding practice more widely throughout NSW public education.

Interested IRSEA members could also volunteer to further support and promote exceptional schools, assisting them to prepare and endorsing their application for such opportunities.



**Global Teacher Prize  
Top 10 Finalist**

**Yasodai  
Selvakumaran**

### Next Steps

At our recent IRSEA Executive meeting the proposal received unanimous in-principle endorsement. An approach will now be made to the NSW Department of Education to develop and formalise, in partnership with IRSEA, enabling structures, systems, and processes to promote and celebrate participation in these opportunities system wide.

Very best wishes  
Eric Jamieson



## FEATURE ARTICLE: DON'T GIVE UP ON GONSKI Dr Ken Boston

Early in 2022, our colleague Chris Bonnor and his co-author Tom Greenwell published *Waiting for Gonski*: how Australia failed its schools. They rightly point out that socio-economic advantage is the major factor affecting school performance and educational outcomes. They are critical of the Gonski Review, and the Karmel Review forty years before it, for not recommending structural reform of the uniquely Australian arrangement of independent schools, non-government systemic schools and public schools, all receiving a measure of state and Commonwealth funding, both recurrent and capital. Their view is that the dismantling of this structure could lead to its replacement by one in which socio-economic advantage might be reduced or eliminated.

Since publication of the book the limited amount of public discussion of this view has not seriously challenged the conclusion that some readers have come to: that the real issue for schooling in Australia is structural reform, not funding equity for public schools, and that there is not much hope for any improvement until that reform has been achieved. I disagree with that conclusion.

### Structural reform

The structure of schooling in Australia is indeed quite absurd. It is not how one would start with a blank piece of paper. But it is the product of more than 150 years of education history, it is strongly defended, it has never been more popular, and it is virtually certain to persist.

Socio-educational advantage (as I prefer to call it) is the hottest commodity in education today. Parents are queued up to buy it, even at the price of \$42,000 a year in many non-government schools.

Parents with low and middle incomes are of the same view: even though many struggle to meet the lower fees set by schools such as Christian schools and Catholic parish schools, they want to send their children to schools from which others can be excluded.



In my view, structural reform abolishing socio-educational advantage and disadvantage would be almost impossible to achieve, and certainly not within the foreseeable future. The only realistic way forward is to mitigate the impact of disadvantage by a new funding arrangement. That is what Gonski proposed: a base grant and loadings for various categories of disadvantage – socio-economic disadvantage, low English language proficiency, disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander status, school size and location - in order to bring all schools to a common schooling resource standard. It is entirely achievable if there is political will.

Tom and Chris call for a national conversation to develop by consensus a new structure in which there are fee-paying independent schools that receive no government funding and can determine their own student intake, and fully government-funded schools, including faith-based schools, that must be available and open to all.

Given the long history of our current schooling arrangements, and the enthusiasm of much of the community to purchase socio-educational advantage, I can't see any possibility of community engagement on the issue. The reason why governments have failed to apply the full schooling resource standard to public schools is because of threatened loss of political support from over-funded non-government schools. I cannot imagine that any government would try to build a constituency to abolish the current landscape of Australian schooling altogether.

Nor do I agree that there is a large body of 'religious poor' clambering for faith-based education to be free.

Part of the Gonski Review involved a program of consultation with stakeholders, including the NCEC, the state CECs, Catholic school principals, teachers, and Catholic parent organisations. My own meetings with Catholic school representatives were in western Sydney, Tasmania, and Queensland (other panel members took other states). As part of the conversation, we commonly raised the question of whether they would like full public funding subject to enrolment conditions being the same as those for public schools.

I do not recall any occasion on which this was seen to be desirable. Nor do I see any signs of change. It seems most unlikely that there is any possibility of the Catholic Church being willing to consider incorporation into a fully publicly funded system that subjects them to the same enrolment conditions as public schools.

And if they did, would it make any difference? In England, which I know well, 93 percent of all schools are maintained schools, which are fully publicly funded, include faith-based schools, and are subject to government regulation. Yet schools in the home counties and the wealthy south-west of the country perform well ahead of those in the north and midlands. Postcode reflects educational performance just as it does in Australia. All sorts of governance reform (academies etc) have been attempted in the maintained school system, but the only real solution is a Gonski-type funding arrangement weighted to address socio-educational disadvantage.

Further, I worry that by dismissing Gonski in favour of structural reform, there is a danger of sweeping the issue of school funding into a backwater. Governments and non-government organisations have been given a further excuse to do nothing, by telling them that funding isn't the real issue after all. This has been a gift to state treasuries, as it undercuts arguments by education departments for public schools to be funded to the full schooling resource standard.

### **Funding equity for public schools**

The call for structural reform rather than mitigation has been accompanied by the casual assertion by many commentators that funding is only one element of school improvement, and that other factors such as teacher quality, leadership, professional development, and curriculum support are equally important.

This misses the point. Funding in itself does not lead to school improvement, but it is a necessary condition underpinning everything else. Improvements in the factors above will not occur without funding. The teacher shortage can be met only by funding. The status of teachers can be raised only by paying them truly professional standard salaries. Professional development, and the mentoring of beginning teachers, requires money for time release. High quality teaching requires investment. Whatever initiatives might be developed to address student refusal, student discipline and other issues must be underpinned with funding.

I am not calling for new funding, but for the strategic distribution of existing funding. Australia would have much better education outcomes if the current recurrent funding - \$61.3 billion annually - was targeted according to need. An enormous amount is wasted on low priorities in the non-government sector, when much higher priorities in the government sector are simply unmet.

The impact is plain to see. The OECD and the Productivity Commission have shown that important benchmarks indicate that the standard of Australian education has steadily declined throughout this century. The underlying factor is the neglect of our public schools. Except in the ACT public schools are at no more than 90 percent of the schooling resource standard, and non-government schools on average are above the standard except in the Northern Territory. The existing available Commonwealth and state recurrent funding for education should be distributed to the schools that need it, to be spent on the things that matter. All state schools should be brought to a proper schooling resource standard as soon as possible, and non-government schools should be stripped of their over-funding.

Only then can we be clear whether, and what level, additional funding might be needed.

The same applies to capital funding. Observing the building bonanza in non-government schools since signing off on the Gonski Report twelve years ago, I no longer believe that the wealthier schools - which enjoy charitable taxation status, have massive investments, raise millions of dollars in donations, can pick and choose which students they accept and charge fees approaching the national minimum wage – should receive any public funding.

While the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars flowing from governments to such schools cannot be spent directly on facilities, they cover much of the recurrent cost of teachers' salaries. This permits a substantial component of school fees to be spent on the servicing of loans for capital works. It is this which has fuelled the building bonanza in private schools in the past five years, which in NSW alone amounts to \$1.5 billion.

Somehow a cap must be placed on the capacity of wealthy schools to pocket government funding while charging an extraordinary level of fees and borrowing tens of millions of dollars on the strength of it to build a second grandstand, a third swimming pool, another wilderness retreat, or a wellness centre. It is rocket fuel for socio-educational disadvantage, which is at the core of our national decline.

### **Twelve years on**

Since the Gonski Report was tabled in 2011, national educational outcomes have deteriorated further, and a full generation of young people have passed through public primary and secondary schools without the learning benefits that would have been brought by the full application of a schooling resource standard. With hindsight, I would now not support any wealthy non-government school receiving any taxpayer funding, either recurrent or capital.

I have one further regret. The logic of Gonski was that each school should receive the amount of funding generated by the schooling resource standard, regardless of the government or non-government system to which it might belong.

Now, this was quickly recognised by state treasuries and state education departments, and by church leaders and church education systems, as a constraint upon their capacity to move taxpayer funds across schools according to their own perceptions of need or for other purposes, and to place conditions on schools in receipt of funding. Neither the government nor the non-government systems have accepted the Gonski position. Funding is paid to the systems not the individual schools.

One of the greatest defenders of the status quo has been the Catholic Church. School funding is still distributed as in the past according to the Church's perception of need at the level of the diocese, not according to the national schooling resource standard. State governments do precisely the same, and additionally shift cost to the Commonwealth.

So, we have neither needs-based nor sector-blind school funding, which were the key planks of Gonski. We are funding systems, not funding schools, and allowing them to distribute funding in a manner inconsistent with a single national schooling resource standard.

My view is that the funding generated by the schooling resource standard should be applied to individual schools, not aggregated into sums to be distributed by government and non-government systems.

These systems should withhold a part of that funding from the school to deliver specific support services (curriculum consultancy, speech pathology, legal support etc), but the funding generated by the school, the amount withheld by the system, the purposes for which it is withheld and the accountability arrangements to ensure the services are provided to the school, should all be public knowledge.

Twelve years on, the Gonski Report remains on the table as the only available and workable solution to the problems in the quality of Australian education. It needs to be talked up, revived and refreshed by a new generation of educational leaders, teachers and activists, and embraced by a more far-sighted and effective set of politicians than we have had in the past.

## MEMBER PROFILE: Eric Jamieson

Editor: The Member Profile is another new feature of IRSEA News, designed to help get to know our members better. If you have any suggestions of members you would like to know more about, please let me know.

This is a wonderful article recently written by an overseas colleague of Eric's after she interviewed him. She allowed us to reproduce it for IRSEA News.



*"I am incredibly grateful to be living a life that has been filled with learning and the privilege of sharing the gift of learning with so many others."*

These words capture the essence of Eric Jamieson's profound passion for education, as I discovered during our enlightening conversation. Over a few enthralling hours, it became evident that Eric is a man who was always destined for a life of service in education, driven by an unwavering sense of purpose and meaning.

From his humble beginnings to a grand vision for the future of education, our discussion traversed the full spectrum of topics. Each piece of his story, unique in its essence, was intricately woven into a much larger narrative of his pursuit of a better world through

education. It was impossible not to be swept along by his boundless enthusiasm for life, his genuine love for others, and his fervent belief in the endless possibilities that the future holds.

For Eric, his early years attending Ashcroft High School in the challenging neighbourhood west of Sydney were a vital part of his journey. These formative years, where he understood the struggles of his community and the importance of education in creating life opportunities, anchored him to the value of his work. This experience certainly made it possible for Eric to relate to the students that he would ultimately be teaching at St Marys High School, an area very similar to the one in which he grew up. He understood the challenges of the community and the importance of learning to create life opportunities. Eric valued his years at the school very highly, made even more special when St Marys was transformed into the state's first senior high school in 1989. His role in that process was significant as he was elected by staff to be on the working party that essentially developed the vision for what was to become St Marys Senior High School. He was also appointed as Head Teacher Student Welfare at the school in 1991, a position which was the first of its kind through the newly introduced merit selection process.

It was when talking about the creative design and development process that he had been through with the new senior high school that Eric's excitement elevated even further, if that was possible, during our conversation. Even this early in his story it was obvious to me that this would be the aspect of his career where his talents would flourish. Indeed, what was to follow for him was a whirlwind of high-level developmental experiences. He was invited to be a team member for a number of school reviews for Quality Assurance, another new initiative for the Department. It was to be Eric's entry point for many more experiences beyond school. He quickly moved into a Chief Education Officer role with Quality Assurance in 1995, an appointment that seemed to me to be a remarkable elevation from his previous position as Head Teacher based on his description of the new role. His next 6 years was filled with a



multitude of roles, all related to school improvement, school accountability, and a much bigger use of data in schools. It was evident that Eric enjoyed the high-paced, creative environment.

It was during 2002 that Eric credited as the greatest developmental period of his career. While he mentioned many people during our talk, there was one who was a standout in terms of the difference made to Eric's career and enriched his life in general. Lindsay Wasson showed him first hand the enormous value of having a mentor who inspires. Their rapport was apparent from the profuse praise with which Eric attributed Lindsay. There was to be a partnership that would extend to this day. It was during his time with Lindsay that Eric moved from a state role into a district role, again in school improvement. Eric proudly shares stories of the transformation of the Mount Druitt District through the symbiotic relationship (Eric's words) they shared together. Whatever it was between them, they certainly had impact, inspiring the District from a ranking of 39 out of 40 for most key learning indicators statewide, to top 20 within 18 months. It was this experience from which Eric drew to move into his next role, which was to be quite a surprising career shift given the level he had been working for the previous 10 years and the excitement he felt from those system roles.

Something that really typified everything about Eric in my eyes was his choice to apply for a Principal's role. He was appointed to Plumpton High School in 2004, a school that happened to be in the same District that he was so instrumental in enabling change. Yet another tough assignment at a school that was significantly underperforming. Call me astute if you like, but I was beginning to see a pattern. Here was a man who thrived on challenge! Seemingly, the bigger the better. Eric's reason for wanting to become a Principal was so that he could put into practice all that he had been learning at a system level. From what he then shared about his 8 years at the school, he achieved this aim with distinction. He shared with deep love and affection about his time at the school, the team that he led, the talented students unlocked by the invigoration of learning, and the amazing school community which he cherished.

He worked together with the local primary schools to create a larger education community. This became a standout example of what is possible with joint pursuit of a strong moral imperative. It was as powerful as it was authentic and integrated. Eric has a fondness for superlatives, which he used extravagantly in his description of the school and education community. He also talks of love a great deal in his descriptions, again, something normally unfamiliar to me in this context. His two experiences in Mount Druitt were to be profound in his professional and personal life. It was at this point of our conversation that he had me crying. What! I never cry!! Time for a refreshment break before he notices.

Despite Eric's resistance, he was lured back into state office to provide system level leadership for the area of school improvement and accountability. He agreed on the basis it would be a short-term role until someone could be appointed longer-term. This was undoubtedly the only way he could be extracted from his beloved Plumpton education community. Of course, there was a larger agenda involving a complete transformation of school planning, school improvement, leadership development, and school accountability, of which Eric was asked to be the architect and engineer, all at once. So it was that in 2011, he commenced a full-time role in a position that was to become Director, High Performance. He relished the opportunity to build a formidable team to lift practices and processes from compliance to enablers of change in schools throughout the state. School Principals, in general, were excited about the potential of these developments, many of which remain in place today.



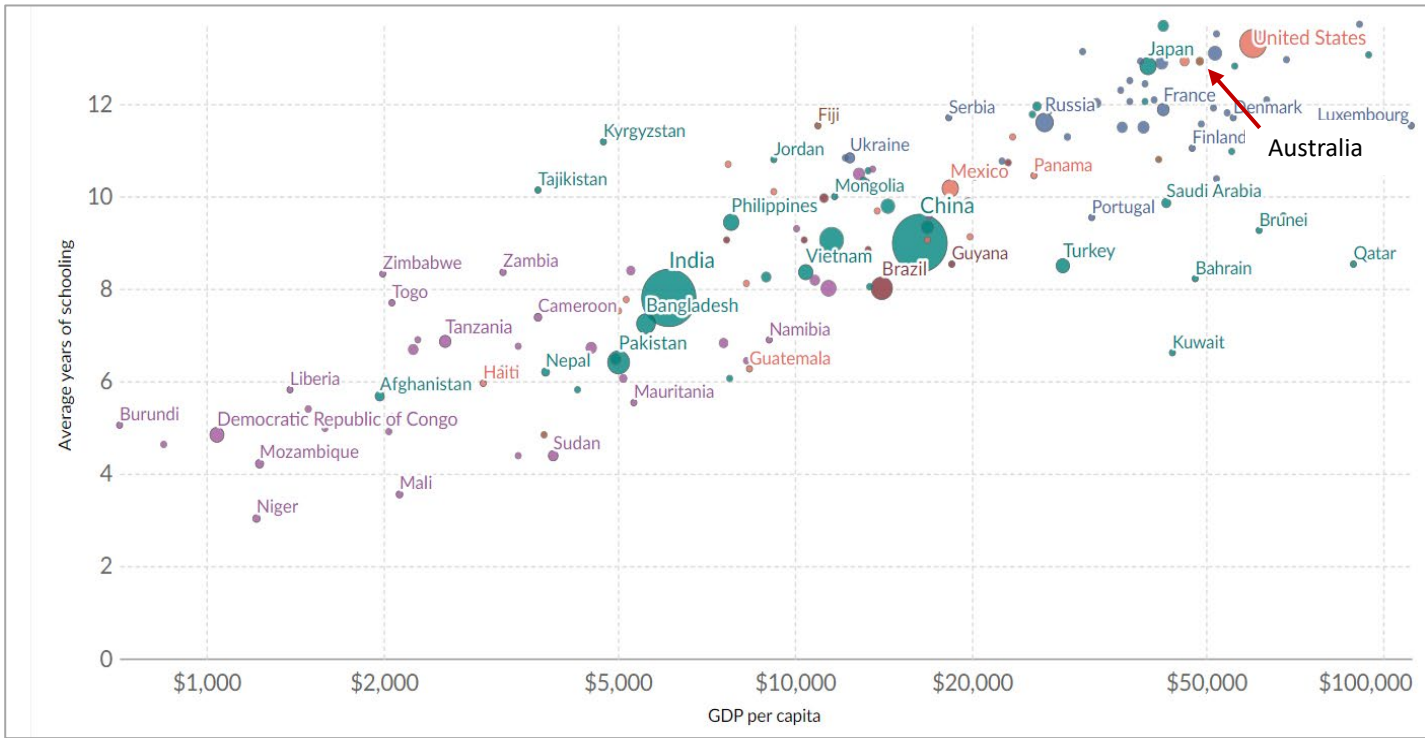
In 2016, Eric made the decision to retire from the Department and was offered the CEO role of Australian Schools Plus, a new not-for-profit established to strategise the use of philanthropic contributions directed to schools serving less advantaged communities. In his typical fashion, as I have been learning, he declined the role and instead requested one that would be solely focused on the educational aspects of the organisation, rather than the business side. Another two years of creative design and action followed, laying the foundations for great success to follow.

At the same time as all of this was happening, Eric was approached for some high-level international roles. He was intrigued by the opportunity for adventures on an even greater scale. His base would be the Middle East and initially involved him working in 16 countries across 6 continents. He reflected on the sweeping changes to his life, the patterns in which one experience prepared him for the next, yet rarely

in a way that he would have expected. His dismay at a narrowing of educational perspectives in Australia was the catalyst for him being attracted to a greater opportunity that was far more expansive and stimulating. His inspiration and passion for education continues unabated, pioneering new designs, innovative approaches, and an exciting liberation for education in diverse countries, each with their own challenges and ambitions.

Eric’s experiences abroad have fuelled his passion for change and innovation in education, inspiring him to advocate for a more adventurous and courageous approach in his homeland. The fire in his heart and spirit for education continues to burn brightly, and I suspect many more wonderful things are to follow as he pursues his mission to make the world a better place, one classroom at a time. There's a sense that there is unfinished business to complete. My suggestion? Watch This Space!

Interesting Facts and Figures: Average years of schooling vs. GDP per capita, 2020



Data source: Lee-Lee (2016); Barro-Lee (2018); UNDP, HDR (2018); Data compiled from multiple sources by World Bank

## THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### AN UPDATE ON

### DEVELOPMENTS

from **Raechel McCarthy**



Hello colleagues,

I can't believe we are already in Term 4 of this year, and I am very much looking forward to (hopefully) being able to catch up with you all at your pre-Christmas luncheon. I have just completed my first week in another new role as Director, Lake Illawarra North Network and am very much enjoying the closer contact with schools and ongoing conversations relating to instructional leadership and school improvement. It is a very interesting network with a combination of schools servicing both high and low socioeconomic communities and several schools with large Non-English-Speaking Background student populations including a high school with an Intensive English Centre. It is also a network within the city of Wollongong which means I will be doing a lot less travel which is better for my family.

Week 1, Term 4 has seen the start of HSC exams (11 Oct-3 Nov) and the date for full implementation of the mobile phone ban in schools. Our department has a clear rationale for this change focused on the benefits of human interaction to student creativity, wellbeing and learning as well as that to society. Schools have been able to choose from a variety of mobile phone management strategies including:

- Phones Off and Away
- Phones collected and stored in classroom
- Phones in Lockers
- Phones stored in the office
- Pouches

For many of our young people, this is a significant change to their lunch and recess entertainment and schools are being very creative in ensuring students can engage in a variety of alternative activities. This week I observed how Kanahooka High School has actively promoted student use of supervised gym at lunchtime and recess including car simulators, weights, rowers, treadmills, and simulated soccer target screens. The gym is well attended by students and many of my schools are also reporting an increase in the number of students accessing the library at lunch and recess.

Another key development within our department is the upcoming launch of our new Strategic Plan which articulates the key areas and strategies for improvement and the new School Excellence Framework Version 3. I will focus on these two areas in my next report once officially launched. Successful implementation of the plan focuses on improving student outcomes and regaining ground on enrolments in public schools.

Finally, I wanted to let members know our next upcoming School Performance Summit is on Thursday 23rd and Friday 24th November at Novotel Sydney Olympic Park. I understand that IRSEA will be represented by up to four members of your Executive Committee.

I hope to see many of you in person before the end of the year.





## COMMITTEE REPORT UPDATES

### Treasurer's Update: Ray Gillies

On 13 October 2023, the IRSEA Society Account had a balance of \$9,656.96. Our Term Deposit was valued at \$10,334.14 (maturing 14 October 2023).

IRSEA 2023 receipts comprise members' subscriptions, donations to Stewart House, and payments for general meetings' lunches. Expenditures are transfers to Stewart House; transmittals of meeting lunch funds; costs of the newsletters; NSW Fair Trading fee; and postage and stationery.

### Secretary's Update: Brian Davies

Our organisation for 2024 is taking shape. At the last executive meeting the calendar of events was drawn up. The 2024 Annual General Meeting will be held on 29 March at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. There are also three general luncheon meetings to be held throughout the year, as happened for the first time in 2023 at the request of members; previously there were only two such meetings. It is important that members make every effort to come along and support these meetings; a great time with colleagues awaits.

There will also be the opportunity to attend social events for members. Kerryanne Knox, our Welfare Officer, initiated these events and members had an enjoyable time at the Kirribilli Club which provided a relaxed atmosphere with good food and drink – and was easy to get to by public transport. The dates for the social events in 2024 are yet to be determined but members will be informed of these in the first newsletter next year which will be sent out at the end of February.

Next year you can also expect to receive newsletters in early May, July, and November. Members are encouraged to contribute articles about their experiences in education, their thoughts about educational issues, their personal experiences and whatever might be of interest to our members.

You might go to our superb website at <https://irsea.org.au/> and let us know what you think. While there, have a look at the Gallery with photos of Vincent Delany receiving his IRSEA Outstanding Service Award. Your contributions to the newsletter could also take the form of a short piece of a couple of paragraphs, such as a letter to the editor. Other members will really appreciate your making a contribution.

In the previous newsletter, members were asked to consider nominating others to receive an award for Outstanding Service or for Honorary Membership. The nominations are to come to me but if you would like any help or advice about the process please feel free to contact me at [secretary@irsea.org.au](mailto:secretary@irsea.org.au) or [bdjinstitute@gmail.com](mailto:bdjinstitute@gmail.com). The forms are included in the newsletter and are also in the Awards section on our website. Those who have contributed to our organisation, and who do so voluntarily, deserve recognition.

Finally, I hope as many as possible can make it to our Christmas luncheon on Friday 1 December at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. It is always a great, festive time with colleagues. Please complete the registration form in this newsletter as soon as possible and send to John Allsopp (details in the form).

#### ***Some key dates for your diary for 2024:***

- Friday 16 February 2024 Executive Committee Meeting (send in any issues you would like considered)
- Thursday 22 February 2024: Copy deadline for newsletter (send in a contribution)
- Friday 22 March 2024: Annual General Meeting
- Friday 31 May 2024: Luncheon Meeting
- Friday 2 August 2024: Luncheon Meeting
- Friday 6 December 2024: Christmas Luncheon Meeting



## Stewart House Update: Alan Laughlin

There is always plenty happening at Stewart House so I thought I would pick a few major issues for your information.

Most importantly, following the extended impact of COVID in recent years Stewart House is now returning to normal operations. This is great news as the help it provides for our most vulnerable children is critical.

There is now a return to full enrolments. 80 children, particularly from country areas of the state who have not been offered placements for some 2 years, will be placed in the full 12-day program. This is great news as Stewart House has had to run a shorter program, with smaller numbers during the past difficult period.



## Marketing and Promotions

The major source of revenue for SH has always been workplace giving championed by public education staff in schools. Regrettably, there has been a year-on-year decline in this revenue.

As one of the strategies to turn this around a new support video is being distributed to schools. This features the new Secretary Murat Dizdar and Past President of the Teachers Federation, Angelo Gavrielatos. The PSA and the Principals' Councils have given this total support. Hopefully this will start to make a difference over the coming months. The aim is to attract, engage and retain at least 25% of the NSW Public Education staff in the Salary Contribution Scheme to effectively meet at least 60% of annual running costs to maintain the service.

Stewart House is also looking to diversify its fundraising efforts. Funds have been committed towards a comprehensive fundraising strategy and process using a company called DGB. They are a campaign agency working with “for-purpose” organisations to strengthen brand and increase revenue through major campaign-based fundraising.

## The Stewart House Board

Michelle Reincastle and Marilyn Walker have now retired from the Board of Stewart House.

And sadly, another member, Greg Prior, passed away after a long battle with cancer.

New and outstanding Board members have been appointed. Cecilia Wilson, known to many in the DoE, brings unique property and school infrastructure skills. Zoe Robinson is the NSW Children’s Advocate who reports directly to parliament on all issues relating to child wellbeing. Colin Gair owns Wheeler Accounting – an iconic and well-respected Northern Beaches accounting firm. David Baker is the Executive Director, derivative sales, for Goldman Sachs.

A number of Board members are continuing: Barry Johnson, Tom Croker, Jan McClelland, Julie Kennedy, and Ken Dixon (although Ken has taken a leave of absence to concentrate on health issues).

## The Board's Vision for a New Facility

Stewart House facilities are dated, and the long-term future of Stewart House will require a significant new facility to be built. In 2022, the Board called tenders from prospective developers to assist in achieving a vision of a fit-for-purpose integrated residential, health and education facility. Stewart House has commenced discussions, through an MoU, for the opportunity for a successful tenderer to enter into a leasehold arrangement under which they would be granted the right to develop a commercial / residential component on part of the site, with Stewart House remaining the registered owner of the Property.

In consideration for the right to develop a Residential Component, Stewart House will receive a new fully funded state-of the-art facility. It is acknowledged that the proposed project is subject to resolution of a number of key issues that will be addressed during 2023/24.

On completion, this proposal would deliver a brand-new purpose-built facility in exchange for a 99-year lease on a portion of the property.

## Friends of Stewart House (FOSH) fund raising.

The Friends of Stewart House (FOSH) will be holding a number of activities in the near future to raise funds to assist in the operation of Stewart House. Many IRSEA members are also part of FOSH.

Of particular note:

- A Xmas Wine Drive has been organised where the purchase of quality wines from Leogate Estate will see a portion of the income go towards Stewart House. Last year this raised over \$3,000. IRSEA members have all been emailed an order form.

- A high tea with bubbles will be held at the Breakfast Point Country Club, Village Drive, Breakfast Point, 2137. Cost: \$50 pp. (includes \$10 donation to Stewart House). Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1 pm – 4 pm. With door prize & raffles.

An email to members will be sent out later, or you could contact Kerryanne Knox.

Email: [kknox@bigpond.com](mailto:kknox@bigpond.com)

## MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

### Editor's Note:

STORIES ARE WANTED URGENTLY FOR OUR FEBRUARY NEWS! PLEASE SEND US A MEMORY, AN OPINION, A RESPONSE TO ITEMS IN OUR NEWS, OR ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TELL US. PLEASE USE THE EMAIL THAT SENT YOU THIS COPY OF YOUR IRSEA NEWS.



Vincent Delany receiving his Outstanding Service Award at our most recent Member's Luncheon in August.

Gerry McCloughan and Brian Davies sharing their reports at the same meeting.

***"Give your hands to serve, and your hearts to love."  
Mother Teresa***



## BELATED BIRTHDAY BASH AT BRIDGE STREET'S BRIGHTEST STAR: Lindsay Wasson

How the memories flooded in! Some bad, some middling, but mostly good, special and uplifting. Approaching the Farrer Place entrance to the old Department building, we wondered what now might await inside. Not the trepidation of an interview. Not the frantic work towards a Ministerial deadline. And not the joy of the outstanding teamwork of brilliant colleagues. No. It was to be nothing less than the extraordinary transformation of the old sandstone monolith to the new and stunning **Capella Sydney**, 'brightest star in the constellation'.

This was August. A birthday lunch for brother Dave, postponed from earlier in the year (there had been a fire in the kitchen). With the postponement, however, came the promise of a bottle of Louis Roederer 'Collection', courtesy of the house!

First a tour of the hotel. Our charming and courteous guide, Mitchell from the check-in desk, took us to a room - elegant and stylish - then to the Guests' Lounge, Aperture, swimming pool (once the William Wilkins Gallery), Wellness Centre, and the magnificent old stairs. All the while pointing out the brilliance of the restoration and the exquisite beauty of the whole refurbishment. **Capella Sydney** is an architectural wonder. For three of our group of six, all former occupants of the building (and now IRSEA members), it was nigh on impossible to translate the 'new' into the 'old'. Which bit was my office? Where did Dave work? Which spaces did Diane work in? Lost in translation, to coin a phrase.

Now to the main game. **Brasserie 1930** lived up to its quickly won 2 Hats from the SMH Food Guide. A wonderful menu, great choice, beautifully presented food of high quality made special by the quite outstanding service. And of course, on top of the pre-lunch champagne, the white and red with entrees and mains, came the complimentary bottle of Louis Roederer. Impressively, this bottle, promised back in June, had been duly noted on our booking. No reminder to management needed. How good is that! (Oops - reminder to Lindsay. Stay clear of that infamous expression!)



**From left to right:** Janet Wasson, Dave Wasson, Diane Wasson, Michelle Wasson, Lindsay Wasson, Doug Wasson. (All six are ex-DoE educators)



Incidentally, two couples went for the most expensive dish on the menu - the famous Maremma Duck - and Diane simply had to have the caviar to start with. How could you not go for broke in this magnificently presented restaurant which, I'm pretty sure, was once a DDG's office and hosted a TAFE presence. I believe it also bordered the offices that housed the Futures Project in 2004-2005 first under Alan Laughlin and then me. (Or was that on the level above?)

For members who have already experienced the new **Capella** and/or **Brasserie 1930**, this will feel like old news. But for those who haven't, I hope that when you do visit, you will find something quite remarkable (as we did in August). Here, a great institutional building, holding the proudest memories of any education building in Australia, now re-fashioned into a grand, new establishment, gives promise of creating new and very special memories for its former, proud denizens. Here's to another round of Champagne!!





## OPINION: Syd Smith

### Write your Own Biography

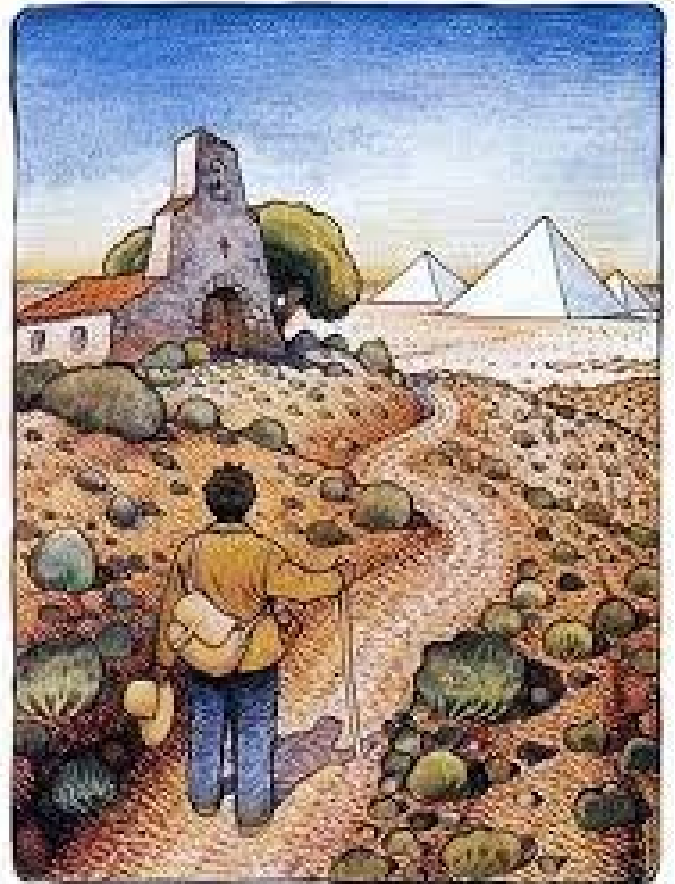
As one gets older it can be a time to review your life and let others know more about you. Writing an autobiography is a great idea for your children and grandchildren to read and, who knows, maybe it will be unearthed in many years for others to read? It can also reveal a person's perceptions of how it was like for them to live in a former age and the struggles and challenges they had to face in everyday life. Many people in their late years often research their genealogy to gain more details about their descendants and would like to pass it on to other family members. Writing a more personal history of your own life provides a more personal history for those close to you to understand.

If you are thinking of writing your own life story there are a few tips you might consider. People who have done this already often have some advice to give.

### Some tips on doing an autobiography

Before you start make sure no other family member has done a family history already and then jot down the summary you will follow as your own guide. First, you need to consider your **audience**. Is it someone you know or is your story for wider consumption? This will have an impact on your **tone** or level of intimacy, whether you will bare your soul or not, or if you take an objective or impersonal approach. Talking to an unknown, wider audience will affect how you write as well.

Next you need to know **why** you want to write. If it's an autobiography you may want to tell your reader how things have changed in your lifetime, how you coped with challenges throughout your life, people who influenced you, what successes you experienced or which disappointments you faced. These will affect the **theme** of your essay. For example, do you want to concentrate on your career, the people you met, stories about your family and how things have changed over time. In addition, ask yourself will it be an **autobiography**, **memoirs** or just a series of **vignettes** and is it just about you or, both you and your partner? And make sure it's not just an ego trip but something more useful for your reader(s).



Then you need to consider the **length** of your story. This will affect how much detail you are going to provide. You may need to present it in **chapters** over distinct **timelines**, or you may simply write a short story with a particular theme or just a particular incident. Some autobiographies can go from 200 to 400 pages. One construction some writers use is to have an introduction of 10 percent, a body of 80 per cent and a conclusion of 10 percent. Try to imagine how your final work will be presented. There are different styles you can use like **narrative**, **chronological**, **first person** and **dramatic**.

### What other supporting materials may you use?

Consider whether you will use **images**, **photos**, **graphs**, or other supporting material? Will you get it printed locally or do you want to publish it widely? You can always pay for your publication by sending it at a cost to an internet provider. It could be eBooks or/and Booktopia perhaps. If you go down this path, you should get someone else to edit it first to avoid embarrassment in case of something you overlooked.

## Writing tips

Try to use a variety of sentence constructions. Keep the audience interested, even spellbound. It's ok to use one-word sentences like: "Disaster!" or even add two or more exclamation marks. You can also use short sentences without a verb like, "Oh no!" And to get special effect sometimes you can use sentences beginning with "and" or "but" etc.

One strategy some writers use is to introduce their story with a short arresting sentence to arouse instant interest. For example, *"I will never go near that place again. I was bitterly insulted by the people I used to love"*. Then at the very end of that chapter or your short story you can refer to it again: *"Going to that place was the most important lesson of my life"*. Many writers like Glover who writes for Fairfax use this strategy all the time. Don't be afraid to use **similes** and **metaphors**. Most novelists do this all the time because they paint brilliant pictures with words. Use **adverbs** as well where you can because, again they provide more detail and emotion to your story. Don't forget also to use **quotes, repetition, humour, and coincidence**. Keep your paragraphs short.

Read it over several times, even aloud if you wish, and then get a close friend who is good with words to look over it again. But a warning! If your writing is to be distributed widely be sure you don't mention certain people whom you have criticised or maligned in any way by name. If it is libellous, they may seek to sue you. This has more relevancy if you put it online, of course.

Finally, think about the high emotional moments, the big events, who the most important characters were and where was the **action, conflict, drama, and suspense**. Skip the boring parts. Tell the truth but make it captivating. And what will your starting point be? If from the beginning, it will be a chronological account or maybe start with a moment of high drama or you can even start at the end and work backwards.

So why not start on an autobiography today? It's a fun activity and if you are printing only a few copies then Officeworks can do it for you cheaply.

If you are thinking of a bigger distribution than a commercial printer like Kwik Kopy can help. Good luck with it and, who knows, maybe one day you can share some of it with other members through our IRSEA News?

## MEMBERS WRITE: Geoff Baldwin

### Tales of the Wild South-West

I spent a couple of years in the mid-1990s as Director Personnel in Metropolitan South-West region. To borrow from the Manly tourism promo, twenty miles from Sydney but a thousand miles from stuff that happens anywhere else. For example, the design of the fax (remember fax machines?) header at Moorebank police station, borrowing from the then slogan of the CBA, had a big, tough-looking, cartoon elephant, with shades and a weapon, with the text, "Which bank? Moorebank!". Herewith a couple of tales from the wild south-west.

### Welcome to the South-West

I am certain that the staff who were my direct reports had resolved to demonstrate to me, freshly arrived from Bridge Street, that Met South-West was indeed not deliverance territory, but instead peaceful and civilised. To show me hospitality into the bargain, a couple of them asked me to come with them, at 5 pm on Friday of my first week, for a drink at the nearby RSL club, which was the other side of a fairly busy three-lane, one-way, street, in the middle of Liverpool.

After we'd stepped off the kerb and started crossing the street, a woman, hotly pursued by a man, ran onto the street. He caught her about halfway across and started to strangle her. She seemed to shove and punch him, freed herself, and ran through the traffic to the other side where she stopped and waited for the man, who caught up with her and started to strangle her again.

Clearly all of us knew the ground-rule that it's a bad idea to intervene where apparent combatants might join forces to attack the intervener; so, no-one did this. But the expression on the faces of my two staff members was priceless. They were determined to

show me what an idyllic place the south-west was, but instead I'd been treated to a cameo, so exquisitely timed that it might have been stage-managed, and so thrilling, with cars whizzing past the struggling couple, that the sudden appearance of Bruce Willis wouldn't have been a surprise.

But at least I was under no illusions.

### **Showdown on Crispsparkle Drive**

In MSW at the time there were two Teachers' Federation organisers: Gary Zadkovich and Ted Kenny. Quite different as personalities, but I had a good working relationship with both. When I got to MSW I had a talk with both and said that I expected them to deal with any issue simply at a school level by consultation with the principal; and that if the issue did not extend beyond the school, I did not wish to know about it. Only if the problem proved intractable should I become involved. They were agreeable, and the arrangement worked well.

However, I was still contacted by Ted Kenny about a problem at Ambarvale PS, concerning one of the two school gates which gave onto Crispsparkle Drive (yes, that's a real street; check it out!). There was a heated dispute about whether this gate should be open or closed at 3 pm school-out time.

The school's two gates were at either end of the street frontage. One was an ordinary suburban garden gate, almost overgrown because of infrequent use. The other, at the end of a sweeping arc of bitumen which served as both a vehicular access and parking lot with parking spaces on either side of the drive, was guarded by a broad, rural style, gate. The kids hardly ever used the former, because the bus stops and pickup areas were the other side of the latter.

The principal had – I gathered after many years during which both gates had been left open at 3 pm – ordered that the vehicular gate be kept shut until 3:30, because of the risk to pedestrians. I think he had visions of being held responsible should a child be run over.

This decision generated a furious reaction from staff. Many of the staff lived in the Illawarra and, already facing a long drive, did not want their vehicles more or less impounded until 3 pm. The principal,

understandably, thought it impractical to both have the vehicular gate open but compel students to use the garden gate, much further from pickups and buses. The Federation argued strongly that the vehicular gate had been allowed to stay open for years, without any incident; and thus, that the principal was just being a difficult, and officious, pest.

At first, I found it hard to accept that a dispute about whether a gate should be open or shut should be so intractable as even to require the attention of an organiser rather than the school-based Federation representative, let alone me. However, there being eventually no sign of resolution and the prospect of escalation, I agreed to go with Ted Kenny to the school shortly before 3 pm. The vehicular gate would be left open at 3 pm, so that I could see for myself that the principal was just seeing imaginary dangers. So, just before 3, the principal, Ted and I went out into the driveway.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the premises at 3:01 pm resembled a Le Mans start in motor racing, but some staff were trotting to their cars, and high tailing it out the big gate. The kids kept to the side, having obviously done so for years.

But no drama, so Ted was confident he'd made his case for the vehicular gate to stay open. By 3:30, apart from Ted's car, my car, and the principal's car; there were only two cars left, parked opposite each other, on opposing sides of the driveway. Simultaneously, the last two staff members to leave emerged from the main block, got into their respective cars, and reversed, with a grinding crash, into each other. The principal's sigh of relief was palpable.

Perhaps oddly, this prompted a solution. Ted asked, "Where's the General Assistant between 3 and 3:30?". "Dunno", said the principal; "probably down the back somewhere stacking boxes". "Well", says Ted, "why don't you put him on the gate; keep it closed; and he can open it when a car needs to leave, make sure kids aren't in the way, and then close it again?".

Problem solved. Crisis, as they say, is the stimulus for opportunity. And the dust settled over Crispsparkle Drive.

## The case of the stuffed grandmother

I was in a meeting around 9 one morning when I got a call from a Cluster Director, saying she needed to talk with me straight away. When I asked if I could call her back, she said, “No; I need to talk with you right now!”.

When I stepped outside the room, she went on immediately: “At Moorebank Primary this morning when the kindy teacher went into the classroom, the stuffed grandmother that had been....”, at which point I said, “Hold on, Pat, what’s a ‘stuffed grandmother’?”. Pat, a lovely and calm woman, almost got cross. She said, “Oh, you know; the kiddies just crush up a lot of paper; get old pantihose, bra, cardigan, etc; they stuff all the clothes with the paper; put some wire and tape around; oh, you know.!” All I could say was, “O-kay!”

Pat went on: “when the kids went home yesterday afternoon, the stuffed grandmother was propped up against the back wall, but when the kindy teacher came in this morning, the stuffed grandmother was on the floor; and on top of her, with his trousers around his ankles, was the school cleaner!”.

The Eric Morecambe response: “There’s no answer to that, is there?” went through my mind, but I just said, “What did the teacher do?”, to which the answer was: “raced across and got the principal”; leading me to ask, “What did the principal do?”; the answer to which was: “Told the cleaner to get out and never to come back”.

My reaction to that was that I thought what the principal had done was a pretty sound response, so I just said to Pat: “Make a note of what’s happened, and don’t worry about it”; which seemed to slightly take her aback.

It was pretty clear that Pat’s main concern was that she’d just been more or less witness to a summary dismissal without due process, for which she might have had some kind of line responsibility; and that there might be ugly consequences.

In fact, the cleaner was not an employee of the Department at all; but instead of whichever firm had the cleaning contract at the time. Contracts of that kind have ample room for the recipient of the services

to bounce even mildly unsatisfactory employees of the service provider; let alone one attempting a different form of stuffing. As far as I know, nothing about this was ever heard from the cleaning contractor; and, in all likelihood, the contractor may never have even known what actually happened.

I only spent a bit over two years in Met South-West, but my sojourn had all manner of benefits, not the least of which was that, by the time I went to work at the university previously known as UWS, I was familiar with the geography of large chunks of Greater Western Sydney. However, the colourful array of incidents was of equal value.

## MEMBERS FEEDBACK: *IRSEA News Design*



### Editor’s Note

Thanks to those members who took the time to tell us about their impressions of the new newsletter. All comments are welcome and suggestions for improvement will help us produce an edition that suits our readers.

### Members’ Comments

I have found the IRSEA Newsletter quite an improvement on the past newsletters. You have made them much more readable with the presentation you have used.

**Geoff George**



Thank you, as always, for the interesting Newsletter. I read every word, thoroughly enjoying the latest news, and especially the "members write" section. Names come up that I hadn't heard about for years, and I had a thoroughly enjoyable conversation with Anne and David after the last one. It was good to hear their news and all about the home they have made after life in Tamworth for so long. I really value the Newsletter, and memories of the people Laurie valued so highly. The department is certainly not using the methods that Laurie set up in Walgett with the wonderful teaching team that developed there.

**Peggy Craddock**

First, I always read and enjoy the Newsletter. Obviously, some articles resonate more than others, but all provide interesting perspectives and reinforce the diversity in our membership. I like the new format. As I usually read the Newsletter on my phone (and sometimes on my tablet) the full-page format (rather than columns) is more easily managed. However, columns do not pose a major disincentive. I enjoy looking at the photos.

**Graham Dawson**

I prefer the change of name and give a thumbs up to the new format. As a professional body, we have to reflect this to the organisations interested in being associated with us and to interested others including the media and the political class. I prefer a single column to double ones. I re-read the News to confirm this.

"Story from the Past" could become a regular article especially if it gives a pointer or two to the future which could be useful to current Ed leaders. Well done to the inimitable Geoff. I sent a copy of it to a close friend who works in risk and governance. I am interested in education trends overseas and learning about the experiences of members currently or recently involved in education activities in other countries.

**Tony Re**

I usually read the newsletter on an iPad and sometimes on a laptop (strangely the photos don't come out properly on either device, but I suspect that's a user problem as Lindsay can see them without an issue). Firstly, good work on the new format and content. Content was most interesting and diverse with a hilarious cautionary tale at the end (Geoff is the ultimate storyteller). I like the *What's New and Upcoming Events* boxes at the front for quick information (unfortunately one of the dates (August) is out of synch with the dates in the body of the newsletter -Brian's report from memory). Eric's mention of mentors was really good to see as I think many of us have benefited from having mentors as well as having undergone mentor training and being mentors ourselves. This was/is? a crucial part of self-development, support and growth while working in a large department. It was great to see an article from Raechel as well (despite her having a million other commitments) and good to have a book recommendation. The images and quotes are a nice touch too. I think the heading should be *Members' Contributions* (but I'm sure you get enough of that sort of comment from others). Each contribution required consideration in a different way: - Who could resist reviewing their own practice against Tony Re's criteria? - S4P made me contact my daughter (in an international school) to see if she has heard about this program. As Lakemba PS was one of mine as a DS, I was thrilled to see it mentioned. Geoff's article just made me think about the number of hilarious stories we all have from past Departmental experiences. (I always hated the Department's style guide that reduced us to a lower-case d.)

**Diane Wasson**

I love the new format and was enjoying reading the newsletter when it seemed to abruptly conclude at the end of page 22. As far as the Bill Nay farewell goes, I could only recognise George Comino and (perhaps) Geoff Baldwin.

**George Green**

First, I always read and enjoy the Newsletter. Obviously, some articles resonate more than others, but all provide interesting perspectives and reinforce the diversity in our membership. I like the new format.

As I usually read the Newsletter on my phone (and sometimes on my tablet) the full-page format (rather than columns) is more easily managed. However, columns do not pose a major disincentive. I enjoy looking at the photos. Thank you for your ongoing contribution as editor. I'm sure it involves quite a deal of coordination and cajoling!

I regret that it is usually impractical for me to attend meetings. I would very much enjoy meeting and reconnecting with past colleagues. Perhaps one day the planets may align and bring me to Sydney when a meeting is scheduled.

**Graham Kennedy**

The Newsletter is important as it provides us who remain, news about friends and former colleagues. To have stories from earlier times, from people who lived them, with snippets about those who have gone to bring good memories is important, I think.

**Peggy Craddock**

Thank you for the newsletter. I usually read them on my iPhone but this time I printed it off so that I could print the lunch invitation. I enjoy the articles. Today I particularly liked the report relating to missing colleagues after retirement and making new connections.

I go to the gym most days and have made some new connections and also, I catch up with my ex-deputies and HT maths (who have each retired) -very rewarding to keep up with colleagues with whom we have spent many hours together. I also enjoyed Murat's career details. Keep up the great work and I will see you at the next luncheon.

**Sharon Parkes**

I read the magazine from a copy over several evenings or to follow up on articles. I thought the second version was quite appropriate in format and print. Clearer than the first edition. There was a diversity of articles that made for good reading. The education focus on Murat and the Department and on school funding was interesting and pointed. Kept education before us. The IRSEA section updated on its policies and there was a couple of articles based on experiences on the job (Peg and Ritchie). All-in-all, very readable. I did appreciate the interview with John Aquilina whose interest does not appear to have waned.

The balance will be more difficult to achieve regularly without some cooperation. Perhaps with travel and social activities on again there may be another source of articles. The length of 16 to 20 pages would be adequate. Be confident as the magazine is, and the producers are, greatly valued.

**Alan Rice**

In my opinion, Syd, the July Newsletter is the best that has been produced. I really liked the range of topics from current educational issues to some personal reflections. It shows that we are an organization able to give relevant advice when requested to DoE, the politicians, and the wider education community. When I spruik IRSEA, the listeners are usually surprised about the breadth of experience in IRSEA and the projects in which members are currently involved.

**Tony Re**

Greetings and Congratulations to all involved in the latest Newsletter and format. It is so interesting and informative, and I know you have had a big hand in its compilation.

**Cliff Cowdroy**

I wanted to say congratulations on another great newsletter. I have had the chance to have a good read and it was engaging and informative and well presented. Something you look forward to and are proud to show off. Well done.

**Alan Laughlin**

I have just spent an interesting hour or so “devouring” the latest IRSEA Newsletter. I must congratulate all concerned on this truly interesting publication. The articles, both from IRSEA members and others were diverse and pertinent to the wide interests of fellow members.

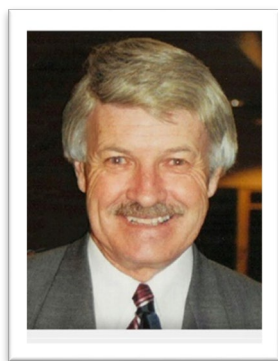
The conferring of Honorary Membership on John Aquilina was also interesting as I have a firm belief that one of the greatest advocates for Public Education as Minister was Rodney Cavalier. He supposedly lost his parliamentary career because his constituents thought he spent too much time on his duties as Minister of Education and not enough on them.

My dealings with him were mainly through my time as Assistant Director and then Director of Services, particularly when we moved into the old Ryde High School after it was it closed. Once again, congratulations on another very thoughtful Newsletter.

**Joan Healy**

## VALE, Barry Higgins: Kerryanne Knox

On July 3 I watched the live streaming of Barry’s thanksgiving service that had many of our IRSEA members in attendance.



As I laughed and cried throughout the hour and a half, it was clear to me, as I am sure it was to many others, that we had lost one of “nature’s true gentlemen” and such people as these are diamonds in our world.

Barry came from Milton, a long line of dairy farmers and was a happy, excellent student at Milton PS or, as it was known in later years, Milton Central School. As an invited guest back to the school for its 125 years celebration, Barry stated that he had enjoyed his education and his friendships. He was well prepared to head off to Wagga Wagga Teachers College in 1965 and commence studies to become a teacher, a profession that he loved with a passion.

He was recognised early in his teaching career as an outstanding teacher when the inspector visited the school where he had been appointed as Teacher in Charge. The school, Albert PS, was one and a half hours west of Dubbo and, despite the small number of students, Barry’s exceptional teaching skills were evident. He was offered a teaching position at Woollahra Demonstration School, a school where teaching students could visit and “learn from the best.”

He went from teaching gifted and talented students to Principal of Chalmers Road SSP, a different kind of school with students with different skills and talents. Chalmers Road was a Special School and he loved it, taking time at night to complete a Masters in Special Education. Barry and colleague, Warren Fairfax, helped to form the Association of Special Education Teachers (ASET) which later formed AASE. This association still supports teachers working in Special Education, including students with a disability and their families.

Chalmers Road SSP is not only special because of the students, staff, and parents but it was here he met his wife Vicki and the start of a beautiful love story.

He was a highly respected leader and recognised as a person qualified to take on the inspector role. In this role, Barry’s professional career included leader of Professional Learning for principals and deputies in Metropolitan South West region, School Improvement Officer in Hornsby Educational Resource Centre and Director of Schools, Mount Druitt. Following his retirement, Barry was called back to the DET for several years as a mediator, negotiator, investigator and was thrilled that his expertise was able to approach every interaction with a calm,



thoughtful approach that prevented a lot of angst and action against the DET.

Proudly, Barry was revered in Mount Druitt area by the Aboriginal community who respected him very much. Treasured gifts presented to him during his time in that area always had a special place in his home.

In listening to family and friends talk about Barry and how much he will be missed, it was easy to get the picture of Barry, the family man and friend. In almost every eulogy, the words, fun, loving, people person and gentleman were evident. He found joy in people and joy in every event and place he attended. Barry was the life of the party and one of his friends mentioned that someone once said, "Every party needs a Barry".

Barry's family spoke with reverence, love and absolute pride in their husband and father. They reminisced on the subtle lessons that Barry had taught them and of his fearless support for them no matter the situation faced. As Vicki described, he would do anything for his children: "He loved looking after his doll and little mates." He would have been proud of their eulogies, but he would have, after many years, needing care, known how precious he was to each one. He was well loved, and he was the love of his dear Vicki's life. She was courageous and brave to the end, watching his decline from 2012, but more severely after 2017.

Barry has left three grandchildren who won't know him as well as his family but will be told thousands of stories that will ensure that his memory lives on.

Barry's faith has been strong and has helped the family to come to terms with his suffering. The wonderful care he also received at the nursing home was applauded.

If I was to use all of the superlatives that were used to describe Barry, the story would be long. Considering the person he was and his strong faith, perhaps the last line should be that we have lost "one of God's finest."

Thank you, Barry Higgins,...thousands of students and teachers are also remembering you for the profound effect you had on their lives. Rest in Peace mate.

## Tributes to Barry

**Tony Re:** "Like so many others, I remember Barry with much fondness and can go back to his earliest days in the classroom. He was an excellent teacher, much loved by his students. I can recall his romance with Vicki and we did not know who was the more fortunate when they found each other. He was affable in all his roles and I always found it most enjoyable to meet up with him at IRSEA luncheons. Farewell, Barry. Rest in peace."

**Rex Gardner:** I worked with Barry when I was at Metropolitan Regional Office in the early nineties and like many others appreciated his committed, professional but personable approach to his role in public education.

His presence at Regional Office was always positive but he could see the lighter side of the many conflicting issues which dominated our Department at that time.

I was fortunate to have Barry chair my retirement function in 1995.

**Warren Fairfax:** We both worked as teachers in Dem schools and later in Special Education. Together we helped in forming the NSW Association of Special Education Teachers (ASET), which later formed AASE which still supports teachers working in Special Education, students with a disability and their families. Barry was an inspirational teacher and leader, so well described in your message. We will all miss him greatly as will his lovely wife Vicki and family. Sadly, I can't be at his funeral as I will be in England. I will however have you all in my thoughts and prayers on Monday next when his funeral will be held. May he rest in peace following five anguished years of suffering. The legacy he leaves is the amazing impact he had on the lives of children and staff in the NSW Public Education System.

Vale Barry. You served lovingly and well, and we will all miss you.

**Mark Anderson:** I worked with Barry when we were School Education Directors in Western Sydney - never a dull moment. A true legend of the Department of a type we are unlikely to see again.

**Lindsay Wasson:** I worked closely with Barry in Met South West Region in the late 1980s when he was a District Inspector and I was relieving Inspector (Eng/Hist) 1988 and then Inspector in 1989. I accompanied Barry on school registrations/inspections and on List 3 inspections a number of times. In these complex processes, he showed the attributes that we all admired - his sharp insight, his wonderful good humour, his dedication to quality process and his abiding commitment to the children and young people he served.

As a colleague, he guided me on the inspection process and supported me in my application for a substantive inspector's position. His friendship, warm collegiality and generosity of spirit shone through at all times.

We worked together on Met South West's submission to the Schools Renewal Taskforce in 1988, when the



then Regional Director, Noila Berglund, took us offline to write it. Again, Barry showed his incisive understanding of how public education could be radically re-shaped to bring

a more performance-based culture and structure to its remit. While this was serious business, Barry also made it an enjoyable process as only he could. Why did Noila choose Barry for this small team? "Barry's a winner", she said in her inimitable style.

In later years he was one of my School Education Directors in Western Sydney Region, appointed in 2004, until his retirement. To this role, Barry brought outstanding leadership, energy, and delivered outcomes that were profound in their impact.

While he supported his principals with special care and insight, he was unrelenting in his high expectations of them and his insistence on the best possible outcomes for the thousands of students in his patch. The loyalty he engendered in his principals and staff was unmatched as was the warmth of his collegiality and the strong commitment he made to the region's leadership team.

For these, and many other reasons, it was one of my greatest honours to present Barry with his medal on the occasion of his retirement. Barry was one of the greats. An educator of the greatest integrity, deepest commitment, special talent, and huge personal warmth. He was both a friend to colleagues and a generous supporter of them. He was an outstanding leader and a penetratingly acute adviser, a generous contributor, and a superb team member.

Barry will always be remembered for his humanity, his decency, his lack of pretension, his personal integrity, and his most special and likeable nature. He will also be remembered for his wit, his wicked humour and his sometimes larrikin ways. But his love for Vicki and their wonderful children was the guiding light that brightened his every day and gave balance and meaning to the profession in which he served so brilliantly.

## VALE, Dennis McKenzie:

Kerryanne Knox

Dennis's funeral was held on September 14.

Dennis has been recognised by many people as a talented educator who was extremely popular. He was held in high esteem by the school leaders whom he supported well and guided soundly.

Dennis continued to work in education long after he retired as a School Education Director. He often said laughingly that he didn't retire because education still needed him and that was very true indeed.

Unfortunately, his call to another universe came too early and he still had a lot of life to live. Dennis was kind enough to be able to agree with the sentiment

that we need to continue to live life for him. We can all make sure we do that for him. RIP to a person who made a difference to public education. We thank you Dennis.

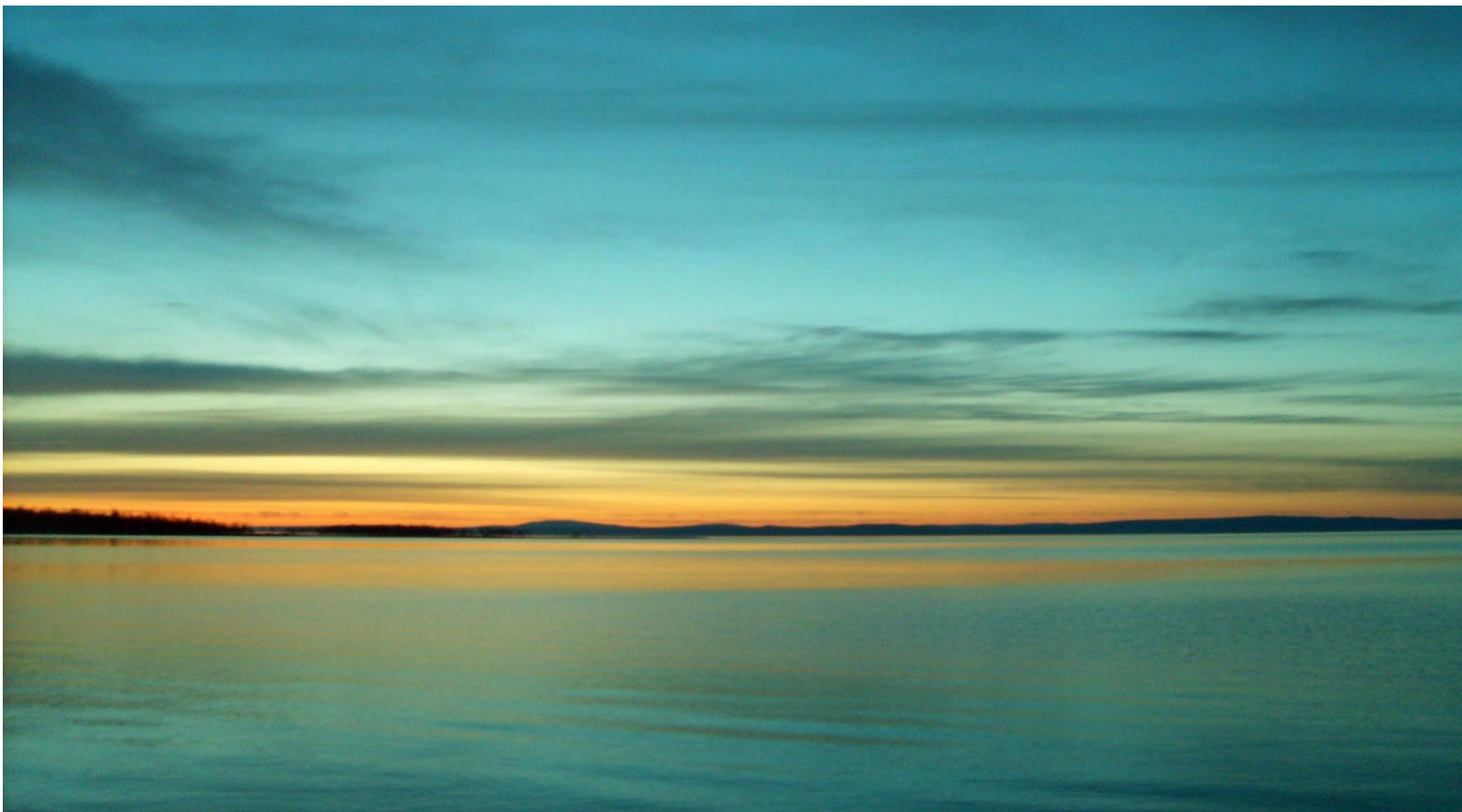
**Kerryanne Knox**

### **Tributes to Dennis**

**Alan Laughlin:** A wonderful warm colleague who provided wisdom, friendship, and continuous support. It was a joy to have worked with him in the old MSW.

**Murat Dizdar:** A great human being and a great educator. A dedicated career serving students in this state and a mentor to many of us. Will be sorely missed.

**Lindsay Wasson:** A smart mind, a great teacher, and an exceptional leader. I knew Dennis from the time we were both Head Teachers History in the 1970s, attending Laurie Tabart's History Conference at Armidale. Dennis's humour, cleverness and joy in life were to the fore. He became a friend. It was difficult not to with Dennis. Our paths crossed a number of times: in Met South West, with Noila Berglund and Alan Laughlin; and when he was a member of my SED team in Western Sydney Region. He was devoted to his principals and developed special, caring relationships with them. They, in turn, enjoyed and admired his very supportive style along with the great good humour he always brought to his work. A colleague and friend who will be widely missed.







**Institute of Retired Senior Education Administrators**

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP  
NOMINATION FORM**

*The highest honour conferred by IRSEA in recognition of dedicated commitment to IRSEA; long-term and outstanding contribution to the membership; a profound and positive impact on the life of IRSEA; and commitment and contribution to public education in NSW and/or internationally.*

**Name of Nominee:** ..... **Name of Proposer 1:** .....

**Name of Proposer 2:** ..... **Name of Seconder:** .....

**Date Submitted:** .....

**REASONS FOR NOMINATION** (To be completed by Proposer - Limit to 250 words)

**Signature of Proposers:** ...../..... **Signature of Seconder:** .....

**FOR IRSEA USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: ..... Date of Consideration: .....

Decision: ..... Date of Award: .....

President Signature: ..... Date: .....

When completed please email the form to the Secretary, IRSEA at  
secretary@irseas.org.au



**Institute of Retired Senior Education Administrators**

**OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD  
NOMINATION FORM**

*To recognise outstanding contribution in advancing the mission and objectives of the Institute and for exceptional leadership in bringing great value to the organisation, its members and to the advancement of public education.*

**Name of Nominee:** ..... **Name of Proposer:** .....

**Name of Seconder:** ..... **Date Submitted:** .....

**REASONS FOR NOMINATION** (To be completed by Proposer - Limit to 250 words)

**Signature of Proposer:** ..... **Signature of Seconder:** .....

**FOR IRSEA USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: ..... Date of Consideration: .....

Decision: ..... Date of Award: .....

President Signature: ..... Date: .....

When completed please email the form to the Secretary, IRSEA at  
secretary@irseas.org.au



**Institute of Retired Senior Education Administrators**

**HONORARY MEMBERSHIP  
NOMINATION FORM**

*Awarded to a person not otherwise a member of IRSEA or eligible for IRSEA membership, and who has made a significant contribution to IRSEA and the achievement of its objectives, or who has made a significant contribution to public education.*

**Name of Nominee:** ..... **Name of Proposer:** .....

**Name of Seconder:** ..... **Date Submitted:** .....

**REASONS FOR NOMINATION** (To be completed by Proposer - Limit to 250 words)

**Signature of Proposer:** ..... **Signature of Seconder:** .....

**FOR IRSEA USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: ..... Date of Consideration: .....

Decision: ..... Date of Award: .....

President Signature: ..... Date: .....

When completed please email the form to the Secretary, IRSEA at  
secretary@irseas.org.au





## Christmas Lunch Meeting and Booking Slip

**Friday, 1 December 2023**

**The Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney**

Please complete the lunch booking slip below and return payment with your cheque (unless paying by EFT) by Friday, 17 November to:

John Allsopp

3 Slade Ave

CASTLE HILL NSW 2154

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

I enclose my payment of \$65.00..... (@ \$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 1 December**.

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 27 November, 2023  
I agree / do not agree (cross out one) that photographs of me in professional or social conditions may be published in newsletters and on the IRSEA website.

