



IRSEA NEWS

WWW.IRSEA.ORG.AU

ABN: 78 259 388 090

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

GERRY McCLOUGHAN



Dear Members

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout New South Wales and Australia. I pay my respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

A very happy New Year to all. We begin 2025 with strong optimism that IRSEA will continue to flourish in enriching the lives of members through engagement, collegiality, friendship and support, while deploying the organisation's intellectual capacity and educational expertise to advance public education.

2024 in review

Reflecting of 2024, IRSEA is in good shape thanks to the passion and commitment of our members and supporters. I commend the wonderful IRSEA Executive Committee for their dedication and outstanding contributions to making our institute the very best it can be.

WHAT'S THE NEWS

- 5 IRSEA Plan for Consultation
- 8 Ripping Yarns from the KGB
- 15 Department's Update
- 17 Committee Report Updates
- 21 Members' Contributions
- 21 - Michael Murray & Jim Scott
- 23 - Education Corner, Syd Smith
- 26 - Peggy Craddock
- 27 Vale
- 30 AGM Luncheon Booking

Upcoming Event

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Castlereagh Boutique Hotel

21 March 2025

2024 was particularly enriching for IRSEA members, with superb and well attended general and social gatherings, as well as some unique opportunities, including exploring together the stunning ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park, and participating in the forum: *Where now for Public Schooling in Australia?*, held at the University of NSW in November. A report on the forum was published via 'The Educator' website [See [‘Australian schooling is in big trouble’: Calls for urgent structural reform | The Educator K/12](#)]. There are also reports on the forum from two of our members presented later in the newsletter. IRSEA will pass on to members other information as the forum outcomes are published.

At the August 2024 General Meeting, IRSEA launched our draft **Directions and Priorities**. This one-page longer-term plan is designed to assist continuity for planning and implementation of IRSEA's mission. The plan has been available to all members for consultation since November 2024.

This *IRSEA NEWS* again provides a copy of the plan and survey (see pages 5-7). I encourage all members, if you have not already done so, to take the opportunity to provide your feedback on the plan, preferably before the AGM on 21 March 2025 – please use the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/eQxxZphyyC>.

Through our meetings, our newsletter and our website, IRSEA has been active in providing to members the latest information about education in New South Wales to promote rich discussions on schooling and policy development. IRSEA has a rapidly emerging role in influencing and advocating for improved directions of public education – we aim increasingly to be the prominent organisation in New South Wales with the unique capacity to connect educational

leadership of the past and present to help shape the future of public education.

2024 was an exciting year for increasing IRSEA memberships, with more full members and over 40 Associate members.

Our guest speakers for our IRSEA General Meetings have been outstanding. We express our sincere gratitude to Deb Summerhayes, Deputy Secretary, Public Schools, NSW Department of Education (March); David Riordan, CEO, Public Education Foundation (May); Viv White AM, Co-Founder and CEO, Big Picture Learning Australia (August) and Dr Ken Boston, AO, with his 'Ripping Yarns from the files of the KGB' (December).

Ken's address is provided in this edition of *IRSEA NEWS* – see page 8. Ken shares the view that IRSEA has a potentially valuable role to play as an independent council of experienced elders contributing publicly to debate on education matters. To that end he has suggested we establish an interest group or 'book club' to progress our *Thought leadership* priority. More to come on that in 2025!



Over 2024, IRSEA continued to acknowledge outstanding service of colleagues in education:

- Honorary Membership: **Deb Summerhayes** in February

- Outstanding Service Award: **John Allsopp** in February
- Honorary Membership: **John Aquilina** in March
- Life Membership: **Geoff Walton** in May
- Outstanding Service Award: **Dr Alan Rice** in August
- Honorary Membership: **Ken Dixon** in December.



IRSEA support for Stewart House has been very strong, with over \$4,300 collected through our raffle program and member donorships during 2024. Stewart House has been providing a residential program of up to 12 days duration for children in need, with educational and experiential learning embedded within a health and wellbeing framework. Stewart House has been the foremost NSW Public Schools' charity since 1931 and IRSEA continues to be a proud supporter.

IRSEA is looking to progress formalised partnerships with other organisations in its mission to inspire and support the achievement of equitable outcomes and educational excellence in public education in New South Wales.

Over 2024, IRSEA has been exploring mutual benefits in collaborating with the Public Education Foundation (PEF) to support public education. Our ongoing work has resulted in a draft Memorandum of Understanding to be finalised for presentation to IRSEA members for endorsement early in 2025. The MOU will be established as a non-binding agreement centred on five pillars of collaboration: *Advocating for Public Education, Thought leadership, Philanthropy for Public Education. Celebrating excellence, and Service of volunteering.*

In September, Vice-president Lindsay Wasson, Immediate-past-president Eric Jamieson and I met with Deputy Secretary Deb Summerhayes to explore establishing a memorandum of understanding to support our mutual goals to help shape the future of public education. We look forward in 2025 to report more to you about this important development.

On 29 November, seven of our Executive participated in the Public Schools professional learning day at Marie Bashir Public School, attended by over 200 senior department leaders including the Secretary, Deputy Secretaries, Executive Directors, Directors Educational Leadership (DELs) and other senior officers. The Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Hon. Prue Car MP provided a passionate address in support of the directions of Public Schools NSW. The program provided an inspirational day with keynotes and focus sessions addressing the strategic areas of *Leading Equity for Excellence, High Potential & Gifted Education, and Explicit Teaching*. Our IRSEA representatives were impressed with the high quality of leadership demonstrated at all levels. We witnessed amazing expertise and fervent passion from the DELs and other senior leaders supporting them.

There were multiple indicators that public education is hell-bent on strong resurgence in NSW. The invitation for IRSEA representation at such events indicates how strongly the Department of Education values the contribution of our Institute in the progression of its reform agenda to ensure public schools excel in providing stronger support to school communities and student learning across NSW.

In December 2024, Kerrie Ikin and I met with senior officers of the Department's Communication and Engagement Directorate to progress the establishment of an annual IRSEA award or fellowship to recognise outstanding senior educational administrators with support for them to conduct innovative educational research. This scheme, to be jointly funded by IRSEA and DoE, presents as an exciting initiative for 2025 and beyond with the capacity to further build productive connections between the Department and IRSEA. More information to follow in 2025.

2025 – onwards and upwards

I encourage all members to be advocates in promoting the value of IRSEA to colleagues and former colleagues. Increasing membership is key to building sustainability for our fantastic organisation and personal contact is still the most effective means to grow the size and influence of IRSEA.

Building on a successful social luncheon at the Sydney Rowers Club, Abbotsford in October, IRSEA will be looking to increase the number of social luncheons through 2025. Suggestions for magnificent venues are welcome.

We are planning a Hunter Regional IRSEA social event and formal meeting to be held at the Apollo Hotel in Charlestown over Friday 14 and Saturday 15 June. This initiative is designed to realise expansion of IRSEA activities beyond the Sydney metropolitan area. Over the Friday-

Saturday period, we are offering a social gathering and dinner on Friday evening, and a more formal meeting with lunch on the Saturday. Holding this important meeting over two days is designed to allow both Full and Associate members along with their guests to attend. Laureate Professor Jenny Gore, University of Newcastle has agreed to be our Guest Speaker for the formal meeting on the Saturday. Full details will be advertised soon.

We will be introducing a new Member-seminar program during 2025 to support IRSEA Priority 2, *Thought Leadership*. I commend member Jim Scott for his drive to establish this initiative which will focus on education innovation and research. Each one-hour seminar will have a 20:20:20 minute structure for *Presentation: Questions & discussion: Advocacy beyond IRSEA*. Each seminar will be followed by an informal luncheon, of course, to contribute to IRSEA Priority 1.

Ideas and perspectives from members at any time are always welcome. Please feel free to contact me via message or a call on 0417243744. This will be my last IRSEA NEWS report to members as president. Thank you to all members for the support provided to me. I would like to formally thank those other members who have provided special and much appreciated support to me in this role. Thank you sincerely to Lindsay Wasson, Eric Jamieson, Brian Davies, Ray Gilles, Alan Laughlin and Irina White.

At the AGM, the Presidency will shift to the visionary Lindsay Wasson, and I very much look forward to supporting him in my new role of Immediate Past President. All the very best to all members.

Gerry McCloughan
President, IRSEA

New IRSEA PLAN for Consultation

The Executive Committee has developed a draft high-level IRSEA Plan, in line with the IRSEA Constitution. This '*Plan on a page*' is designed to describe and promote the activities and directions of IRSEA over the longer term. We believe this document will support the growth and influence of IRSEA for the good of members and for our advocacy of public education in New South Wales and beyond.

The plan features the proposed wording for the *Vision, Mission (Purpose), Commitments, Priorities* and intended *Impacts* of the Institute. Three draft priorities of '*Thriving membership*', '*Thought leadership*', and '*Advocacy and inspiration*' are designed to authentically encompass our evolving Institute as a beneficent and forward-looking organisation with an emphasis on improving the future for public education while honouring and building on its illustrious past.

During the August meeting 2024, the draft was presented to members attending, and there was support for a wider consultation with the full membership before the plan is adopted as a public facing document for ongoing planning, promotion and reporting.

The Executive Committee is very keen to gain input from the broader membership on the draft Plan before we formally adopt it in April 2025. If you have not already done so, please use the link below to respond.

We greatly look forward to your input to help guide the shape and implementation of the plan. We will be looking for multiple ways that members can contribute as we put the plan into action.

CLOSING 31 MARCH!!

FEEDBACK ON IRSEA PLAN

(See copy and constitutional context below on pages 6 and 7)

~ MEMBERS' SURVEY ~

Please provide feedback on the following questions, with supporting comments where needed.

Q1. Please indicate your membership status:

☐ Full ☐ Associate ☐ Honorary ☐ Life

Q2. Does the one-page plan clearly reflect and communicate the constitutional *mission* and *objects* of the Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators (IRSEA)?

Q3. Do you support the descriptions of *Vision, Mission, Commitments, Priorities* and *Impacts*?

Q4. Is the plan feasible and achievable?

Q5. Are there recommendations for any improvements to wording or intentions?

Q6. What impact do you believe this plan will have on the directions and priorities of our institute?

Q7. Do you have any other suggestions or feedback?



ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS:

Please use the following link to respond to the members' survey:

<https://forms.office.com/r/eQxxZphyyC>



Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators (IRSEA)

OUR DIRECTIONS AND PRIORITIES

**DRAFT for
Consultation**

Our Vision



An influential and thriving organisation of inspired leadership, warm collegiality and passionate advocacy to help ensure public education in NSW is the core provider of outstanding, internationally renowned, quality education.

Our Mission



Enrich the lives of members through engagement, collegiality, friendship and support while deploying our intellectual capacity and educational expertise to advance public education.

Our Commitments



- Ensure collegiality, friendship and member value are at the heart of the organisation.
- Embrace inclusivity, equity, diversity and collaboration as the underpinnings of excellence in public education.
- Support a public education system that delivers learning success for every child and young person.
- Advocate for the students, families, administrators, teachers, schools and communities that comprise public education in NSW and beyond.

Our Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout NSW and Australia. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Our Priorities

Thriving Membership

Enriching the lives of retired and current senior educational administrators through engagement, collegiality, friendship, sharing and support.

Thought Leadership

Deploying the deep educational insights, expertise and wisdom of our diverse membership – connecting past and present to help shape the future of public education.

Advocacy & Inspiration

Inspiring and supporting the achievement of educational excellence and equitable outcomes in public education.

Our Impact



Thriving Membership

Adding genuine value to the lives of members through a suite of social and service activities.



Thought Leadership

Contributing to and influencing the intellectual capital and capabilities of public school educators in their quest to be at the forefront of education provision.



Advocacy & Inspiration

Providing public educators and policy makers with independent, authoritative and evidence-based educational advice, advocacy and support.

1/8/2024

IRSEA PLAN: CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Extract of Mission and Objects from the *IRSEA Constitution*

2 Mission Statement and Objects

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

2.2 The Objects of the Institute are to:

- (a) preserve friendship and a sense of identity among those senior men and women who have spent their professional endeavours in the field of public education
- (b) provide whatever donations and other support to Stewart House, Harbord, New South Wales, or any other non-profit tax-exempt charitable organisation for children, as may be determined at each Annual General Meeting of the Institute
- (c) provide members with a forum for the discussion of educational issues
- (d) offer the benefits of the members' experience and wisdom to policy makers and senior officers in public education and to the wider community
- (e) provide support that may enhance the welfare and quality of life of members in regard to retirement matters
- (f) contribute to the body of knowledge about the evolution of public education in New South Wales, Australia.

Ripping Yarns from the Files of the KGB

Dr Ken Boston, Guest Speaker ~ IRSEA Lunch, 6 December 2024

This is an edited version of Ken's address to the IRSEA lunch in December. Our participants' survey rated this the absolute highlight of the luncheon (100% rated it the aspect of the luncheon they most enjoyed!). Ken indicated afterwards that it was an honour and a pleasure to speak to former colleagues.

KEN'S ADDRESS

The NSW Education Department was established in 1880. There have since been twenty-three Directors-General or equivalent. I was number fifteen, and one of six to have served for more than a decade.

I was a bit of an odd fish: coming from outside NSW and having been the Director-General of another state; and not retiring or dying in office but resigning to take on another job in education.

They were the best eleven years in my professional life. I had two superb ministers in Virginia Chadwick and John Aquilina. Or three such ministers actually: I was with John Watkins for the last few months, but by the time he became Minister I was already flirting with London.

* * * * *

I had two hesitations about applying for the job in NSW. First unlike in any other state, the NSW Department – the largest and most powerful education body in the country - no longer had control over the K-10 curriculum in government and non-government schools. The Carrick Report and the Education Act had given that responsibility to a Board of Studies. Would I be a Director-General with one hand tied behind my back?



Second, the Department was being reconstituted following Schools Renewal, part of which I strongly agreed with, but part of which I thought had serious shortcomings.

The more due diligence I did on NSW, and the more I read of the detail of these changes, the more concerned I became. It seemed as if this massive Department had become some oversize laboratory rat, opened up flat on its back with a motley collection of people rummaging around in its entrails: John Carrick, Brian Scott, Hedley Beare and the External Council of Review, Nick Greiner, and Brian

Scott's son Mark, who was the Minister's adviser.

How much say would the incoming Director-General have? Did they want someone simply to resurrect the rat and make it promise to behave better in the future than it had in the past?

But after much thought we decided that I should apply.

I remembered Paul Keating saying that if you don't live in Sydney you're just camping out.

* * * * *

The Board of Studies issue was dealt with rather easily. I attended the first Board meeting soon after my appointment. John Lambert spelled out at some length, for the benefit of the new boy, that the Board was now the sole curriculum authority in NSW, and that the Department was just one vote among the many around the table. I took it all in without demur.

But this explanation clearly created an unworkable situation. I was responsible for a quarter of the NSW budget. The curriculum has enormous budgetary implications. Yet I could potentially be outvoted at the Board by, say, two parent representatives and a teacher from a private school, who had no fiscal accountability to Government. That position was not sustainable.

Further, the fact remained that the NSW Department was the greatest curriculum resource in the land. Its support was critical to the future success of the Board. Collaboration between the two bodies was essential. In the event of any conflict, surely Department advice on curriculum should be rejected only by the Minister, not by the Board.

So I went to the Minister and pointed out the absurdity of the position, and the risk it

involved. I said that I did not propose to attend further meetings of the Board, but to send a deputy. I proposed to offer her the final advice of the Department on recommendations she would receive from the Board prior to her final decision. She readily agreed. John Lambert was not happy, but the matter was solved. From then on, the Deputy Director-General (Schools) represented the Department on the Board, his vote being understood as potentially provisional.

Thankfully it all turned out to be a storm in a teacup. Some of you might need to correct me, but I cannot recall any occasion on which we in fact recommended any substantial change to a Board recommendation. That was because the Department was so immensely influential in Board Committees that only sensible recommendations acceptable to public education came forward.

After Gordon Stanley and John Ward took over the Board, Terry Burke and I would meet regularly with them and the Minister for very constructive discussion of Board proposals and recommendations. All that was 32 years ago - I of course now see no problem with the current arrangements with NESA, and with the Secretary being a member of its board. By now long-established precedent, he is able to also offer direct advice to the Minister.

* * * * *

The Schools Renewal issue was a bit more complex. I arrived in NSW, as I had in South Australia, with a very clear view of the role and purpose of public education, which I have held since my days in Victoria, and which I hold to this day.

I believe that a public education system is an instrument, an implement, a tool to be used to achieve excellence and equity in education for all young people throughout the state. It has a purpose and a mission. A public education

system is not an inert bureaucracy, but a cause.

The classrooms of Australia's public schools are the crucible in which the sinews of this multicultural, pluralist nation have been continuously fired and shaped.

I also have a firm view on the most effective structure for a public school system.

At the top is the Minister, making and deciding policy. The chief source of that policy should be the Department. A strong department produces a steady flow of policy recommendations to the Minister, some of them relatively minor, but giving the Minister improvements to make and things to announce. In the absence of such a flow of policy development, the vacuum will quickly be filled by untested ideas from the Minister's staff and backbenchers.

Next is the State Executive, responsible for strategy and the macro-allocation of resources. By strategy I mean the development of all those systemic plans that are necessary for achieving the overall goal of ubiquitous educational excellence and equity. The State Executive is the key body for applying the instrument or tool to achieve equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes for all groups of young people, regardless of background.

The role of regions is to manage the delivery of that strategy by schools. The NSW Education Department was and remains the biggest employer in the country – too large to manage centrally. Management includes curriculum support, professional development, staffing and promotion, facilities, accountability, monitoring school performance and managing under-performing schools.

The schools are the front-line delivery focus of the organisation. In my view 32 years ago, I

believed they bore the entire responsibility for tactics – the actions planned to achieve a specific end. If the departmental strategy was to teach all children to read to a specific standard by age eight, it was the job of the school to decide on tactics – to decide on how that should be done.

Teaching methodology and school organisation to my mind were entirely matters for the principal and teachers as professionals. I would not have countenanced, 32 years ago, the mandating of explicit teaching or synthetic phonics, although I do not question that decision today.

Now, I was 100 per cent behind what Scott was proposing for schools. My problem with Schools Renewal was not so much what it said, but what it failed to say.

Its sole strategy for the renewal of schools was devolution, to be accompanied by reduction in the roles of head office and the regions. But if ubiquitous excellence and equity were to be achieved, far more than this was needed.

The Schools Renewal Strategy had no explicit commitment to the mission of public education as I saw it, no explicit program for achieving excellence and equity across NSW, and no strategy for bridging social divides and sustaining a multicultural Australia.

It said little or nothing about curriculum strategies, professional development strategies, staffing strategies, strategies to support young people with disabilities and those in small and remote schools, and capital works strategies – all of them critical for genuine system-wide school renewal and rejuvenation.

The Report proposed a hands-off approach strategically and managerially. In my view quite the opposite was required as a corollary to devolution to schools. If the system was to

be used as a weapon for achieving excellence and equity, it needed a strong state executive and head office to develop this expanded body of strategies, and strong regional management to ensure delivery.

So I was an evangelical devolutionist – a happy clapper - at the tactical level of schools, but a centralist when it came to strategy and management.

I have very high regard for Brian Scott personally, and he did much to help me settle into NSW. I also regard Mark Scott as a good friend of long standing. But Brian saw my strengthening of the strategic and management roles of head office and the regions as counter to his report, rather than dealing with its omissions. The last straw for Brian was the decision to move back to Bridge Street, and he resigned at that point in 1994.

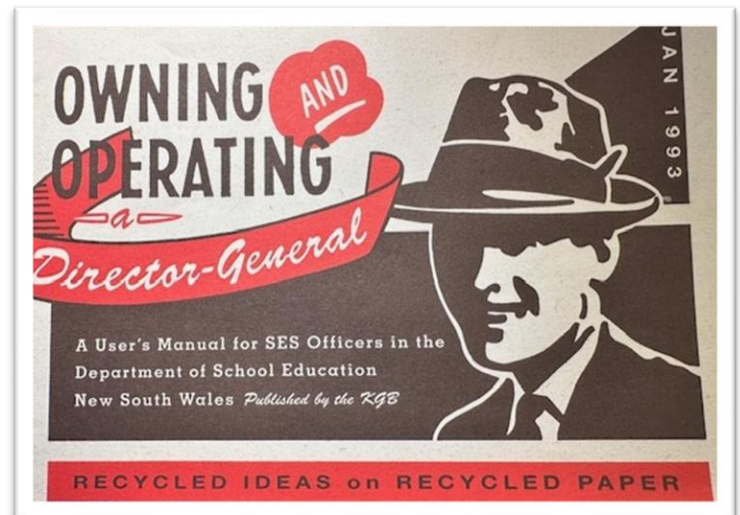
* * * * *

Towards the end of my first year, 1992, I came to the conclusion that the Department at central and regional level was still suffering from having the stuffing knocked out of it by Metherell, Carrick, Scott, Greiner and all the events since 1988.

People seemed to be waiting for someone to tell them what to do next. For the first few months I had thought this might have been because they were just waiting to see how the new bloke would turn out, but I soon realised it was much more than that. The prevailing culture was reactive rather than proactive – not defensive, but lacking in energy, hesitant to float new ideas, and unwilling to take risk. And that was perhaps understandable.

My attempt to kickstart a change in that culture was the document *Owning and Operating a Director-General*, which was distributed to all 200 Senior Executive Service officers in the organisation. In 1954 my father

had bought his first car, an FJ Holden, and in its glove-box there was a manual on which this document was whimsically modelled. I wrote it over the 1992/3 Christmas break, and Irina and her team did an excellent job on its production.



It set out some ground rules “to keep your Director-General in top working order”, of which the most notorious were the construction of briefing notes that provide solutions rather than delineate problems; the preparation of answers to Ministerial correspondence in plain, simple English, avoiding the bureaucratic camouflage of the passive voice; meeting all deadlines; and foreseeing and resolving potential difficulties before they become major issues. It acknowledged that innovation “means taking risks, and with risks will come mistakes. Don’t be afraid to take the one, or to make the other: Directors-General have much experience of both”.

I regarded this document as very important. It was a charter for proactivity for all SES officers and the staff working with them, and for making the organisation much more responsive to the community. Its intention was to get everyone again playing off the front foot. It encouraged ideas and laid out the

pathway to transform them into policy proposals on the Minister's desk.

Some people appreciated its attempts at wry humour, others were offended by it: by the obvious sexism of a male wearing a fedora on the cover, and by the arrogance of professionals being told how to write a briefing note and a ministerial letter.

But it worked. I must admit that I obstinately insisted on rigid adherence until it was fully embedded, as did Head Office Directors, Regional Directors and the Ministerial Correspondence Unit. Phil Bolte rooted out the passive voice relentlessly. Work that didn't meet the standard was inevitably sent back for redrafting and resubmission.

That hurt many people deeply – when you have a master's degree in education, it is pretty bruising to have a briefing note, or a draft ministerial letter rejected. But learning took place. Things started humming and organisational vitality returned. It was worth the pain. By 1995, head office and the regions were functioning far more effectively than in 1992 and were seen to be doing so by Government. I was invariably going into ministerial meetings with an agenda of solid proposals, rather than waiting for the minister to take the initiative.

* * * * *

When I look back over my eleven years when we were working together, the events of that time fall into three categories: the waves on the surface of the water, the tides that could be expected to come and go periodically, and the deep-sea current beneath, that altered the course of events profoundly and over which we had no control.

The waves on the surface of the water varied in size and roughness but never dominated the headlines for more than few days or a week at

a time. They included both good news and bad news: such things as pay disputes; strikes; school discipline; crises at Bega, Manly, Lismore and Lurnea High Schools; the establishment of Coffs Harbour Education Campus: the Baumgart, Eltis and McGaw Reviews; the establishment of the quality assurance unit, visits of the international advisory group chaired by David Hargreaves, my fight with the Howard Government over its refusal to allow children from the Villawood Detention Centre to attend nearby schools (which we won), and so on. The bad news kept many of us awake for a few nights, but did not threaten to alter the course of history.

The tides were more serious and long-lasting. They were a much greater worry than the waves, but of a kind that comes and goes. In my time there were three events in this category.

First, two significant restructures of the organisation in the light of budget cuts, the more significant being that of 1996, when the Council on the Cost of Government imposed a \$17 million budget reduction on head office and the regions, resulting in a reduction in the number of regions and the loss of many good people.

Second, the Royal Commission on the Police Service, which expanded into child protection and revealed our inadequate procedures for dealing with paedophiles in our own ranks. This exposed a shameful period in our history. It led to the immediate recentralisation of the management of allegations against teachers.

Third, the formation in 1997 of the Department of Education and Training, from the Education Department, the Department of Training and Education Coordination, and TAFE NSW.

I was never made privy to the full reasons for this move, which came from deep within Cabinet and the Premier's Office. But my belief is that it was driven by a decision to deflate the tyres of DTEC.

DTEC had been set up following the Labor victory in 1995 to stimulate and manage the provision of training by private providers. This work was aided by federal provisions brought in by the first Howard Government in 1996. By 1997, private providers were taking a significantly increasing share of the low-cost high-enrolment courses delivered by TAFE, which had formerly helped subsidise the high-cost programs requiring advanced technology, and the second-chance adult education programs.

My guess is that this concerned some influential members of the Labor Party, and it was decided to put the functions under different departmental management, although I was never directed to slow down the accreditation of private providers, nor did I have the means to make that happen if they met the required criteria.

My initial reaction to the proposal was that there was no reason why school education should be part of the arrangement. This was about training: surely Government could just reshape TAFE to take over the DTEC function. There was a precedent for this in the Health Department, which not only ran the public hospitals, but accredited and regulated private hospitals and other private health providers.

The problem with this solution was that the TAFE Commission was a corporate body unlike other government departments: it had a Board, a Managing Director rather than a Director-General, and eleven institutes operating semi-commercially. There would be a massive conflict of interest if DTEC were to be subsumed under TAFE. Certainly, it would

have been strongly opposed by private providers. And so, the new department was established.

It is important to understand that there was never an actual amalgamation of schools and TAFE. I became both Director-General of Education and Training and Managing Director of TAFE. But nothing else changed. The TAFE Commission Board remained. The TAFE directors continued to meet separately under my chairmanship: they were not amalgamated with State Executive. There was no integrated Education and TAFE strategy. There was no common budget. The TAFE institutes were not touched: existing TAFE signage and TAFE letterheads were retained. I was even given two farewells, one by TAFE and the other by Education and Training. There was some useful movement of senior staff between schools and TAFE, and some increased interaction between schools and TAFE campuses, but otherwise TAFE was kept as it was planned in the days of Gregor Ramsey and Greg Woodburn.

The most alarming problem in my time was the deep-sea current flowing steadily beneath us during the 1990s, which we were powerless to control, and which has subsequently become much stronger and more pernicious.

This was the change beginning in the 1970s, when governments moved away from Keynesian economics to today's full-blown neoliberalism.

When I began teaching in 1964, education was seen as a public good. Public schools provided – and were seen by the community to provide – high quality education. They served the great majority of the population. Federal and state governments, regardless of party, believed in public investment in public infrastructure and services, a social safety net and a constraint on inequality. That was the essence of Keynesian economics.

Education has now become a positional good. In the public mind, if you want your child to have a good education, you must pay for it. The more you can afford, the better the education. The role of government, neoliberals believe, is to eliminate the obstacles that prevent the discovery of the supposed natural hierarchy in society: cut taxes, shed regulation, privatise public services, diminish the power of trade unions, shrink the state, and liberate the market. Preferential funding treatment for non-government schools has made wealthy private schools the engine of social division and segregation. Inequalities in wealth have become extreme.

In the early 1990s, the Greiner Government basically pursued a nascent neoliberal agenda. So did the Carr Government. Neoliberalism subsequently accelerated federally and in all states. We fought bitterly against the Howard Government's education funding agenda from 1996, but we were not successful, and the situation has greatly worsened since.

We said then that government policies would result in the residualisation of public education. That has now happened. It is a national disgrace that many comprehensive high schools cannot offer high-quality face-to-face teaching in the more demanding HSC English, maths and science subjects. That fact alone is driving many parents, against their natural preference, to send their children to non-government schools. Public education is now facing a potentially existential threat, which will not be diminished simply by bringing public schools to 100 per cent of the Gonski Schooling Resource Standard. Some radical redesign of the structure and funding of schooling might be our only salvation, along the

lines suggested by Chris Bonnor, Dean Ashenden and others.

Being Christmas, I won't pursue that sad topic. But I would say that the best thing going for public education in NSW at the moment is its leader, Murat Dizdar. He has an enormous task ahead of him, but he has the personal and professional qualities needed if this mountain is to be moved, and behind him he has a Department more united than it has ever been in the past. For what it is worth, he has my total and unqualified support.

* * * * *

Thank you for hearing my confession, and for inviting me to blend my memories with yours. Like me, you undoubtedly reflect from time to time on achievements and disappointments in your career, and on things you are proud of and other things you regret.

We are a special group of people – colleagues who have devoted their working lives to the cause of public education.

Whatever we did, wherever we were, whatever our position, and whatever our success or failure, we together, for some time, carried the fire and I think we did pretty well.



NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS

RAEHEL MCCARTHY, DEL AND IRSEA LIAISON



Hi all

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. I managed to get in a one-week holiday up to Queensland with my family which was lovely, and I managed not to get sunburnt which is unusual but very fortunate!

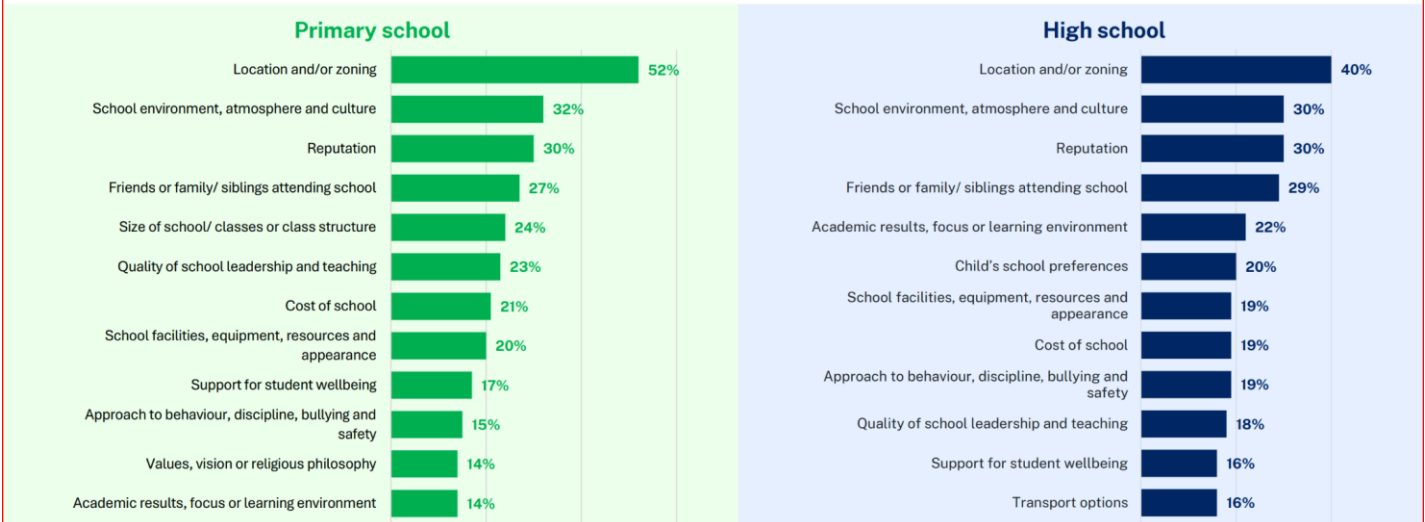
I thought for this article, I would reiterate the key priorities for our department and provide an update on current and new strategies to grow student enrolments, getting every school to build community confidence and bring more families back into the fold of Public Education.

In 2025 we will continue our deep focus on leading equity for excellence, explicit teaching, and high potential and gifted education. We will work collaboratively to create inclusive, engaging and high-quality learning environments for all our students and continue to deliver on Our Plan for NSW Public Education in its second year of implementation.

Last year’s strategies to boost enrolments included efforts to reduce the number of teacher vacancies so that we have a committed and dedicated teacher in every classroom across the state. To attract and retain more people to the teaching profession, all teachers benefited from a significant pay rise. Our department also mandated more flexibility in teachers accessing part-time arrangements; introduced a maximum one-hour mandatory training requirement; and introduced a staff wellbeing strategy. This has resulted in an anticipated 61,000 young learners starting kindergarten and 52,000 students beginning their secondary school journey in Year 7.

Over the school holidays, Asset Management Unit completed 1200 maintenance jobs, started the process of 9 major school renewals and ensured everything was in place for the 5 new schools opening in 2025. I think this is very important work as we need to ensure our school facilities are at least comparable to what the private sector offers.

Parents were asked what factors they considered when selecting their child’s school. The graphs below show the main factors considered, ranked in order and expressed as a percentage of respondents.



Note: ‘school environment, atmosphere and culture’ primarily relates to the ‘look and feel’ of a school, rather than to specific programs which may be covered under other responses, such as ‘support for student wellbeing’ or ‘approach to behaviour’.

In 2025, to ensure the public agrees our schools offer “a quality education without an enormous price tag” there is a growing emphasis on ensuring voluntary school contributions remain voluntary and that no student is denied the opportunity to meet syllabus requirements because of non-payment of school contributions. Schools were also advised not to use incentives or consequences regarding the payment or non-payment of school contributions.

DELs have been provided with a very useful “Boosting Community Confidence in Public Education Resource Pack” that includes:

- Research highlighting the key factors influencing parents' school choice decisions

- Resources to support key transition points
- Illustrations of practice where schools have greatly enhanced student enrolments
- Some conversation starters for DELs to use with principals.

This is an exciting time to be in education and I look forward to using these resources with my own principals towards the end of this term.

Thanks for reading this article and I hope to catch up with you all face-to-face soon.

Regards

Raechel McCarthy



COMMITTEE REPORT UPDATES

Treasurer's Update: Ray Gillies

Annual subscriptions are now due

I thank members who have paid their IRSEA subscriptions of \$25 for 2025. A renewal form was sent to all members. Many members took the opportunity to include their very much appreciated donation to Stewart House.

If you have not yet paid your annual subscription, please send your payment as soon as possible.

IRSEA finances are sufficient to meet current commitments

On 1 March 2025, the IRSEA Society Account had a balance of \$13,039.78. Our Term Deposit is valued at \$10,775.51 (maturing 14 July 2025). IRSEA receipts were \$2,025 members' subscriptions, \$2,055 in members' Stewart House donations, \$420 lunch payments, and \$155 other donations. Expenditure was \$30 for postage.

Proposed increase to annual subscription in 2026

The IRSEA Annual Financial Report for 2024 is included in this newsletter. It shows that we had a deficit of expenditure over receipts of \$544. Costs are also rising with planned improvements in member service.

I intend to recommend to the 21 March 2025 Annual General Meeting that the IRSEA annual subscription be increased to \$30 in 2026.

Ray Gillies

IRSEA Treasurer



Thriving Membership



Thought Leadership



Advocacy & Inspiration



**INSTITUTE OF RETIRED SENIOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS INC.**

ABN 78 259 388 090

<https://www.irsea.org.au>**ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2024****Balance sheet: Financial Year - 1 January to 31 December 2024**

Assets		Liabilities	
CBA Society Cheque A/c	\$8,594.78	Subscriptions in advance	\$85.00
CBA Term deposit	\$10,775.51	Subs. arrears written off	\$50.00
Non-current assets	\$0.00		
Subscriptions in arrears	\$50.00		
Total assets	\$19,420.29	Total liabilities	\$135.00
Net equity	\$19,285.29		

Income and Expenditure: Financial Year ending 31 December 2024

Income		Expenditure	
Stewart House	\$4,300.00	Stewart House	\$4,300.00
Subscriptions	\$2,550.00	Newsletter (printing)	\$1,362.00
Donations to IRSEA	\$265.00	Newsletter (postage)*	\$429.90
Lunch meetings	\$7,510.00	Lunch meetings (members)	\$7,020.00
		Lunch meetings (guests)	\$780.00
		Lunch meetings (venue)	\$880.00
		Fees to Fair Trading	\$54.00
		Member certificates	\$278.80
		Refund (prepaid lunch)	\$65.00
Total income	\$14,625.00	Total expenditure	\$15,169.70
		Operating loss	(\$544.70)

Reconciliation as at 31 December 2024

CF from 2022-2023	\$9,139.48
Less operating loss	(\$544.70)
CF 2025	\$8,594.78

Interest earned on the CBA IRSEA Term Deposit in 2024 was \$440.44. The current term deposit was reinvested for nine months at 4.45% p.a. and matures on 14 July 2025.

1. I move that the AGM approves the Annual Financial Report for 2024.
2. I move that the IRSEA annual subscription fee is set at \$30 for 2026.

Ray Gillies
Treasurer, IRSEA

Secretary’s Update: Brian Davies

IRSEA NEEDS YOU



With our Annual General Meeting on Friday 21 March, it is time to nominate for the election of the 2025-2026 IRSEA Executive Committee. There will be vacancies on the executive committee to be filled. Syd Smith, our newsletter editor, after years of service on the executive will be stepping down. I would like to thank Syd for all his wonderful work. There is also likely to be other places on the committee. It will be wonderful to have new executive members to share their perspective. If you haven’t been on the committee before you will find that there is a great deal of support for each other amongst the executive members.

Nomination is easy. A nomination form is on page 29 of this newsletter with information on the positions on the executive that you can nominate for. You can nominate for one of the office-bearers, or to be an ordinary committee member (the number is not limited) to help play a supporting role. You can nominate for more than one position. All you have to do is complete and sign as

the nominee. If there are issues with organising or getting the signature of a nominator or seconder, please don’t let that put you off, just contact me on secretary@irsea.org.au and I will help. You also might like to help someone else to nominate. Nomination forms have to be to me by **Friday 14 March 2025** (details on the form) with the election taking place at the AGM.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting is to be held on Friday 21 March 2025 at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

The meeting will commence at noon and is scheduled to finish at 2pm. The lounge will be available for drinks before the meeting. The booking-slip and details for the meeting can be found on page X and need to be returned by **Friday 7 March**. This is a wonderful opportunity to catch up with colleagues, hear what is happening in IRSEA and raise any business you would like discussed. Please contact me on secretary@irsea.org.au by **Friday 7 March** if there is any matter you would like to include on the agenda.

DATES for Your Diary	Friday 21 March	Annual General Meeting
	Friday 30 May	General Luncheon Meeting
	Friday 1 August	General Luncheon Meeting
	Friday 5 December	General Luncheon Meeting
	ALL Meetings @ Castlereagh Boutique Hotel	

Please also note that when I receive the details of the ANZAC Remembrance Service that is held at the Department’s head office at Parramatta, I will email the information to members

Brian Davies
Secretary
Email: secretary@irsea.org.au

Stewart House Update: Kerryanne Knox

Last year the Chief Executive Officer at Stewart House, Graham Phillpotts, retired. He had given eighteen years of continuous service to Stewart House and had taken it through some incredible changes while maintaining the mission “give children a better life”. We wish him well.

I have taken up the role temporarily while the search for a new CEO begins. At the same time, the Principal of Stewart House, Stephen Smith, accepted the role of Principal, Marsden High School. A new Principal, Peter Wilson, has been appointed permanently to Stewart House.

Throughout all of this change, there has been some incredible work being done in the fundraising sphere to encourage people to continue to donate to Stewart House or to start now to help give some children a “break from their present circumstances” and look to the future of what may be for them.

A fabulous Boxing Day event was held on Sydney Harbour once again. This had to be cancelled during COVID times but Transdev has been a fabulous partner for Stewart House in getting it up and running again. We had more than 400 supporters on the day and it was a perfect way to watch the start of the Sydney to Hobart Race. I am hoping to assist in encouraging more of our school staff and retired colleagues to commit to regular donations again as we face a future where our regular donations are in decline.

For those of us who are still donating and buying that raffle ticket at IRSEA lunches.....thank you! Every dollar is appreciated!

Kerryanne Knox
Acting CEO
Stewart House



EDUCATION CORNER

FORUM: WHERE NOW FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA?

Hosted by [Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, UNSW](#), and supported by [Big Picture Learning Australia](#). Friday November 15, 2024, John Niland Scientia Building, UNSW Sydney

Five IRSEA members participated in this forum. In the next edition of IRSEA News we hope to report the compiled inputs from the ten focus groups, as well as other outcomes from the forum. Here are reports from two of our representatives.

Report by IRSEA Member, Michael Murray

It was my pleasure to attend this forum on 15 November on behalf of IRSEA, one of several organisations in attendance with a focus on improving the impact and effectiveness of public education in this country.

Two keynote presentations, by Dean Ashenden and Chris Bonnor, provided much food for thought.

Dean Ashenden argued the need for 'big reform' on a scale not seen since the Whitlam/Karmel restructuring of the 1970s. In particular, he urged a shift away from an ATAR-driven 'cognitive speed competition' to a focus on student-driven learning; common funding for a level playing field; and a move away from national governance. He offered this thoughtful goal for school reform: '12 safe, happy and worthwhile years, for all, within a generation'. I look forward to reading Ashenden's latest book, *Unbeaching the whale: Can Australia's schooling be reformed?*

Chris Bonnor pointed to declining achievement and growing disadvantage as signs that Australia's education system is in deep trouble. He said that Australia must learn from comparable high-performing countries – such as New Zealand, Canada, Scotland, Belgium and the Netherlands – that it is possible to allow diversity and choice of schools while maximising equity and effectiveness. This can be achieved by a common

framework for all schools, public and private, with equal funding, no fees and full accountability – but zero public funding for schools that choose to be exclusive.

The strong presence of Big Picture Learning Design on the day provided a glimpse of what future educational reform might look like in terms of student learning. The many Big Picture students who attended the forum were living testimony to the effectiveness of safe and inclusive schools that nurture student agency in learning. Their eloquent voices added significantly to the debate about educational reform.

At one point in proceedings, moderator Viv White, Big Picture Executive Director, recognised the warm reception she received when presenting to IRSEA recently and the enthusiastic participation of IRSEA in the forum. Clearly, the collective wisdom of IRSEA can play a key role in shaping future directions in public schooling in Australia.

Report by IRSEA Member, Jim Scott

I was made aware of the conference by IRSEA President, Gerry McCloughan, and was interested enough in the conference theme to nominate myself to attend. I confess to not knowing about BPLA before the conference.

Supporters who spoke on the day included:

Viv White who is the current Executive Director of BPLA. Viv was a key person in the Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) team when I first met her whilst working as CEO, Science with the Department) / Verity Firth (former NSW education minister and now at UNSW) / Student participants in the program / Dean Ashenden, former academic and writer on education / Chris Bonnor has spoken at a recent IRSEA meeting and is a writer on public education / David Fox representing industry.

Participants sat at round tables; each table had an appointed chair, volunteer recorder and one question (of 10 in total) to answer related to the theme (Where to for public schooling in Australia?)

At my table were two students from schools participating in BPLA, a teacher at a school running BPLA classes, an academic at USyd, and a SABSA officer. Points from the round table discussions (1.5 hours allocated) were posted for others to see and taken away by organisers to inform their further work. A question from each table was developed for panel members to answer in the penultimate session of the day.

The program is running in some 50 Australian schools. The conference organisers propose it as an alternative to the mainstream curriculum found in our schools. It is based on projects chosen by students

Projects are related to student learning plans developed from learning goals outlined in documents on the BPLA website and completed in both school and outside settings, appropriate to the projects being undertaken.

Students are individually mentored and supported by “coaches” who are teachers and outsiders as they work through their projects. Authentic assessment information is derived from the quality of the content in student portfolios and presentations about what they have learned to an audience including parents, peers and relevant others. Quality is assessed in terms related to the learning principles behind the BPLA approach.

Advisory teachers write detailed narratives describing the strengths and challenges emerging from the presentations; students write reflective reports about their progress as learners and next steps.

Students in the senior years (equivalent to Yrs 11 & 12) are provided with an alternative credential (to the HSC / ATAR) and is warranted by the University of Melbourne. That credential is used to gain access to university, training colleges and jobs.

“The International Big Picture Learning Credential (IBPLC) is a new, personalised form of final-year assessment that measures and captures a broader range of students' capacities, experiences and qualities than is usual; matches them against developmental progressions; and allows students significant agency in the way they are represented.”

My take on the day:

- Overall, the day managed to efficiently and effectively collect a lot of ideas from participants to inform the organisers about possible futures for public education.
- The students who spoke to the conference and at my table were outstanding ambassadors for BPLA.
- It's not clear how many students in the program go to University, TAFE or straight to jobs but it seems to be attracting a growing number of participant schools and individuals. The program is based on current research into learning that:
 - identifies the importance of trust (in schools and teachers to do what is best for their students)
 - prioritises students' needs and interests as a basis for what to learn
 - emphasises a focus on developing skills and capabilities enabling students to be life-long learners able to contribute to and thrive in the world of work and life beyond school
 - values authentic assessment and reporting that aligns with learning intentions.

IRSEA PRIORITIES



EDUCATION CORNER

SYD SMITH, IRSEA News EDITOR

What makes Chinese students so successful by international standards?

There is a belief widely held across the Western world: Chinese students are schooled through rote, passive learning – and an educational system like this can only produce docile workers who lack innovation or creativity. We argue this is far from true. In fact, the Chinese education system is producing highly successful students and an extremely skilled and creative workforce. We think the world can learn something from this.

In a viral video earlier this year, Apple CEO Tim Cook highlighted the unique concentration of skilled labour that attracted his manufacturing operations to China: When South African President Cyril Ramaphosa visited the Shenzhen headquarters of electric vehicle manufacturer BYD earlier this year, he was surprised to learn the company was planning to double its 100,000-strong engineering taskforce within the coming decade. He might not have been so surprised had he known Chinese universities are producing more than ten million graduates every year – the foundation for a super-economy.

What can Western education learn?

An emphasis on education is a defining feature of Chinese culture. Since Confucianism became the state-sanctioned doctrine in the Han Dynasty (202BCE–220CE), education has entered every fabric of Chinese society. This became especially true after the institutionalisation of the Keju system of civil service examinations during the Sui Dynasty (581CE–618CE).

Today, the Gaokao university entrance examination is the modern Keju equivalent. Millions of school leavers take the exam each year. For three days every July, Chinese society largely comes to a standstill for the Gaokao. While the cultural drive for educational excellence is a major motivation for everyone involved in the system, it is not something that is easily learned

and replicated in Western societies. However, there are two principles we believe are central to Chinese educational success, at both the learner and system levels. We use two Chinese idioms to illustrate these.

The first we call “orderly and gradual progress” – 循序渐进. This principle stresses patient, step-by-step and sequenced learning, sustained by grit and delayed gratification. The second we call “thick accumulation before thin production” – 厚积薄发. This principle stresses the importance of two things:

1. a comprehensive foundation through accumulation of basic knowledge and skills
2. assimilation, integration and productive creativity only come after this firm foundation.

Knowledge, skill and creativity

The epitome of orderly and gradual progress is the way calligraphy is learned. It goes from easy to difficult, simple to complex, imitating to free writing, technique to art. Since 2013, it has been a mandatory weekly lesson in all primary and middle schools in China. The art of Chinese writing embodies patience, diligence, breathing, concentration and an appreciation of the natural beauty of rhythm. It teaches Chinese values of harmony and the aesthetic spirit.



“Thick accumulation” can be illustrated in the way students study extremely hard for the national Gaokao examination, and also during tertiary education. This way they accumulate the basic knowledge and skills required in a modern society. “Thin production” refers to the ability to narrow or focus this accumulated knowledge and skill to find and implement creative solutions in the workplace or elsewhere.

Ways of learning

On the face of it, the emphasis on gradual and steady progress, and on accumulation of basic knowledge and skills, may look like a slow, monotonous and uninspiring process – the origin of those common myths about Chinese learning. In reality, it boils down to a simple argument: without a critical mass of basic knowledge and skills, there is little to assimilate and integrate for productive creativity.

Of course, there are problems with Chinese learning and education, not least the fierce competitiveness and overemphasis on examinations. But our focus here is simply to show how two basic educational principles underpin Chinese advances in science and technology in a modern knowledge economy.

We believe these principles are transferable and potentially beneficial for policymakers, scholars and learners elsewhere.

Peter Yongqui Gu and Stephen Dodson

Republished 5 January 2025 from THE CONVERSATION, 21 October, 2024

Why I Quit Teaching: A Teacher’s Lament

Syd Smith, IRSEA News Editor: *We reproduce a section of this original article without comment or opinion. Members will have their own opinions and are welcome to tell us what they are. The article appeared on a website known as Mamamia, an Australian site. They are the words of an anonymous teacher from an anonymous state, who had decided to resign.*

We ask the question: “How relevant is this to the teacher shortage we are witnessing in Australia today?” We welcome your comments.

When I started my teaching career in 2004 devices didn’t exist, teachers didn’t have emails (or laptops) and staff meetings were informative and short. We discussed the logistics around upcoming performances or events, the wellbeing of students, and learning activities that had been enjoyed and/or led to success. Now we are primarily discussing **data**. And I’m sick of it. Data is destroying education. In schools, data refers to (but is not limited to):

- Individual and whole school assessment and overall grades
- Individual and whole school NAPLAN results and their comparison to other schools
- Assessment data from state run and school-based programs
- Qualitative surveys of students, teachers and families

There is a teacher shortage and every year, more and more of us are leaving the profession. Yes, the reasons for this vary with difficult to manage classrooms ranking at the top. But for me it’s the data. I’m not leaving because I don’t love educating. It’s largely because I can’t get on board with the ever-increasing focus on data. The vast majority of learning activities are grounded in measurable, comparable results in figures. We don’t read and discuss poetry for pleasure so we can make a lovely poem for a family member; we do this briefly and then focus on teaching the students the criteria of the rubric for the poetry assessment, so we can grade them on their final poem/s.

In government schools, we’ve somehow gone from “hands on learning” to government created death-by-PowerPoint. We’ve gone from the goal of “lighting the fire” of life-long learning” to “filling the cup of knowledge”. And it’s in the name of the data: we need to make sure kids can remember as much content for school, state and national testing, fulfill the criteria of assessment rubrics and acquire enough skills through all of this, to catapult us higher in OECD testing by the time they are 15.

Life-long learning and future wellbeing are not the goal because you can’t assess those easily with data. You can’t report those on *My School* or add them to your *Annual School Plan*, or ongoing *Teacher Plans*. So,

everything is driven by data that CAN be measured, on an ongoing basis:

- What percentage of students can you shift into the higher bands of NAPLAN to improve the school's overall median to be reported in the state and local news?
- What percentage of students can you move from C to B grades by the end of Term 3, so the report cards show greater growth?
- What competitions can students win, so we can report these in our Prospectus?

And the data driven focus hasn't just taken over academic subjects. It's infiltrated the subjects kids enjoy most. "Sporty" kids are being told they're a C grade student in PE because they didn't exceed the minimum assessment rubric requirements, including a multiple-choice test. Why are subjects like PE and Art assessing written work at all? Data. The theory goes that in order to ensure kids can perform proficiency in NAPLAN writing, reading, grammar and spelling tests, they need to be practising these skills in every subject. This isn't a choice driven by what's best for students. It's what's best for data.

And why are students in Year 2 across the country being asked to bring BYO devices to school in ever increasing amounts? Data. If they can practise NAPLAN style testing on devices in Year 1 they'll be able to perform better in NAPLAN testing which is almost exclusively conducted on devices (with the exception of the writing test, for Year 3 students). And what does this mean for students on a day-to-day basis? There's less time for fun. Less time for being outside reading, writing, crafting, drawing or playing games for pleasure. There's less time for developing social skills, friendship and creativity. Less time for going outside just to play in Primary Schools or work on passion projects in Secondary Schools. We don't just read for reading's sake. We read to fill the Premier's Reading Challenge recording sheet, so we can get a medal, and the school can report how many students completed the challenge. We don't just write a story or an argument, we follow a very strict structure



and fill in the blanks to enhance our school's NAPLAN writing marks.

When you ask an adult what they remember about school, it isn't the data. Not their grades, their reading level at the end of Year 1, their NAPLAN Mathematics results in Year 3,5,7 and 9 and percentage of improvement between those years. They remember the time they got into trouble for playing in the rain, how lonely they felt when they ended up in a class without their friends, the bullies, getting into trouble for talking, the smell of the toilets and not being allowed to join a sporting team, club or activity because it was over capacity. They remember the excursions, the joy of "Free Time", the love of the playground or oval, the Bake Sales, dress-up days, the choir, dance and being in the soccer team.

But no one remembers data.

Imagine if all that money, time and energy spent on data collection, data analysis and data presentations went into making schools engaging places of belonging and life-long learning for those who attend. Imagine that!

That's a school I'd like to work in and for my son to attend.

Source: Mamamia:

<https://www.mamamia.com.au/why-i-quit-teaching/>

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

PEGGY CRADDOCK

Editor's Note

STORIES FROM MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS A GREATLY VALUED FEATURE OF IRSEA 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.

Feedback from Peggy Craddock



Hello to all and thanks for a great newsletter again. Thank you for your good wishes on my health. Eula Guthrie was a great favourite at Walgett Primary school as she and Laurie were organising the setting up of the branch of the Correspondence School. Parents of children on properties many miles away on the black soil plains could not stop singing her praises. If they could have read her obituary, then they would have believed and piled on more praise.

On the story of Carolyn, there is some information missing from what I sent. She is the Director of her faculty at the university and, with her team, designed wearables for astronauts travelling to, working in and outside the space station, and back to earth. She and her team are now designing wearables for the next moon mission and the ones to Mars. The 24/7 baby monitor was her 'thank you' to the "premi-baby" nurses.

VALE

CLIFF WILLIAMS

We have unfortunately lost another educator who was a credit to the public education system. I am indebted to David Maher for his message:

“It is with great sadness that I advise you of the passing of Cliff Williams, a most loyal and faithful member of my District staff. I first met Cliffy when he was Headmaster of Bourke H.S. and I was Headmaster of Goodooga.

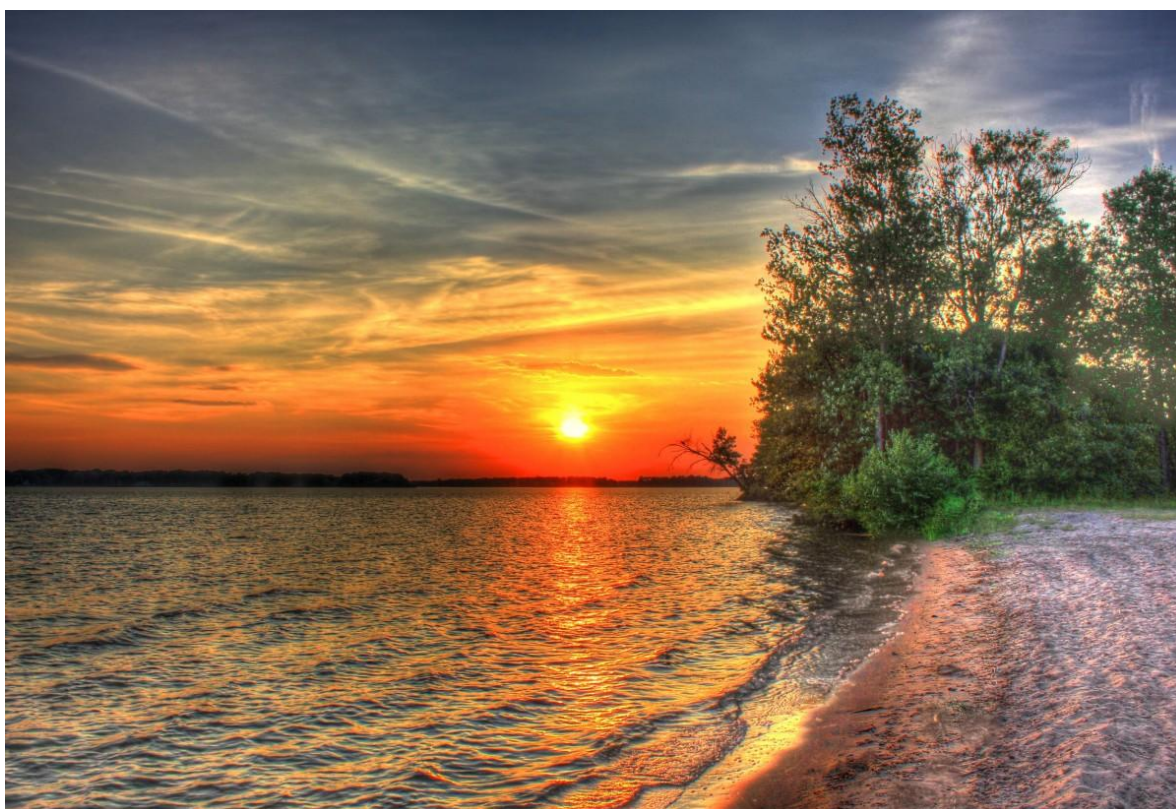
Cliffy was a master manager of a District and a most reliable and decisive leader of his people. His office work was done briskly and with proper judgement and skill. His District work was done with diligence and human care. People knew and respected his standards.

Personally, I had unwavering trust in Cliffy. He never let me down. Thanks, Cliffy, for having served teachers, pupils and school communities with great care and human understanding. You did the job with common sense and maturity. Rest easily.”

Our special thoughts are with Mally, Laura and Fiona. Sounds like a special man and for those who didn't know him, it seems it was our loss!

RIP Cliff.

Kerryanne Knox, Welfare and Social Coordinator



JOHN HOY

John was born in 1931 and passed away at the age of 94 in January. His son has informed us of John's passing. There would be still some of our members who recall John Hoy but as he lived to an excellent age many of his colleagues may have gone before him!

John began his education career in 1951 and enjoyed teaching and living in Northern NSW. He loved teaching as attested to by one of his students....."He was my first ever teacher at Dunnadie Creek School on Ghoolendaadi Soldiers Settlement area between Gunnedah and Boggabri in the late 1950s. Many happy memories of that time." (S. Clark)

He impressed others as well being promoted to Acting Inspector in 1971 and given the permanent position in 1972. He particularly loved the Bathurst area and was Assistant Director of Education in 1979. He returned to the Inspectorate but was disenchanted with the new Education Minister, Dr Metherell and when Metherell deleted the Inspectorate John said "enough" and retired.

For those who remember John he was quite the storyteller and had, I am told, a great sense of humour. Maybe that is what kept him alive for so long...a great attitude!

His family laid him to rest on January 29th in Bathurst and they will miss him greatly. Our condolences to the family.

Thanks John...sounds like you loved education and loved telling those great stories we all collect.....RIP and thanks for your service.

Kerryanne Knox, Welfare and Social Coordinator

JOAN HEALY

Joan passed away on Friday 31 January in Greenwich Hospital. Her husband, Tony, informed us of her passing and, in particular, wanted to ensure that all our members were informed. Joan loved Stewart House charity and supported it for many, many years. She was one of the people who attended as many social events as she could, that is, when she wasn't gadding around the world enjoying herself! She was also a regular contributor to IRSEA News.

Joan started her career at Murwillumbah High in the late 1950s. This was her country service having graduated from New England University with a Science/Teaching degree. Tony was delighted to tell me that Joan was always a "people person" and in Murwillumbah at that time, one of the important events was to nominate a chaperone to accompany the "Banana Queen" around NSW, promoting North Coast bananas. Joan Healy was quickly given the job and travelled across the state. She loved it and was good at the job! No surprise there!

Joan's funeral was held at Northern Suburbs Crematorium on February 11 this year.

Kerryanne Knox, Welfare and Social Coordinator

Please Nominate for Our Executive

IRSEA 2025-2026 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

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

Nominee:

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

Position:

Nominator:(signature):

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

I acknowledge and accept this nomination

Nominee (signature):

PLEASE RETURN TO BRIAN DAVIES **BY FRIDAY 14 MARCH** for the election to be conducted at the AGM on Friday 21 March 2024.

bdjinstitute@gmail.com OR secretary@irsea.org.au OR to 24 Olinda Crescent, CARLINGFORD NSW 2118)

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

Executive Positions to be Elected

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

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

Annual General Meeting and Luncheon

Friday 21 March 2025

@ Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

11:00am for the 12:00pm meeting

We are thrilled to welcome back to IRSEA as guest speaker, our esteemed Honorary Member,

DEB SUMMERHAYES PSM, Deputy Secretary, Public Schools

‘Excellence and Equity in NSW Public Education – Now and Into the Future’

Deb has been a passionate educator in NSW Public Education for over thirty years.

In her current role, Deb supports 120,000 support staff, teachers and school leaders to deliver high-quality education for 800,000 students in NSW Public Education. As Deputy Secretary, Deb’s focus is on supporting all in the system to support Principals and teachers to lead learning in all schools for continuous student, teacher, leader and school improvement.

Deb does not believe a postcode should determine a young person’s life options and has been committed to leading, supporting and working in partnership with students, families, and staff in complex school communities across the state.

Deb believes it is the job of educators to ensure every student, in every classroom, in every public school in NSW has access to an equitable and excellent education, where their learning and wellbeing needs are understood and their lives transformed through learning. Deb will kick off our meeting at 12:00 pm in the Adam Room.



IRSEA members and guests, please join us for networking and collegiality, Deb’s address, our AGM, lunch and raffles to support Stewart House.

Book early to ensure you do not miss this important event!



Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators

IRSEA General Meeting Booking

*Come and join friends and colleagues for our Guest Speaker, AGM, and Luncheon at
Castlereagh Boutique Hotel (169 Castlereagh St, Sydney 2000) on*

Friday, 21 March 2025

11:00 - 11:50am – Pre-meeting gathering and refreshments on Level 2,

12:00 - 2:00pm Formal meeting – Adam Room (Level 4).

Please return the booking slip below and make payment for the lunch meeting by **Monday 10 March**.

BOOKING SLIP

Name (please print):

Guest's name/s (if applicable):

I have transferred OR enclosed my payment of **\$70.00** (or additional for my guest/s @ \$70.00 per head) for the above listed to attend the IRSEA luncheon, 11.00am for 12.00pm, at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel which includes a 2-course main meal with bread roll, coffee and tea.

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

Meal type Number required

I agree / do not agree (cross out one) that photographs of me in professional or social situations may be published in IRSEA media and publications, including newsletters and on the website.

Signed: Date: Phone no.

NOTIFICATION and PAYMENT OPTIONS ~ Payment by direct deposit/bank transfer is preferred.

- ☐ Payment by **Electronic Funds Transfer** – 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'**

- ☐ Email or message your booking slip to Ray Gillies, IRSEA Treasurer, at **rcgillies@yahoo.com.au**

[Phone images or scans are acceptable]

- ☐ **If paying by cheque**, please make the cheque payable to *Institute of Retired Senior Educational Administrators*, or *IRSEA* and cross it **'Not negotiable'**. Mail your cheque and booking slip to:

Ray Gillies, 79 Albyn Road, STRATHFIELD, NSW 2135

For further information or notification, please call or text Ray on mobile: 0412 763 242

NOTE: Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after **Friday 14 March 2025**