



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

LINDSAY WASSON



Dear Members

While a turbulent, troubled world continues to reel under Trumpian chaos, with a more than substantial contribution from Tsar Vladimir and his ilk, I sit at my desk revelling in the safe, and stable beauty of our democracy and marvel at the largely harmonious, extraordinarily diverse and culturally-enriched society we love and nurture.

I'm also driven to reflect on the fragility of the wonders we enjoy and how we have created such a relative nirvana as other, so-called democracies implode or vote for self-destruction. Yes, USA, I'm talking about you! Yet this is not the time to explore that sorry history in detail. I will leave that for another time and tome. Except to assert, after decades of contemplation, and with the boldness of this historian's conclusion, that we owe our great fortune to the greatest and noblest institution of our society, public education!

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Upcoming Event

IRSEA General Meeting & Luncheon

Castlereagh Boutique Hotel

1 August 2025

And so, it's time to give the *'full-throated roar of commitment to free and secular public education; to the unique importance of public education in bridging social, economic and religious divisions; to the critical role of public education in building and sustaining a pluralist, multicultural and civil society; and to the urgency of rebuilding public education as the mainstream educational provision.'*
(Ken Boston, 10 March 2025)

To this end (or beginning?) we shall concentrate on the initiatives that will have most impact on fulfilling our noble remit. While we continue to provide the enriching social amenity of the Institute and increase our great opportunities for mutual connection and social, collegial events, we are clear-sighted about our unbending commitment to greater influence, persuasive argument, powerful partnerships, and expert leadership in helping shape a refreshed educational landscape in this state and beyond.

I will not reiterate the 'select strategic initiatives' listed in my President's Report in the IRSEA News of May this year, but will provide an update on a select few.

Hunter/Central Coast Meeting

Congratulations to Gerry McCloughan and Janina Sulikowski for organising the hugely successful, historic and magnificent first foray to Newcastle over the two days of 13-14 June. With a truly inspiring presentation from Laureate Professor, Jenny Gore, the event attracted many local members, and some from afar - Chris and Karlene Carroll, for example. This event will now become a regular feature as we expand our reach and our membership. Plans for the southern realms are underway with a planned event in Wollongong for later in the year. Chris Carroll and Raechel

McCarthy, I see your hands are up in volunteer mode already!



Belinda Giudice, Principal, Gledswood High School
Guest Speaker at IRSEA General Meeting, May 2025

Partnerships and MOUs

Public Education Foundation (PEF)

Agreement has been reached, on the most amicable and altruistic terms, to cement our relationship with the Public Education Foundation through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) drafted by one of our great talents and lawyer-in-residence, Geoff Baldwin.

The MOU will be signed by the new CEO, Dr Manisha Amin and me, at our up-coming Luncheon Meeting on Friday 1 August at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. It's warmest thanks to Gerry, Eric, Alan (and me) for our work in reaching this wonderful outcome. On the PEF team, David Riordan (previous CEO), Miriam Valero and Dr Manisha Amin have been superb in their support from the outset.

NSW Department of Education (DoE)

With our outstanding Deputy Secretary, Deb Summerhayes, initiating and leading the process for the DoE, and supported by the excellent Nick Magriplis, the Department and IRSEA are close to finalising an MOU which we hope to sign in the very near future. Gala celebration included! Our team includes Gerry McCloughan, Eric Jamieson and me, with legal work done, once again, by our resident expert, Geoff Baldwin!

These two MOUs will be celebrated as an historic achievement for IRSEA. Our first formal partnerships with our natural friends and allies, organisations that hold the same underlying values, principles and purposes.

IRSEA Fellowship

Once again, congratulations Dr Kerrie Ikin for creating the inaugural and long-term annual IRSEA Fellowship for a senior administrator in the DoE. More details to follow.



Links with the Australian Film and Television Industry

As well as a teacher, educational administrator, and past film historian, I am a strong proponent of the Australian Film and Television Industry as central to the projection of our society as fair, egalitarian, and nurturer of the core values required of the strongest possible, truly democratic society.

Throughout its history, Australian film has played a largely unsung but heroic part in building our nationhood through the depiction of our people (The Sentimental Bloke); their struggles (The Overlanders); their successes (The Castle) and failures (Breaker Morant); their heroism (Kokoda Front Line); their loves (Muriel's Wedding); and their cherished belief in diversity and multiculturalism (Bran Nue Day), among so many other great Australian attributes.

With a dash of quixotic optimism, I recently I met with Darren Ashton (whom I taught in a film course at Wade HS in Griffith in 1979), now celebrated film director and President of the Australian Directors' Guild (ADG), and with Matt Deaner and Andy Barclay of the Screen Producers' Association (SPA). My engagement with these remarkable leaders and creatives was to explore how Australian film, television and even streaming services may more overtly support the role and value of public education as the undisputed mainstream education provider. This is the education required to maintain, grow and enhance our values and democratic beliefs essential if we are to thrive, and not just survive, in a world where democracy is being assailed by the worst of the world's vandals, autocrats and aggressors.

It's clear to me that we, and the Film and Television Industry, are natural allies.

The Moving Image can help our people better understand the crucial significance of those who work in Public Education in NSW and the unique role the NSW Department of Education plays in creating the vital underpinnings of an outstanding, world-leading, socially just and highly successful democratic society. Only public education can do that. The others are but self-interested social dividers, exploiters and predators of the public purse.

The trick will be to turn the cameras to the stories (and there are many) for which public education can provide the content and the inspiration.

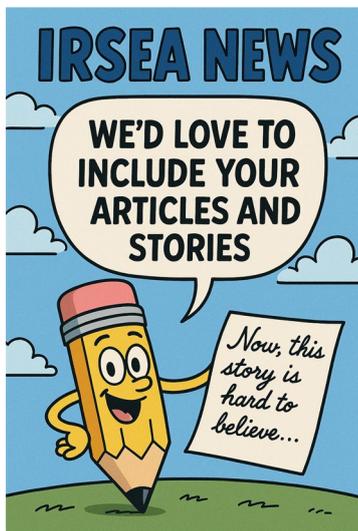
We have much to do and with the promise of much excitement to come!

Thank you, friends and colleagues, and thank you to the outstanding Executive Committee Members who give so much of their time and creative energy to the great cause we all pursue.

Writer, Producer, Director
- Lindsay Wasson

THE END (for now)

More episodes in this 'series' to follow!



Michael Murray, Editor of IRSEA News, calls upon IRSEA members to contribute to *their* newsletter.

IRSEA News is a forum for members to share their thoughts and experiences – of work, retirement, or life in general. Your reflections on the past, analysis of current state of play, or future projections make wonderful reading for members.

If you have a 100-500 word article you would like to contribute to RSEA News, or would like to discuss an idea you have before writing, please contact the editor, Michael Murray on

michaeljfmurray@gmail.com .

IRSEA SPECIAL EVENT REPORT

Hunter–Central Coast Regional Gathering ,13-14 June 2025

IRSEA is pleased to report a huge success with our historic regional gathering held over 13-14 June 2025 at the Apollo International Hotel, Charlestown, with participants overwhelmingly rating all aspects as excellent.

The whole event was magnificent, with wonderful connections and reconnections, fine food and beverages, and terrific social and professional conversations.

“The Gathering”, as we came to call the weekend, was focused on two important events:

1. A social networking dinner, held at the excellent hotel à la carte restaurant [Babbingtons](#) from 6:00-8:00pm on Friday evening, and
2. A more formal luncheon meeting with Guest Speaker held in the Apollo conference centre from 11:00am-2:30pm on Saturday.



Thank you to those attending the whole weekend gathering: Lindsay and Diane Wasson, Janina Sulikowski and Doug Absalom, Barbara Witcher, Kerrie Ikin, Ray and Val Gillies, Chris and Karlene Carroll, John Lester, Max Smith, and Gerry and Dagmar McCloughan.

The **Friday evening social networking dinner** in [Babbingtons](#) restaurant provided a terrific opportunity to reconnect Hunter-Central Coast friends and former colleagues including Max Smith, John Lester, Rob Farley and Laurie Murphy, with more southerly residing IRSEA



members. Excellent food, beverage and service ensured we could socialize and share many stories from our past work lives.



The **Saturday luncheon meeting** held in the Apollo Conference Centre was a standout! With the excellent facilities and service of the self-contained conference centre, we all enjoyed the chance for further reconnections and storytelling. Janina Sulikowski and Gerry McCloughan co-chaired the event. The Gathering was very pleased to warmly welcome Jenny Gore, Khalil Khay, Sharon Parkes, and Liz Rushton who were unable to attend the Friday social dinner.

During the luncheon, President Lindsay Wasson outlined for all the nature, activities and values and directions of the Institute, describing its history, membership, activities, plans and directions, and partnerships.

An absolute highlight of the luncheon meeting was a wonderful **Keynote address** from Laureate Professor Jennifer Gore AM: *How can we transform education in NSW?*



Jenny is a leader in education in Australia and internationally. She is currently the leader of the University of Newcastle's *Teachers and Teaching Research Centre*. With significant experience and expertise in educational research and leadership including two decades of work with the NSW Department of

Education since 2003, Jenny has led the development of the *Quality Teaching Model* based on three key dimensions of evidence-informed good teaching and assessment practice: *Intellectual quality, Quality learning environment, and Significance*. Jenny's ongoing work on *Quality Teaching* and *Quality Teaching Rounds* has shown how the Quality Teaching framework effectively supports teacher professional development, increases teacher satisfaction, enhances teaching quality in schools, and improves student achievement while also narrowing equity gaps.



In her talk, Jenny identified the **major challenges currently confronting education as** *Lifting student achievement, Realising equity goals, Responding to the changing circumstances, Making teaching more attractive and Choosing wisely among alternatives*.

Jenny led us through considerations of the role of **hope** and **luck** in achieving successful educational outcomes. Improvement requires more than dreaming of a better future. She suggested that education systems need to find vigorous paths of action that teachers and leaders should take to deliver system transformation.

Jenny drew on powerful ideas from Glyn Davis, *"Birth is a throw of the dice. The consequences can last a lifetime. If you believe people deserve an equal chance to prosper, this game of chance is deeply disturbing if nothing follows to even up the inherent unfairness"*, (*On Life's Lottery*, 2021).

Drawing as well from the Grattan Institute “Many Australian teachers are being left to fend for themselves, creating lessons from scratch and scouring the internet and social media for teaching materials. This has contributed to unsustainable workloads and a high degree of variation in teaching and learning from one classroom to the next. It creates a lesson lottery for teachers and students.” (Ending the Lesson Lottery, 2022)

Reflecting on these ideas, Jenny asserted that we cannot rely on hope and luck to deliver system transformation. She suggested that we can reduce the role of luck by concentrating on the substance of teachers’ work (shared vision, shared language, and powerful professional development); the structures guiding teachers’ work (genuine and comfortable collegiality with time for collaboration) and through the relational aspects of teachers’ work (to build self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and school culture).

The **SMART work design model**, created by Professor Sharon Parker (Future of Work Institute) and based on decades of research, suggests five key themes to consider when creating or developing work that results in positive outcomes for a thriving organisation. SMART work encompasses five themes: *Stimulating, Mastery, Agency, Relational, and Tolerable Demands*. [S.M.A.R.T Work model - Resources](#)

Jenny proposed that the use of [Stephen Kemmis’s Practice architectures](#) in schools is not a bad way to think about how we structure school environments for improvements. Stephen’s theory holds that transformational practices are composed of *sayings, doings, and relatings* that hang together in the purpose of the practice. For transformational teaching, new ‘sayings’ take the form of shared language for describing quality teaching; new ‘doings’ occur through the development of new structures for conducting observations of lesson quality; new ‘relatings’ become evident in the increased collegiality and respect between middle leaders and teachers.

In Jenny’s recent work, *new sayings* provide a different language for talking about pedagogy; *New doings* are different ways of doing observations with one another that’s actually very powerful and positive; and *new ways of relating* to each other, including the kind of increase in respect that happens between leaders or middle leaders and teachers; between beginning teachers and more experienced teachers. Jenny contends that to transform schooling in NSW, we really need to look at what our current *sayings, doings* and *relatings*, and how we can transform each of these.

To reduce the role of luck, Jenny argues that we need to look at the *substance* of teachers’ work in developing a shared vision of change; in what we see as good practice; and in what shared language we use for that.

Transformation requires powerful forms of professional development. Jenny argues for critical collegiality rather than contrived collegiality or polite collegiality. She suggests that we should not let a culture of politeness get in the way of really meaningful learning. Relationally, we really need to build teachers’ sense of efficacy; their satisfaction; their morale, as these contribute to productive school cultures, and the key is to try to bring it all together with a more holistic focus.

Ultimately, system and school leaders need to choose wisely among the plethora of educational improvement models and alternatives and implement initiatives that have strong robust evidence, where the evidence is of impact on student learning outcomes and empowerment.

Jenny advocated for robust evidence-based and impactful models to transform education. She illuminated the findings of extensive research she has conducted with colleagues with Quality Teaching and Quality Teaching Rounds (QTRs), providing an extensive and high-level overview of the successes achieved by Cessnock High School through using the Quality Teaching Framework. The school is an excellent example of how QTRs can transform education because it is an effective and

efficient way to raise the status of the profession, strengthen initial teacher education, improve retention in the teaching workforce, support teacher and student wellbeing, lift student achievement and narrow enduring achievement gaps.

Resources that provide evidence for the superb outcomes of the Quality Teaching Framework include the following:

- [Final report to the Paul Ramsay Foundation](#) outlining the five-year program of research and outcomes of randomised controlled trials on Quality Teaching Rounds.
- [A video case study of Cessnock High School.](#)
- [Building school capacity through partnership.](#)

A vote of thanks on behalf of IRSEA was made to Jenny by Vice-President, Kerrie Ikin, with President Lindsay presenting Jenny with an IRSEA Certificate of Appreciation. Thank you, Jenny, for your enlightened perspectives on the challenges facing school education in NSW and Australia and for your erudite and evidence-based solutions towards transforming schooling to provide more excellent and equitable outcomes for students.

Jenny's educational and research interests have consistently centred on quality and equity, and have ranged across teacher socialisation, alternative pedagogy, reform in teacher education, pedagogical reform, and



teacher development. Many in our institute look forward to further consideration of Jenny's ideas and suggestions as a magnificent contribution to the *Thought Leadership* priority of our new IRSEA plan. Jenny's address provided a tremendous conclusion to the Gathering.

Thank you to participants' generosity with \$250 being raised for Stewart House.

Thank you also to the Apollo International Hotel, Charlestown, especially to Steve Renshaw (Conference and Events Manager), Zoe Hurtz (R/Conference and Events Manager), Ashleigh (Front of House), and Will (Head Chef).

The notion of having IRSEA events outside the Sydney Metropolitan area has gained strong endorsement. We accepted 25 formal apologies, 17 of whom reside in the HCC. This coupled with feedback that a better time of year for the next gathering be in October-November, gives us great heart for a much increased attendance in 2026. As well, we are confident we have a model that can be replicated in other parts of regional and rural NSW, so we encourage members to keep an eye out for when IRSEA meets near to you.

We have established a **Regional meetings** page on our website [<https://www.irsea.org.au/>] and further information about the inaugural event can be found there, including Jenny's PowerPoint, an important paper she mentioned by Sawyer and Hattam, and other information in support of her address.

Finally, a big thank you to Janina Sulikowski for your extraordinary efforts in liaising, cajoling, persuading and following up. We could not have done this without you, dear lady.

We will be planning a similar event for the Hunter Central Coast in 2026, once we can assess the best time to suit the locals.

Gerry McCloughan

Immediate Past-President and Co-chair of The HCC Gathering

NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS

RAEHEL MCCARTHY, DEL AND IRSEA LIAISON



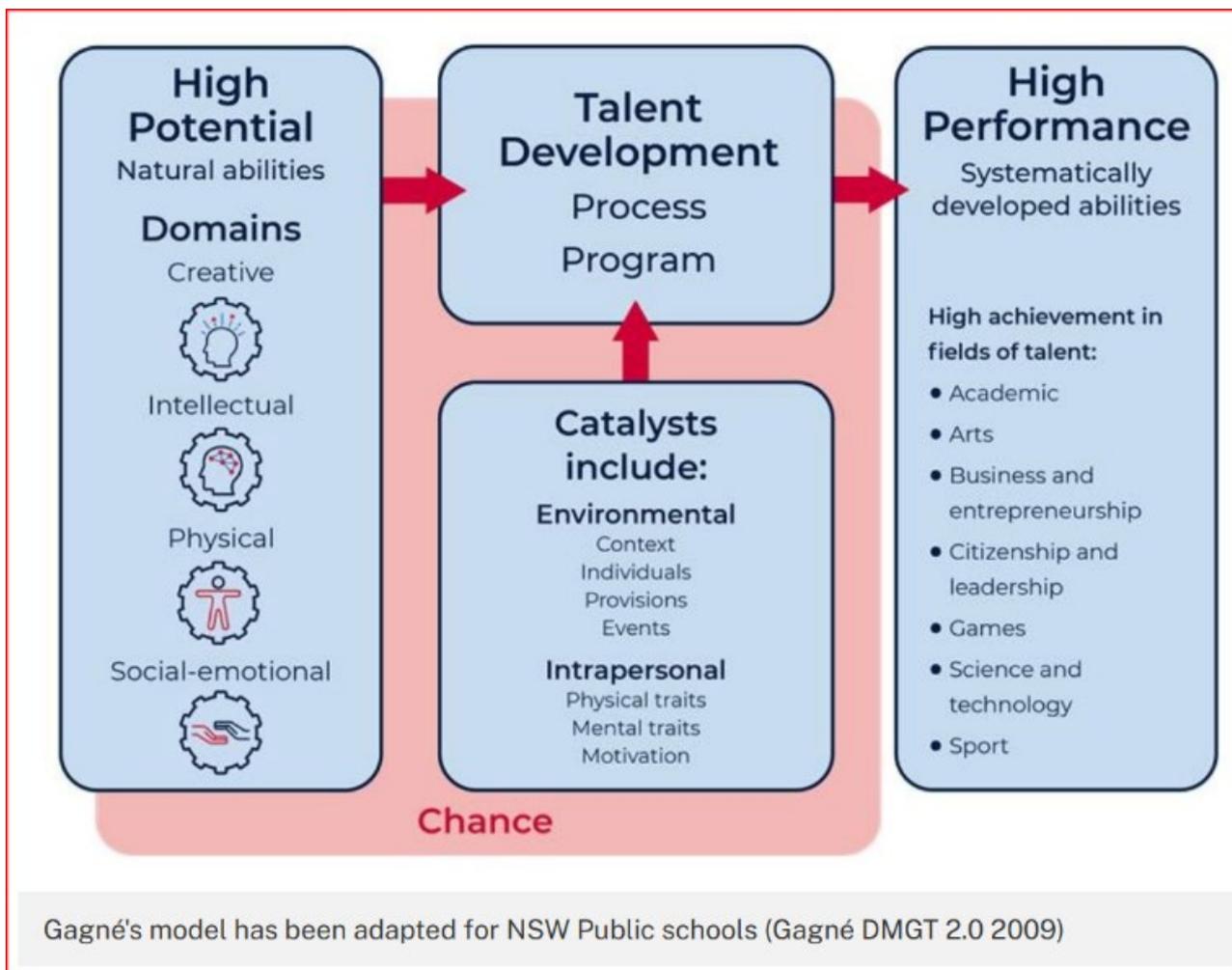
High Potential Gifted Education (HPGE): A key priority for ALL our public schools

Raechel McCarthy is the Director, Educational Leadership, Lake Illawarra North Principals Network. Raechel plays an important role in liaison between IRSEA and the Department. In this article she reports on an exciting development in public education.

HPGE is a key priority for the NSW Department of Education. Not only does it provide important opportunities for our students, but it is also one of the key enablers for boosting community confidence in public education and regaining our market share of students (when compared to independent/catholic schools).

The HPGE policy requires all schools to promote student engagement and challenge by committing to high expectations for every student. Our system has supported schools to achieve this commitment by providing a suite of quality professional learning about high potential and gifted education and guidance on policy implementation. All schools during the Term 2 Staff Development Day were required to select one of three tiers of professional learning based on their current level of engagement and understanding of high potential and gifted education and then engage in the on-line learning modules.

The definition of HPGE has been expanded to include the following domains:

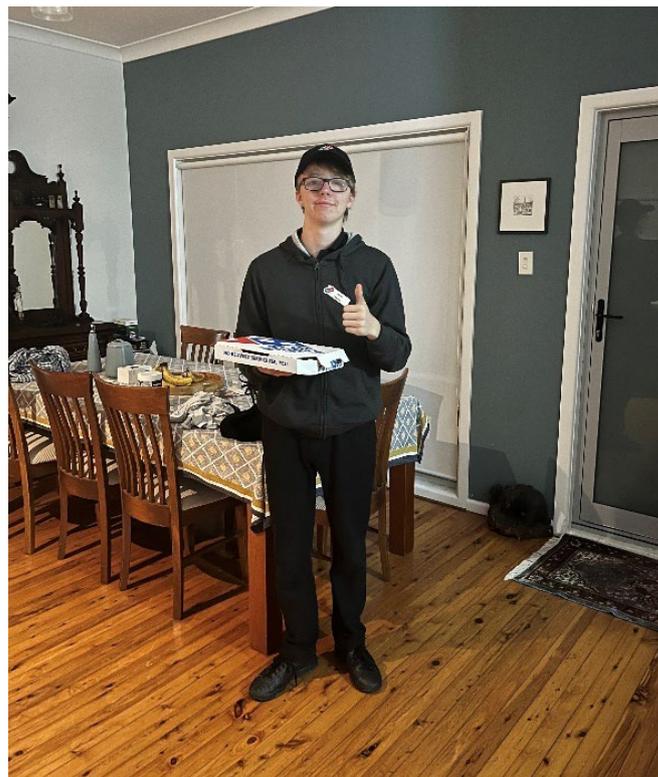


The guiding principles of this work are that:

- All students regardless of background or personal circumstances, require access to learning programs that meet their learning needs and support to aspire to, and achieve, personal excellence. HPGE is just as important at Wilcannia Central School as Greenwich Public School.
- Our commitment to high expectations for all students includes high potential and gifted students.
- Achieving excellence for all students includes HPGE students.
- Potential exists across the continuum, where different degrees of potential require different approaches.

I am excited about how our Department is recognising the social and emotional domain of HPGE. We can all remember that student in our class, who might not have been our most academic student (or our best-behaved student) but had a natural ability to communicate, lead and inspire others. EQ (emotional intelligence) has also been recognised as being increasingly important in our new digital world of work. My own son Harry has these skills and it is affirming to think that schools will be actively looking for and nurturing these talents in schools. Here is a “mum photo” of his first shift working at Domino’s after school.

I am also excited to be part of a Priority Action Team of DELs in Regional South and Connected Communities. I am also excited to be part of a Priority Action Team of DELs in Regional South and Connected Communities. Our aim is to improve DELs’ understanding of system supports available. We will build DELs’ capacity to nurture effective educational and instructional leadership in all schools in their networks, thereby empowering teachers to meet the learning needs of HPGE students across the four domains of potential and



talent development.

Reflections on NSW Public Schools Term 2 Hub & Spoke meeting

Wednesday 21 May 2025

Gerry McCloughan
Immediate Past-President, IRSEA

The Hub & Spoke meetings just keep getting better in that they are more and more exploring how to improve school performance through improve student engagement in learning. The absolute focus on schools, teachers and students is refreshing – the pieces of the

Public Schools Plan are all coming together like it is just one piece of work. Well done, Deb Summerhayes and team! The framing of *equity* as a *capability* for all is a prize-winning concept. I look forward to witnessing the outcomes that will flow from this notion.

The Hub & Spoke meetings are a positive and supportive operation – I did not hear any complaints about schools,

school leaders, teachers or students. The day was all about how to support schools, their staff and communities.

I was impressed at how the current transformation in Public Schools NSW is making strong use of:

- theory of action
- situation analysis and data
- targeted and positive strategies.

The Regional North team at the Tuggerah Office comprises a fine group of educators who work collaboratively under the positive, thoughtful and encouraging leadership of Executive Director, Tim McCallum.

It was incredibly valuable to contribute to a Spoke workshop on how to increase enrolments, ably led by Kate Stevens, Director, Enrolment Trends and Transitions Taskforce.

The shared Hub sessions were all very well presented. I particularly enjoyed hearing all the wonderful work being done in the Regional Rural Remote and Unique School Settings Directorate. Executive Director, Dean White, presented a fine portrayal of the challenges and achievements across 1018 schools in his charge, including 968 rural and remote schools and 50 unique settings. The focus on rural equity, interagency support and community partnerships was fabulous to see, and I applaud the “No Wrong Door” approach being used to engage all folk in the Bush.

A novice’s impressions of the Hub & Spoke meeting at St Peters, Metropolitan South

Michael Murray, Member of IRSEA Executive

This was my first Hub & Spoke, so I adopted a watch, listen and learn approach.

Like Gerry, I thought the organisation of the day, under the wise and capable leadership of Deputy Secretary Public Schools, Deb Summerhayes, was magnificent. The ‘hub’ sessions ensured consistency of messaging from head office on policy issues such as equity, high potential and gifted education (HPGE) and attendance, while the ‘spoke’ sessions, at ten locations throughout the state,

allowed the local network of educational leaders to discuss and plan implementation of strategies at the regional level.

I was hugely impressed by the quality of thinking demonstrated throughout the day by the team at Metro South, guided by Executive Director, Jan Green.

They appreciated the opportunities offered to students and teachers by systemic strategies. They also had a realistic grasp of the challenges faced by local schools in implementing these strategies, but shared creative solutions for how these challenges might be met.

One standout moment for me was the explanation of the relationship between equity and excellence provided by Derek Schwarz, Director, Schools Policy, Education and Skills reform. Equity and excellence are often set as opposing principles, as if it is a choice between the two, but in fact they are inextricably linked: we need equity to achieve excellence, according to Derek. We also heard about two guides developed by CESE to help schools evaluate their performance in this area and identify areas of focus.

Another important point of discussion, no doubt of interest to IRSEA members, was about how public schools could increase and maintain enrolments. It seems that there has been a drop over recent years in Kindergarten and Year7 enrolments in public schools. Research shows the factors that influence a parent’s choice of school, notably family and friends, other parents, the school’s website and school open days or events. The fact that many parents are making that decision when their child is aged 2-4 years old underscores the challenge facing public schools, individually and systemically. A renewed HPGE commitment (‘the business of every school’) and support for schools to finesse their websites are two important strategies to reverse the enrolment decline, but this is definitely an area where IRSEA can help with ‘thought leadership’.

I felt honoured to participate in my first Hub & Spoke, felt greatly encouraged by the experience and look forward to representing IRSEA at future events.

Treasurer's Update: Ray Gillies

On 30 June 2025, the IRSEA Society Account had a balance of \$9,642.10.

Donations totalling \$3,782, from 53 members and IRSEA activities, have been paid to Stewart House.

IRSEA receipts include \$2,680 members' subscriptions, attendees' payments for meeting lunches \$4,170, and \$175 other donations.

Expenditure has been IRSEA meeting lunches \$4,600; IRSEA NEWS \$1,097; certificates \$165; NSW Fair Trading \$56; and postage \$30.

Our Term Deposit is valued at \$10,775.51 (maturing 14 July 2025).

Ray Gillies
IRSEA Treasurer



EDUCATION CORNER: THE WORLD'S BEST SCHOOL PRIZES

ERIC JAMIESON, VICE-PRESIDENT STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

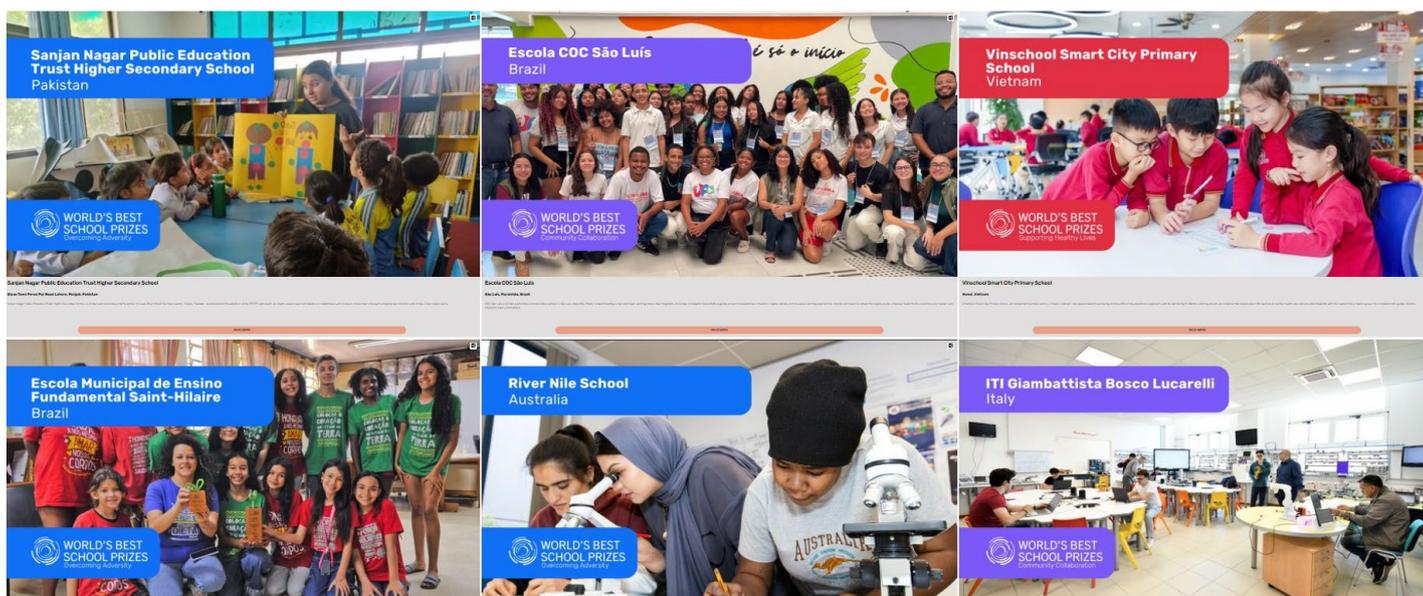
Each year, the World's Best School Prizes offer an opportunity to learn from schools around the globe that are making a meaningful impact in their communities. I am very honoured to be on the judging panel for these awards, as I have done so since their inception.

The 2025 finalists have recently been announced, representing a wide range of contexts, approaches, and achievements. It is always a joy to learn about schools demonstrating how diverse and adaptable education can be in all types of contexts throughout the world. It is a wonderful tribute to the power of the human spirit and the amazing teachers, leaders, staff and supporters who provide the greatest gift of all to young people!

The five prize categories: Community Collaboration, Environmental Action, Innovation, Overcoming Adversity, and Supporting Healthy Lives, capture the

diversity of what it can mean for a school to be excellent. The categories were deliberately chosen so as to highlight the many aspects of schooling. They also serve to be highly inclusive of diverse contexts throughout the world. They make for fascinating reading! This year's finalists include schools that have launched student-led mental health programs, partnered with local organisations to support families, introduced sustainability initiatives, and developed creative ways to engage students in learning.

Link to: [World's Best School Prizes website.](#)



What stands out across all categories is not a single model or method, but a shared commitment to relevance, relationships, and responsiveness. The schools and communities honoured in 2025 all demonstrate that education can thrive when it is embedded in local context and driven by purpose. While the schools vary in size, location, resources, and history, all share a clear commitment to making learning more meaningful for their students.

Some schools have made sustainability part of the everyday experience of learning. One finalist created a garden that feeds students and families while also serving as a living laboratory for science, health, and economics. In another setting, students have taken responsibility for peer-led wellbeing programs that are now central to the life of the school.

Other schools have looked outward and found ways to redefine their role within the community. One urban school developed a partnership model where families and local businesses work alongside staff and students to solve real issues. Another school, located in a remote region, has woven traditional knowledge and language into its curriculum, building cultural identity and strengthening engagement.

The T4 Website for the World's Best School Prizes includes the sole Australian finalist, River Nile School (RNS), a not-for-profit secondary school in North Melbourne. It describes the school as "breaking down barriers to education and providing a pathway to economic independence for young refugee and asylum-

seeking women by empowering them to discover their potential, assert their identities and build successful futures. For these women, complex systematic barriers that include limited English proficiency, social isolation, and past trauma hinder their access to mainstream education. Through intentionally designed programmes, RNS delivers high-quality, life-changing education and wellbeing support that equips them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to thrive."

For many of the finalists, innovation does not involve large-scale change or expensive technology. It has come through a shift in perspective. Simple actions, such as listening more closely to student voices or revisiting what success means, have led to significant outcomes.

For me, these stories of so many schools each year provide a collection of ideas and approaches that encourages thinking openly about what is possible in our amazing world of education. They show what can happen when they respond to their own context with care, insight, imagination, a spirit of adventure, and a focus on each individual, as well as valued relationships.

Their stories clearly show that there are many pathways that are possible when pursued with curiosity, imagination, and purpose. The enduring message is that when schools are the best versions of themselves, they are stunning places of belonging, energy, and learning that make a profound difference to the lives of many.

If you are interested in exploring more about the stories of all 50 finalists, please click on the following link: [T4 Education website](https://www.t4education.com.au).

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTIONS: 80 AND THE WHALE SHARKS

ALAN LAUGHLIN

I turned 80 in May this year and rather than a party, my wife Ann and I decided on a bit of an adventure instead. We had loved the recent ABC series on Ningaloo with Tim Winton. We were particularly taken by the incredible whale sharks and the opportunity, maybe, to swim with them. We were a bit naïve about what was required for this, but we had seen a cruise advertised out of Broome that featured Ningaloo. This was the Coral Expeditions cruise line, small boats that mainly travelled between Broome and Darwin. I suspect a number of you have done this. Once a year one of their boats heads south, down to Exmouth and Ningaloo. There was one cabin left when we enquired so we were on our way. This little story is about that travel, some observations, and in particular, the whale shark adventure. Hope you like it.

Getting to Broome proved difficult. Direct flights were only available a couple of times a week. So, 5 hours to Perth, 2 hours wait then 2.5 hours to Broome. However, the wait in Perth turned out to be very interesting. In the two hours we were there some 5 jet aircraft flew out, with mainly mine workers, to all sorts of destinations. Not small jets, they held about 100 or more. Mainly men but quite a few women. I was surprised at how big the Fly In Fly Out (FIFO) work system is. I talked to a few of the crowd - they mainly mined iron ore, but also lithium and gas. Big industries.

Overnight in Broome, then onto the boat, 60 or so passengers. The tides at Broome are about 8-10m so when you arrive at the wharf you can expect the boat landing gangway to be from level to very steep. They are spending a lot of money there now to build a floating platform. A good idea. Like all cruises, big or small, we were very well looked after.

I will mention a couple of things I thought were different about this cruise. First, the number of women crew. Most of the hospitality staff were women, mainly kids just out of school really. However, the chief purser was also a woman, but so too were most of the staff in the kitchen, the dive master (mistress, I guess), lecturers



(two marine scientists), and most notably one of the three engineers. The female engineer was great, took us for a tour of the engine room, sported hair parted down the middle, red one side, green the other. Port and starboard, I guess. The only all male group was the bridge crew. I am sure that will change soon.

The other interesting feature was a large aluminum runabout they called the "Explorer". It sat on a platform at the stern at deck level. You just walked on board. They then lowered the platform into the sea, the Explorer floated off, and away you went. No clambering into tenders or zodiacs. On return the Explorer just went onto the platform and it was lifted up to deck level and you walked off. Ingenious and a big help for some of our less mobile passengers.

We were meant to go first to Rowley Shoals, a submerged coral atoll group out in the Timor Sea, but it was too windy so we put that on hold. More about that later. Instead, we meandered south and pulled into a number of the many windswept island groups off the WA coast. Most of these were national parks and had a range of sea birds breeding. The real beauty was underwater with abundant fish life and coral reefs. It was here that we brushed up on our snorkeling skills.

One of the really interesting places was the Montebello group. You may recall Britain tested a number of nuclear bombs there back in the fifties. A couple of these islands are still radioactive, and only a one-hour visit is allowed. Not sure how this affects the birdlife? The fallout from the last blast was so dirty it was detected across the continent as far as Rockhampton. Thinking about the Montebello and the later Maralinga explosions, you wonder at how naïve we all were.

A few days into island exploring and pleasant snorkeling we started to head down to Exmouth. This town has a fascinating history. It didn't exist until 1963 when the Australian and US governments signed an agreement to establish a joint electronics communications facility. This became a US/Australian town with lots of left-hand drive vehicles. Apparently, all got on really well, and you still have American and Australian flags around the place.

We landed at Exmouth and then a small bus took us down to Ningaloo. Ningaloo is on the coast around the corner from Exmouth harbor. Lots of young people work the tourist industry here from all over the world. On the bus, and later the whale shark boat, we met Canadians, Americans, Germans, English and New Zealanders. They all loved it, and many had been there for years.

On the trip to the Ningaloo area, you come cross a radio communications station. This is really an eye opener. It consists of 13 enormous towers - the highest is 387m. Way taller than Centrepoint, and arguably these are the tallest structures in the southern hemisphere. The centre is now known as the Harold Holt Naval Communications Station. It is jointly operated by the US and Australian navies, but the American population has dwindled as other communications systems in the United States have been developed. This station produces Very Low Frequency (VLF) radio waves which apparently support contact underwater with submarines in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans. Apparently, more Americans are now coming back, and large arrays of satellite dishes are springing up. The Americans in town won't say what it is all about, and the locals have learnt not to ask. There is a very large airfield at nearby Learmouth, where US military transports regularly land. Fascinating.



The little bus takes you onto the wharf at Ningaloo, only about a half hour or so from Exmouth Harbor. We then got onto a smallish boat that held about 20. We had 12 people who wanted to swim with the sharks and the rest wanted a look. They provided wet suits, which were most welcome, and we took our own snorkel gear off our cruise boat. There was a crew of five, all with a job to do - mainly to keep us from drowning. The skipper headed out and took us down inside the reef where we moored, and they tried us over the side to see if our snorkeling skills were up to speed. The whale sharks though are in open water and this can get a bit rough - it is also deep water, about 70-100m.

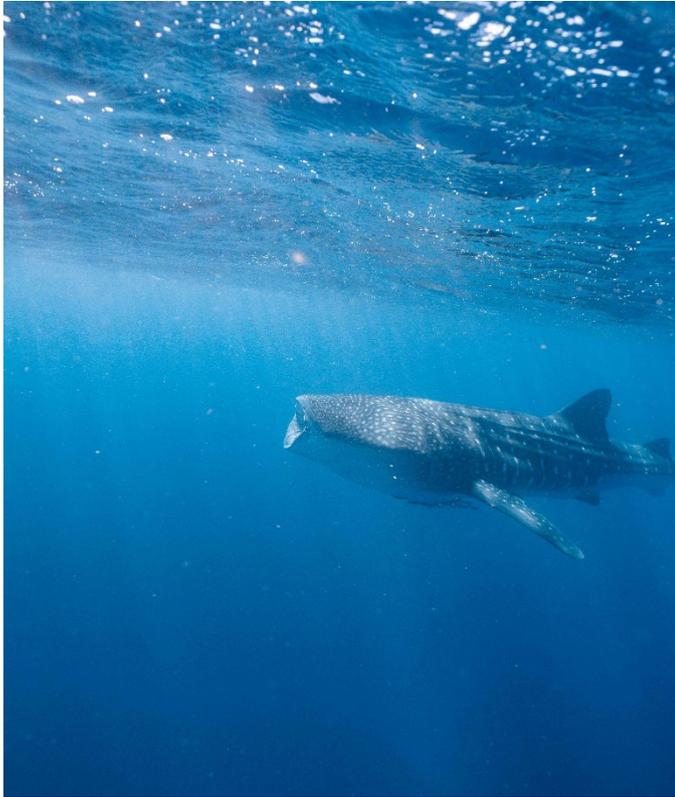
Oh well, off we went, out to sea.

How does this all work? The skipper is the shark spotter, aided by a small plane, and sometimes a drone. There are about 8 or so boats with a similar intent that the plane talks to, but there are plenty of sharks at this time of year and plenty of sea room. The sharks tend to swim in fairly straight lines and close to the surface as they gulp up plankton. Yes, they are plankton feeders, so everyone is quite safe - from being eaten anyway. When they spot a shark, the skipper positions his boat just off the line of the shark's swim.

The deck hand on the back signals, by extended arm, the direction of the shark's swim. At the judged time he yells loudly, "Go, go, go". We had six in our swim group. We were sitting expectantly on the platform over the water, and like parachutists you can't back out at that stage. You push off the platform into the chop, and there is a dive master with you. Our young guy was from California. You paddle to him and line up roughly in the

direction he signals. With a bit of luck, the shark will swim right on by as you soak it all up.

Well, the first time I went in, it was pretty choppy, and I got a few mouthfuls. I drifted off while trying to get a breath and got yelled at by the dive master, but then I



managed to see a rough shadow in the distance. Getting back onto the boat was also an adventure with a very sloppy seas and a rocking boat. Had to take our fins off in the water and climb up the ladder which was rocking up and down like a giant pair of scissors, if that makes sense. Took a chunk out of a finger. Not a memorable first attempt.

Anyway, after getting my breath and a few Band-Aids, the skipper spotted another shark. "Go, go, go". This time I stuck to the dive master like glue. Bounced around in the chop and looked underwater into that beautiful blue sea. From my right this enormous whale shark was heading straight for me. Breathtaking, as it veered slowly away. This was a monster, some 12 m long. I could have reached out and touched it. I abandoned the dive master and swam with the shark for a while, but it was a bit fast for us, even though it looked like it was meandering along.

This experience was truly awe-inspiring. Whale sharks are truly magnificent and gentle creatures. How

privileged was I? This could not have been a better experience. The picture with this article shows the particular shark I encountered. You can get an idea of how big it is if you can see the little swimmers in the top left of the picture.

Getting us back onto the boat, the crew abandoned the ladder and pulled us up on the platform like a sack of potatoes. Undignified, but safer and quicker. The crowd on board who had witnessed the shark were all besides themselves. Unforgettable. Even the non-swimmers had a good look as the shark did all we hoped and swam right near the surface.

I was so lucky - we had three more shark swims. Each one a bit different, but so humbling. The second shark swam to us, then decided to go deep. Like a submarine into the depths. The third had its mouth wide and was taking in prodigious amounts of plankton and other nutrients. By the end of the morning, I have to say, I was exhausted.

The skipper then took us back in behind the reef to relative calm and we had a bite to eat and champagne to celebrate. This was actually my birthday. The crew took this in and organized a jam tart with a candle. How good was that. After lunch we just meandered across the lagoon and did a bit of easy snorkeling. Two dugongs popped up besides us, remarkable. In the water we saw green turtles among all the usual spectacular coral fish. What a day.

Luckily, there was a German girl in the crew who was a photographer. Hence these shots you see from a really good camera.

Our wonderful journey continued on from Exmouth with wonderful snorkeling and island hopping, but I am running out of space. I would like to tell you about Rowley Shoals. This is 260 km west of Broome, a group of three coral atolls out on the edge of the Timor Sea. We had calm weather predicted there so headed off on a long sea day of travel. You can only see the atolls above water at very low tide and you need calm days. The snorkeling and reef viewing was great. But in March this year a marine heat wave headed across this remote atoll with sea temperatures of over 30C. A lot of this pristine reef died. This is unusual in the west. Will the reef come back? They are not sure.

When you read about this, every coral reef in the world has reported extensive coral bleaching and death. We do live in a warming world, and coral may be the canary in the sea. The experts are trying to help in all sorts of ways, like identifying tougher corals. But if you want to see coral with your grandkids, sadly you better do it soon. The sea in general is under terrible pressure from

industrial fishing and heat waves. David Attenborough's latest movie "Ocean" tells the story. We must agitate for change to support our sea life with manageable harvesting and action to reduce global warming, wherever we can.

MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE LAW – WHEN IS IT ILLEGAL TO TAKE A PHOTO?

BY GEOFF BALDWIN

Over the course of a dozen years, in the course of my work as a lawyer, I have written three versions of an article about photography and the law. Interest was initially strong, and has remained so.

What follows is a reworking of the most recent version, to focus to some extent on explanation of the underlying issues in the context of schools and school education.

One of these underlying issues is that the use to which a photograph is put is, very frequently, much more significant than the circumstances of its taking. This was spelled out clearly in media coverage of a recent tragic incident.

A simple question?

This incident was the 2024 murder of six people in a shopping mall in Sydney's eastern suburbs. The commencement, in the first half of 2025, of the coronial inquiry into the deaths was widely publicised, particularly because the father of one of the victims made public his opposition to the inquest. This was mainly on the basis that the six who were killed, and their killer, all being now dead and the circumstances of their deaths widely known; there was not much left for a coronial inquiry to find out. The father – a prominent businessman – also commenced legal action against a range of media outlets that had published a photograph of his daughter in connection with reporting on his objection to the inquest.

Photographs of the daughter (together with photos of the other five who died) were widely published in the immediate aftermath of the mass killing. There was at the time no reported objection from any relative,

including the businessman, possibly reflecting the standard practice of outlets to seek permission for publication from grieving relatives. However, some months later, the businessman commenced action. In opening the case for the businessman, prominent Senior Counsel Sue Chrysanthou SC was reported as saying that copyright claims were "pretty straightforward: someone owns the photo, someone uses it, and there's either permission or there isn't".

Is this something legally novel?

It's not legally novel, but maybe not well known, that copyright (a specific element of the more general concept of "intellectual property") in a photograph is owned, in the absence of special circumstances, by the person who takes it, because the photographer is held to be the creator of a work which is by nature creative. While the overwhelming majority of today's point-and-shoot photographs could hardly be described as involving much creativity, it can hardly be denied that many photographs are works of art, and some are very famous.

When a newspaper or TV channel uses photographs of people injured or killed, the outlet routinely seeks permission from relatives. The motivation generally has little to do with copyright or fear of legal action, but is mainly out of respect for the feelings of family members. Typically they are photos taken long before the newsworthy event, and in some cases the identity of the person who took the photo may not even be known with certainty. A family member may "own" a photograph in the same way that an art collector "owns" a purchased painting: the ownership is of the item itself, and not of

the intangible property that the law holds to be owned by someone who has originally created the painting.

At the time of writing of this third revision of “Photography and the Law” it remains to be seen whether the action commenced against the media outlets creates new law, but it certainly underscores the point that the use to which a photograph is put is legally just as important as the circumstances of its taking. Further, the simple fact that action has been commenced demonstrates the changeability of this particular aspect of the law.

What is special about photography?

Photographs (and videos: references to photography here include videos as well) are indeed funny things, in the sense that the ability to capture an exact and durable likeness of some person or thing from a distance – instantly and without the need for any great skill – has existed for only a very brief period of human history. So, by contrast with issues on which the law has developed over many centuries, photography is relatively new.

Photography is arguably unique in its ability to affect, in some way, a subject from whom the photographer is quite distant, and who may be entirely unaware of the photographer’s activities. Other than with very specialised equipment, it isn’t possible to capture a clear sound recording of what someone has said except from very close range; but this is not true of photography.

There is little doubt that the questions currently posed by photography are greatly complicated by the explosion of social media, which now pervades most aspects of modern life. So, how might we go about working out whether the taking (and, obviously, use) of a photograph breaks the law?

For many people, questions of “privacy” are the first things that come to mind. We will return to this, but it’s best to start with the basics.

Rights, obligations and liberties

From the way lawyers tend to write, it might be thought that the world of law is divided up into two parts: rights and obligations. But there’s a third part: liberties.

You must comply with obligations – for example, you are obliged to vote. You can exercise rights as against others – for example, with a handful of obvious exceptions, you

have a right to refuse entry to any person you don’t want to let into the home you own.

In the middle, so to speak, are liberties. These are things you may do, as long as you don’t infringe the rights of another person, or fail to comply with some obligation which you are under. You are at liberty to leave your home and walk down the street, but in so doing you are still obliged to obey the traffic laws; and you don’t have the right to insist on entering a particular street if some proper authority has closed it.

You can take your camera or phone with you as you walk down the street, and you are at liberty to take a photograph of anything or anyone you want to, while you are walking. Even if you are taking photos from inside your own property, it’s better to think of this as being a liberty and not a right.

So what sorts of factors might influence whether your photo is in breach of the law?

Broadly, these factors are:

- where the photo was taken
- what the purpose of taking the photo was
- what use was made (or intended to be made) of the photo

Where the photograph is taken

Generally, you can lawfully take a photograph in any public place such as a street, park or beach, and obviously, any property you own or have control of (for example, a rented property).

While a concert hall or sporting arena might seem to be a public place, it’s not a public place in the same way that a park or beach is. Neither is a school.

The reason for taking the photograph

Generally, if the location is not a problem, the reason for taking the photograph doesn’t matter. However, if you have a voyeuristic purpose, which can generally be thought of as capturing images of private activities for your own or someone else’s sexual gratification, that is likely to be an offence under the NSW [Crimes Act 1900](#), regardless of where you were when you took the photo. The distribution of “intimate images” can also be an offence under the same Act.

The use or intended use of the photograph

The reason why a photograph is taken and the use to which it is put are different things. A photograph may have been taken simply out of personal curiosity, but if it is subsequently used for an untoward purpose, trouble may result.

Photos, videos and copyright infringement

While a person has no copyright in his or her own image (because copyright can reside only in the creation of something), and generally photographs of performances in public places are safe, that does not mean that copyright problems cannot occur.

If you have gone to that rock concert and captured a video of a song played by a band, whether or not the venue forbade photography, if all you do is replay it to yourself, nothing is likely to happen, much as, strictly speaking, you have made off with someone else's intellectual property.

However, if you post the video on YouTube, you will have breached the band's copyright and, at least in theory, deprived the band of royalty income it might have otherwise received. If you go further and save the recording to a DVD or flash drive which you then sell to others, thus deriving income for yourself from material over which the band has copyright, that's even worse.

It may be true that artists hardly ever bother taking legal action, especially over amateur recordings, but it's helpful to understand that you can't safely use photographs or videos you have taken for any possible sort of use.

Privacy concerns related to photography

It is of course often said that the capture of photographic images, even in public places (for example a photograph of a car with the licence plate clearly visible), can be an "invasion of privacy".

A sanction under the [Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988](#) is unlikely because that Act is aimed at rather different things, notably the use of "personal information" for purposes other than those for which it has been collected. Photographs are not, in themselves, "personal information".

The school education context

Arguably there is no other context in which it is more evident that the really important issue is, as was pointed

out at the start, the use to which a photograph is put is of far greater importance than the circumstances of its taking. Consider the following.

The place is the school swimming carnival. Enthusiastic parents take photos: some strictly of their own children only; others including classmates and friends; and yet others in which images of students having no particular connection to their own child are captured. The proud parent posts on Facebook, Instagram, or the like. Some posts include names: "here's Hermione with her friends Harry and Ron".

The potential concerns here are not those of copyright infringement. The obvious possibilities include family law proceedings where custody orders are in play, apprehended domestic violence orders, and related identity suppression orders.

Every phone is a camera. It is, for all practical purposes, impossible to prevent unauthorised photography. The most obvious – and, it might be thought, common – remedy is a consent or disclaimer form to be signed by participants, but that can go only so far.

Is the law about photographs up to date?

In the late 1970s the publication of a photograph taken at a Sydney racecourse of then Chief Magistrate Murray Farquhar sitting beside notorious criminal George Freeman was arguably the start of Farquhar's fall from grace. So these issues aren't entirely new but, yes, the law probably isn't up to date.

The school swimming carnival example above points out the near impossibility of in some way regulating photography in situations akin to being public places, but which actually aren't.

The use of cameras mounted on drones, which most people would entirely reasonably think of as being harmfully invasive of privacy, is largely unregulated; and possibly controllable only if the images are put to some improper use. And the reach of social media continues to outstrip the capacity of the law to respond effectively.

Probably the most effective approach is, as it was with efforts to stop unlawful discrimination, and currently with cybercrime, essentially the raising of awareness of the risks and consequences.



IRSEA Invitation

WWW.IRSEA.ORG.AU

General Meeting and Luncheon

@ Castlereagh Boutique Hotel, 169 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

11:00am for the 11:45am meeting

Apologies for the delayed notice, however, the 1 August meeting is shaping up as a BIG ONE for IRSEA. And so we are moving the meeting to the big Cellos Grand Dining Room, Level 4 of the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel! We will be signing an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalise our exciting new partnership with the Public Education Foundation. We may also have some other surprises for our meeting, so please do all you can to attend and enjoy the celebrations.



To cap off the meeting, we will be hearing from our guest speaker . . .

Dr. Manisha Amin, CEO, Public Education Foundation

Dr Amin has recently been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Public Education Foundation. Manisha is a highly experienced and respected executive, having held senior roles in organisations including the Centre for Inclusive Design, Barnardos Australia, and the Cancer Council. Her background spans technology, education, health, environment and community sectors—always with a focus on social purpose, innovation, and inclusion. A proud graduate of the public education system, Manisha is passionate about equity in education and deeply committed to the Foundation's mission. Her collaborative leadership style, strategic mindset, and strong track record in stakeholder engagement, including with government, set her up well to lead the Foundation into its next chapter in its quest to strengthen support for students, teachers, and principals in the public education sector across Australia.



We will be enjoying our usual networking and collegiality along with our new alternate drop lunch main, with dessert and coffee/tea, and of course, a tantalizing raffle prize to support Stewart House.

We guarantee a magnificent IRSEA event so, members and guests, please join us for more conviviality, fun and inspiration.

This occasion will be a wonderful opportunity to introduce new potential members, so please consider inviting past colleagues from Schools and TAFE to experience what IRSEA offers for retired senior educational administrators.

Please book straight away on the form below 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, IRSEA Reports and Luncheon @ Castlereagh Boutique Hotel (169 Castlereagh St, Sydney 2000)

Friday, 1 August 2025

11:00-11:30am – Pre-meeting gathering and refreshments, Level 2

11:45am-2:00pm Formal meeting – Cellos Grand Dining Room, Level 4

Please return the booking slip below and make payment for the lunch meeting by **Friday 25 July**.

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, 11.45am 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 Meals 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

PLEASE NOTE: Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after **Monday 28 July 2025**