



May was the month for celebrating public education with Back to School Day, Victorian Education Week and the AEU's public education day.



Bum goes **PSYCHO** in Pascoe Vale

Rachel Power *AEU News*

WRITER Andy Griffiths introduces his new mascot to the kids at Pascoe Vale Primary School. "Meet B3 — Banana in Balaclava", he grins, holding up a Banana in Pyjama doll with a sock over its face. "Those other bananas are way too nice."

Andy's particular brand of cheekiness has its origins way back in 1968 at this very school. He returned to his old haunt for the Education Foundation's Back to School Day on 8 May.

Now in its sixth year, the program sees prominent Australians return to their former schools to share their life stories with current students and celebrate public education. Last year, more than 1800 participants visited over 500 public schools.

Andy Griffiths, author of the best-

selling *Just!* series and comic novels such as *The Day My Bum Went Psycho*, was an eagerly anticipated guest.

"I know it's always a shame to miss your regular classes for visiting speakers," he teased his listeners in Year 5/6. "What would you have been doing? Maths? That was always my worst subject. I was only good at writing rude words on the calculator."

Andy said being a student at Pascoe Vale Primary School made him who he is, and that all his ideas had their origins in those early years. It's where he learnt his first rude word, he said, and discovered practical jokes, the basis of most of his stories.

"Stories are like practical jokes," he explained. "You lead someone one way and then give them something they're

not expecting."

Education Minister John Lenders launched this year's Back to School Day at his own alma mater, Trafalgar High School, with Education Foundation CEO Adam Smith. Lenders used the opportunity to open a new \$450,000 flexible learning centre.

Minister Lenders was joined by two of his former teachers. He spent 20 minutes with Year 8 students who quizzed him about "his time at the school, what his teachers thought of him as a student and some great questions about what he would like to achieve as a minister of education during his term," Mr Smith said.

Eumemmerring College had a joint visit from two old boys working in distinct fields. Singer Darren Tyler is currently performing in *Miss Saigon*, while David Biagi is vice-captain of the Casey Scorpions VFL team. The school, in one of Victoria's most disadvantaged areas, is developing a reputation for success stories, with *Sunrise* weatherman Grant Denyer last year's celebrity visitor.

Macquarie Bank chairman Simon McKean, Collingwood AFL player Shane O'Bree and Channel 7 reporter Peter Mitchell were among the other Victorians to go "back to school". ♦

Public teachers celebrated



THERE are never enough opportunities to recognise the invaluable contributions made by teachers, leaders and SSOs to their schools and communities. For five years, the Victorian Education Excellence Awards have helped fill the gap.

The awards celebrate the outstanding work of Victoria's school principals and teachers and provide professional development opportunities, here and overseas, for those who exemplify best practice and innovation.

The 2007 Victorian Education Excellence Awards were announced by the Minister for Education, John Lenders, at a gala dinner during Education Week. As usual, AEU members were prominent among the finalists.

Congratulations to our winners: **Abigail Graham** (Neerim District Secondary College), who won the \$50,000 Lindsay Thompson Fellowship; **Lynette Jobson**, **Jeanette Finegan**, **Susan Lee** and **Tina Agosta** (Seabrook Primary School), who won the \$20,000 School Leadership Team Award; **Lynette Hines** (Tallarook PS), winner of the \$10,000 VCTU Outstanding Primary Teacher; and **Paul Van Eeden** (Thornbury High) for the mecu Outstanding Secondary Teacher Award.

AEU award for top student

Congratulations to art teacher **Harriet Turnbull**, winner of the AEU award for best practicum at Melbourne University. Harriet, now teaching at Melbourne Girls' College, came top in her year for the teaching practice component of her graduate diploma.

She was presented with the AEU-sponsored award by AEU branch president Mary Bluett, who said: "Harriet is a worthy winner of this award. She's incredibly enthusiastic. She also sees her membership of the AEU as core to her being part of the profession." ♦



Normal service resumed

PressWatch last issue noted an uncharacteristic lapse at *The Australian*, which failed to cover the ACER report on performance pay (verdict: it doesn't work). Thankfully, all seems back to normal, and ANU economist Andrew Leigh's findings on performance pay (verdict: it does work) were plastered all over page one on 21 May.

Man of Steel

"When Colac College principal Richard Cooper talks about the Colac Regeneration Project it seems as if each word is a building block and his will alone might be enough to get it done."

— *Phew! A breathless Karen Harbutt in the DoE's Education Times (31 May) gets overexcited by the state budget's building program.*

Stop the presses!

"Girls Drank At School Sleepovers"

— *Headline, Herald Sun (5 June). On other pages: Pope confesses "I'm Catholic"; bear waste found in woods.*