

# AEUnews

TERM 3 2019

MAGAZINE

SPARK THE CHANGE

INABILITY | WELLBEING | RESPECT | EMPATHY | REDUCING WORKLOAD |



AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION  
VICTORIAN BRANCH



## AEU VICTORIAN BRANCH

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## AEU News Issue 3, 2019

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**Educators understand that if students are overwhelmed by trauma, depression or anxiety – or just stressed out by testing regimes and fears for their future – they're in no state to learn. There is ample research on the benefits of having someone who listens and empathises in preventing stress or emotional pain morphing into a full-blown mental health disorder.**

Preschools, schools and TAFEs play a central role in promoting respect, positive attitudes and healthy behaviour. In this edition, we meet members who are 'sparking the change', whether working to achieve equality for LGBTIQ+ students, helping children overcome trauma or enabling asylum seekers to envisage a future.

Our 'regional focus' is Melbourne's south-east, where we visit schools finding myriad ways to foster positive behaviour and meet a teacher whose colleagues supported him through the toughest of times.

We profile a preschool teacher who found her passion and her calling when she ditched advertising for education. And hear from the sole teacher of one of Victoria's smallest and most isolated schools, where the entire student body of seven fits into one classroom.

We learn about a new teaching model that could transform the introduction of STEM in early childhood. And, of course, we couldn't ignore the debate over the ban on mobile phones in schools! We speak to two school leaders with very different takes on the issue.

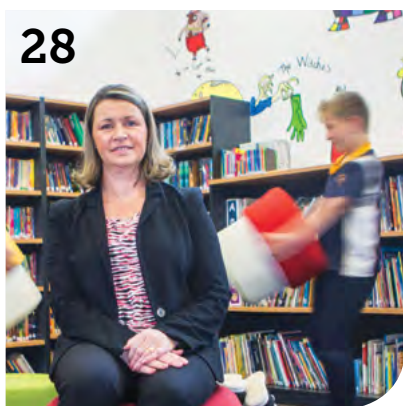
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**Our core objective is to make sure that you are given the trust, support and resources you need to do the job that you have trained to do.**



## Leading the way

In late July, I was fortunate to be part of an AEU national delegation to the Education International Congress in Bangkok. EI (of which the AEU is a member) is a federation of 391 education unions across 176 countries, with 32 million members.

The congress theme was 'taking the lead' – in advancing our profession, promoting democracy, human and trade union rights, and ensuring free quality public education for all. As you will see in this edition of the AEU News, taking the lead was also a focus for our annual conference on 5 August.

In my address to conference I reminded delegates that, as educators, we can be a significant force in the progressive movement to achieve justice, sustainability and a well-resourced education system. Central to this is our role of equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to navigate the world we're living in – one that will require them to adapt, collaborate, analyse and successfully transition to potentially very different ways of working and living. It is a privileged role – and, I believe, an obligation – to support our students along a path to a more democratic and sustainable future.

Climate change is real – and the importance of taking action in response to the inaction of governments around the world has never been more essential. It's appropriate that we stand with the young people demanding action through the student climate strikes. It's also appropriate that we advocate for the health and wellbeing of our students, not to mention that of ourselves and our colleagues.

A recent AEU survey, which encompassed schools, TAFE and early childhood, showed our members are facing significant challenges in supporting the rising number of students with mental health issues. It is up to us to highlight the very real needs of our students and to keep up the pressure for better resources to address student wellbeing, especially for those who are disadvantaged.

We know two years of preschool is most beneficial to children from low SES families – and that additional funding to support students with disabilities, those in regional and rural settings, and with additional English language needs does make a difference.

In terms of the needs of our members, the AEU has been taking the lead in addressing the significant workload issues being faced by educators. The VGSA 2017 and the TAFE MEA 2018 are the first agreements to include specific clauses to tackle workload.

For school staff, this meant the introduction of the professional practice days and the 30+8 model. For TAFE teachers, it has been the requirement for mandatory workplans. Workload will also be top of mind during negotiations for the next early childhood agreement.

The most recent school sector newsletter contained detailed information about the 30+8 clause, including advice to teachers and

principals on implementing this model in schools. Now is the time to submit plans for 2020 and we need to make sure PPDs and the 30+8 clause remain key ways of managing teacher workloads. We are also maintaining pressure on DET, as a party to the agreement, to provide better support and assistance for schools in tackling workloads.

The gross inequity between the public and private education systems was again put under the spotlight in a detailed exposé from the ABC recently. If you didn't see it, I urge you to look up *Rich school, poor school: Australia's great education divide*. In what the story described as an 'infrastructure arms race', this research revealed that four of the country's richest private schools spent more on capital works than 1,800 public schools combined.

Thanks to the Morrison federal government's biased support, taxpayers are subsidising extreme luxuries – from rooftop gardens to 'subterranean aquatic facilities' – for elite private schools, while public schools are forced to fundraise for the basics. So much for 'needs-based funding'. How can the Morrison government justify a situation that sees students at Geelong Grammar attracting almost twice as much funding (\$25,000+) than those in nearby public schools, where students are funded at around \$13,000 each – more than \$1,000 less than the federal government's benchmark? For a secondary school with 1,000 students, that's a shortfall of \$1.25 million a year, or the equivalent of ten extra teaching staff.

Whilst the Andrews government is contributing billions in additional funding under the new state-federal funding agreement, it also needs to lift its game. There continues to be no transparency regarding how much money is allocated by both levels of government and to which sectors: public, Catholic or independent. The Victorian government also needs to reassess its policy of guaranteeing private schools at least 25% of the funding state school students receive, which is only adding to the widening equity gap.

As your union, we will never stop driving home the message that this kind of inequity between schools is unjust and unacceptable – in any country, but especially in a wealthy country like Australia, which prides itself on its sense of fairness. We will also continue to support members to organise and advocate for your professional interests and rights at work. Our core objective is to make sure you are given the trust, support and resources you need to do the work that you have trained to do – work that is of vital importance now and for our future. We all need to ask ourselves – are we prepared to take the lead? If not us, who else?

**Meredith Peace**  
President, AEU Victorian Branch



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## AEU MEMBER VOICES

**A UK education watchdog has called for a ban on 'pushy' parents emailing teachers at all hours of the day and night. Good idea?**

Our school is fantastic, as all emails go through the school email address. This helps to keep nights and weekends email-free. Of course, we can respond during that time and the email will be sent when the office staff are in during business hours.

– Lyndon Strolla

This is driving us mad in Adult Education! Possibly a one hour per day allocation for all teachers to respond to emails? No responses outside this time limit.

– Jill Slater

The way you put an end to instant-response culture is you just stop instantly responding.

– Adam Bakker

**Victoria becomes the first state in Australia to ban mobile phones in government schools. The AEU is cautiously supportive, but keen to hear your thoughts.**

A ban during class time has significantly changed the learning dynamic in our school. It is far less stressful for teachers and students alike. Pedagogically, I like the arguments for phones in classrooms, but I'd also like to do yard duty where kids look me and their friends in the eye from time to time.

– Anna Treasure

This is reactive, not proactive. Mobile phones are a great learning tool if used appropriately and it's a great teaching opportunity for kids to learn how to use their devices appropriately in a school.

– Shannon Harvie

A huge relief. So much time and energy wasted on trying to manage students' compulsive social media use. I think the "students need to learn how to



**Left:** Award-winning rep Hanae Honda at this year's AEU Reps Conference.

**Below left:** Mahani Mohd Tif from the NUW addresses the crowd at our AEU Reps Conference.

**Below right:** The AEU's tongue-in-cheek response to the ABC's capital funding revelations.



manage themselves" argument is bogus; like telling a heroin addict it's good practice to keep heroin on their person.

– Michael Downes

A state-wide ban sets a clear standard that backs up teachers to teach and foster good learning habits.

– Peter Signorini

Absolutely a good response. There is vast evidence about the mental health implications for having a mobile in the bedroom; it follows that the same pressures and anxieties would exist in the classroom.

– Jason Crebbin

Be very cautious. I agree it makes sense pedagogically but will be a nightmare to enforce, which will no doubt just further add to our huge workload. Furthermore, I really don't think the department should make such huge decisions without consulting teachers.

– Elliot Brice

We've had it in for two years and it is the best!!! The kids actually talk at lunchtime and the responsibilities for kids' online behaviour sits squarely with parents.

– Rachel Jansen Ditty Zuidland

**The ABC ran a gobsmacking exposé on how non-government schools are spending their capital funding. Forget basic maintenance – barista, anyone?**

Teachers have known of the inequality of money handouts for private schools for many many years. Now, at least, there is hard evidence. Trying to convince the powers-that-be for much needed maintenance was always hard work.

– Christine Sudul

They're building an aquarium for scuba lessons? How is this not satire?

– Rhys Cooper

[How about] plumbing that doesn't leak into the staff car park, a functioning PA system, asbestos removal, a lick of paint and some grass?

– Elyce Boyd

We've been without heating all winter.

– Kate Logan

Government schools get great results. A swimming pool and a third oval doesn't really achieve anything.

– Adrian De Fanti



JUSTIN MULLALY, DEPUTY PRESIDENT



CARA NIGHTINGALE, VICE PRESIDENT  
EARLY CHILDHOOD

## SCHOOLS

### Morrison wants to take over our union

Our union is democratically run. We have a union structure that means that every member can influence the actions of the union and help make decisions about the use of union resources. Our sector and branch councils are made up of elected representatives – teachers, principals and support staff – from the workplaces we represent. They determine what our union does and doesn't do, with senior officers required to carry out those decisions.

This is how unions are run: by and for members. As it should be.

But Scott Morrison has a bill before parliament that would fundamentally undermine union democracy and threaten the internationally recognised human right of workers to organise and to act collectively.

This bill, with its doublespeak title of 'Ensuring Integrity', would allow the Registered Organisation Commission (the body that regulates unions), the Minister or a 'person of sufficient interest' (read 'employer' or 'parent') to apply to the Federal Court for a broad range of orders. These include disqualification of an officer, deregistration of a union, alteration of a union's eligibility rules, restriction of the use of union funds or property, and more. A 'union officer' is defined broadly and includes local sub-branch representatives. The Federal Court would be able to impose the same suite of powers – including findings against the union, officers or members – for offences such as filing union paperwork late with a government authority.

If passed, the bill would automatically disqualify any person who has committed an offence (under a law of the Commonwealth, a state or territory or another country) from holding a union position. It would also allow the Federal Court to disqualify someone from holding a union position on a wide range of grounds, including not being a 'fit and proper person' to hold office, for example, if they had been caught twice driving without a license.

No other democracy has laws like this, which fundamentally take aim at the rights of workers and union members. The closest equivalent would be laws introduced in 1930s Brazil during a dictatorship. There is certainly no equivalent in corporate law.

Morrison's bill is currently being considered by a Senate committee, as it has already passed the Lower House. It will be up to the six crossbenchers to determine its fate, with Tasmanian Jackie Lambie and South Australian Centre Alliance senators being the key decision-makers. They are yet to confirm whether or not they support the proposed legislation.

The bill is likely to be back in parliament in November. For the sake of AEU members and all Australian workers, it must be stopped.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

### Negotiations underway for early childhood workforce

Formal negotiations with the Municipal Association of Victoria and EEEA have been underway since May and informal discussions are ongoing. The Fair Work Commission (FWC) approved Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA)'s single interest application (SIA) in mid-July. ELAA then sought to narrow the scope of the SIA so it was sent back to the FWC. We are hopeful that this variation will soon be approved. Employers will then provide all employees with the Notice of Representational Rights (NERR) and formal bargaining with ELAA must commence within 14 days.

We undertook extensive consultation with members towards the end of 2018 and identified the top three issues for our log of claim: pay parity for teachers with school teachers, a significant increase in educator salaries, and addressing workload.

Earlier in the year, the AEU worked hard to ensure more kindergarten programs in long day care and within schools would ultimately be covered by the agreements. We know the sign-up rate for long day care services is low and teachers in these services do not receive the pay and working conditions they deserve.

The majority of our members who work in long day care settings are employed under the Educational Services Teachers Award (ESTA) and there are some notable inequities between that award and the VECTEA. Teachers salary and conditions should be the same, regardless of whether they work in long day care or sessional kindergarten. There is a great opportunity right now to make things fairer, which is why we are working closely with members and potential members to encourage their employer to become a signatory by explaining how the process works and the funding delivered as a result of our negotiations. We want to see equality of outcomes across the early childhood workforce and with our colleagues in schools.

The Victorian government has also committed to almost \$5 billion over the next decade so that every child in the state will have access to two years of funded kindergarten by 2029. With the expansion of preschool funding in Victoria to include three-year-old kinder programs, there will be high demand for more teachers and educators in a sector that is already experiencing a shortage. The best way to attract and retain new teachers and educators is to make sure their pay and conditions reflect and value the work of the profession.

We encourage our early childhood members to keep up to date with all AEU communications and the progress of these negotiations. If you have any questions or queries, or would like to organise for me to attend a member meeting and provide an update on negotiations, please email us at [EC@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:EC@aeuvic.asn.au).



ELAINE GILLESPIE, VICE PRESIDENT  
TAFE AND ADULT PROVISION (TAP)

## TAFE

### Meeting the demand

We have welcomed the Victorian government's investment of an additional \$11.7 million in the TAFE system to help meet the demand created by the introduction of free courses. The funding includes \$5m for extra places, \$500,000 for teacher scholarships to attract professionals with industry experience, and \$6m to supply study skills and course materials to disadvantaged students.

At the end of June, there were 25,000 enrolments in free courses. The AEU is now calling on the government to make further significant investments to ensure we have enough fully qualified teachers to meet the increase in student numbers.

It is gratifying to see public TAFE finally getting more of the support it needs. We know that Victorians support this vital access to further education and the high-quality skills TAFE provides.

The 2019 Free TAFE list is especially focused on meeting the job and training needs of regional Victoria. We understand the department will be reviewing completions and provision at the end of each year to match industry demand and avoid flooding the market with graduates for jobs that don't exist, as occurred under the former Liberal government's privatisation agenda.

The AEU remains focused on ensuring that the new staff agreement is properly implemented in TAFE institutes, especially regarding workplans and managing teacher workload. We are still hearing of instances where teachers have been expected to teach for up to 1,350 hours. Anything above 800 hours is a breach of the agreement and we are in the process of using every avenue to bring those institutes into line.

Other issues we are tackling include a lack of training provided to senior educator managers regarding workplans, which should have been completed by 1 March; several reports of unaddressed risks to health and safety; and a lack of consultation with staff at some institutes on significant changes to working arrangements.

## DISABILITY

### New MEA on its way

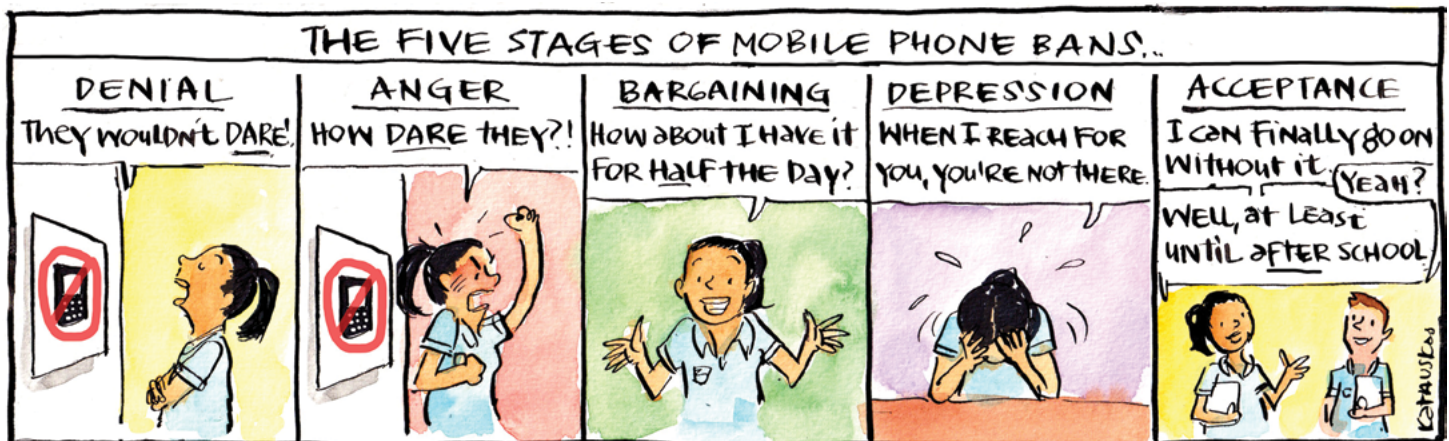
The AEU has reached an in-principle multi-enterprise agreement (MEA) for disability members in standalone services that largely maintains conditions, despite a lack of transitional funding from the Andrews government. Despite intensive lobbying from unions, the government refused to top up funds to maintain annual leave conditions. Only existing employees working in a program with a January shut-down period will retain six weeks annual leave. All other staff, along with new employees, will now get four weeks.

The new agreement does see some improvements, including increased provision for overtime, weekend work and sleep-overs, as well as greater clarity on part-time hours and rostering. It introduces the concept of 'flexible part-time employees' – whereby the employee agrees on availability and has some core and some flexible hours – to improve certainty and maximise job security. Casual staff also gain the right to request conversion to permanent employment after 9 months, with a limit on fixed-term contracts.

Unfortunately, the lack of transitional funding has seen a reduction in the number of employers willing to sign up to the draft MEA. At this stage there are 15 registered, with several still considering their position. We will be urging members in those centres to lobby their employers to sign up.

Throughout September, employers who have signed up to the agreement will be discussing the proposed changes with their employees prior to the voting process. The AEU will also hold webinars and local meetings to help members gain a better understanding of how the changes will impact on you and your centre. If you would like to arrange for an AEU organiser to attend your workplace, please email [rtc@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:rtc@aeuvic.asn.au).

The draft MEA's nominal expiry date is 31 December 2022. This will allow all parties in the sector to continue lobbying at the state and federal level for improved funding for disability.





# AEU branch conference highlights

This year's conference emphasised the importance of taking the lead – in advancing our profession, promoting democracy, ensuring quality public education and saving the planet.



In clockwise order: Damon Gameau, Correna Haythorpe and Meredith Peace address AEU members and staff at this year's branch conference.

## STEPPING UP

MEREDITH PEACE  
AEU VICTORIA BRANCH PRESIDENT

In the past year, AEU members have once again taken up the fight for what we know is right.

In last year's state election, this meant putting forward clear plans for Victoria's schools, TAFE and early childhood; lobbying politicians and candidates; and talking publicly about the need for further investment in public education.

In this year's federal election, it meant campaigning in a toxic political environment characterised by inaccurate reporting and poor analysis of just how antagonistic the Morrison government was towards public education.

We will learn from our experiences and once again take the lead in making positive change. In the early childhood sector, that means continuing our long-term campaign for federally funded three and four-year-old preschool. In TAFE, it means continuing to rebuild our public TAFE system. In schools, it means improving workloads and investing for population growth.

I was pleased to host filmmaker Damon Gameau in conversation at this year's conference. His new documentary *2040* is a prime example of people learning from their experiences and working together

to make our world better. Imagining a future world where humanity has acted to ameliorate climate change, his film has a very simple message: education will be key to saving the planet.

UN research suggests that educated girls with reliable access to health services are likely to have fewer children, significantly reducing the impact of overpopulation by about 1 billion people by 2050.

Damon spent three years travelling around the world, looking for ideas that could turn things around and secure a healthier planet by the time his five-year-old daughter Velvet turns 21.

He said that speaking with children the world over has filled him with hope. The next generation – currently in our schools – doesn't understand why we aren't getting the leadership we deserve, so they are taking the lead themselves. We've seen this in the student-led climate change rallies across the country; hope – and dedicated activism – really does have the power to change the world.

We will continue to grow our union and develop active and engaged members who can take our message out to our education and broader communities. At this time in our history, we must step up to protect our profession, our public education system, our environment and our democracy.

## CONTINUING THE FIGHT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

CORRENA HAYTHORPE  
AEU FEDERAL PRESIDENT

With the return of the Morrison government, the post-election landscape for public education is grim. Once again, we will see privatisation on the government's agenda. Once again, we will have to step up to defend collective institutions like our public health and public education systems.

In early childhood, the Morrison government has refused to guarantee its share of funding for 15 hours of four-year-old preschool beyond 2020. In TAFE, we have seen the federal Coalition unashamedly shifting public money from our public TAFE system to private VET providers.

In schools, the re-election of the Morrison government means public schools have lost \$14 billion across the next decade. School staff will continue to face the same challenges, the same workload issues and the same resourcing issues.

Our campaign objectives remain the same too. Thanks to AEU members, we have fought off the nastiest components of the Abbott, Turnbull, and Morrison agenda – and we will need to keep doing so for the foreseeable future.

# Three-year-old preschool rolls out

The historic announcement of funding for three-year-old preschool is a great win, but raises a number of questions.

**T**hree-year-old preschool was one of the centrepiece announcements in this year's Victorian state budget. Treasurer Tim Pallas highlighted the historic investment of \$882 million, describing it as a commitment that ensures children are *"ready for school and set for life"*.

Never before have we seen such focus and financial investment in the early childhood sector. It's because of concentrated effort by the AEU and our members that three-year-old preschool is now a reality, rolling out in six local government areas from next year and delivering at least five hours of preschool per week for every three-year-old by 2022.

This means children will now be better prepared to transition into primary school, having received the best possible start to their education. The DET recently wrote to service providers, addressing some common questions about the rollout.

## Will the school starting age remain in place?

Yes, 30 April remains the cut-off point for school entry. Therefore, it is possible for younger children to attend three-year-old preschool provided they turn three by 30 April that year. Where two-year-olds are enrolled, the minimum educator to child ratio of 1:4 must be applied. The capacity to employ more staff and meet the 1:4 ratio will be a decision for each provider to make.



## Why does our centre have to wait until 2022 to begin implementation?

A reform of this size will take time to implement. Over the next decade, the workforce needs to double and 1,000 new centres have to be built. We also know that there are pockets of disadvantage in rural areas, so providing access for these children in the early stages is an important part of the policy.

## Won't this cause more staff to be part time or made redundant?

It is the case that 15 hours of three or four-year-old preschool does not fit neatly into our current industrial entitlements, which provide a maximum of 25.5 hours teaching time. The neat and tidy solution would be for teachers and educators to teach for 30 hours.

However, the AEU will never agree to diminishing entitlements and increasing workload pressure on staff, so we need to look at what is possible under the current rules. These matters will form part of our negotiations for the next VECTEA and EEEA, and have been firmly placed on the minister's and the department's radar.

## Influencing education policy

The AEU Education Committee was formed in 2018 to develop policies in a range of professional areas pertinent to members.

Comprised of around 20 representatives, including teachers, principals and AEU officers, the committee was established in response to a call from members for the union to strengthen its professional influence on the educational approaches operating in Victoria's schools.

The committee determined that the AEU should draft formal policies in five areas: curriculum; assessment and reporting; teacher welfare; technology; pedagogy; and inclusive education.

AEU representatives and councillors are being consulted on these drafts. Educational experts have also been invited to speak to the committee to help inform its deliberations, including

Associate Professor Alan Reid; Professor Neil Selwyn (technology); Professor Umesh Sharma (inclusive education); David Howes (VCAA/regional issues); and Paulina Billett and Rochelle Fogelgarn (teacher bullying).

The first policy – on curriculum development – has been endorsed by the AEU's branch council and is available to members at [aeuvic.asn.au/school-curriculum-development-implementation-and-review-policy](http://aeuvic.asn.au/school-curriculum-development-implementation-and-review-policy). The committee is currently in discussions with the education department about how this policy should be implemented at the school level.

Its draft reporting and assessment policy will be the next cab off the rank, and will be considered by branch councillors prior to being made available to members for feedback.

# Going above and beyond

Yet again, international data confirms Australian teachers are working far longer hours than those overseas and spend 50% more time on non-teaching tasks than the OECD average.

JUSTIN BOWD reports.

In June, the OECD released the results of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted in 2018.

TALIS data aims to provide internationally comparable information about the nature and volume of teachers' work, their education, practices, attitudes and workplaces. TALIS was administered to 6,603 teachers and 453 principals from Australian primary and secondary schools, although its main focus is lower secondary educators (3,573 teachers and 230 principals in the Australian sample).

Perhaps unsurprisingly for AEU members, TALIS data revealed that Australian teachers were working significantly more hours per week than their counterparts in other OECD countries. Lower secondary teachers, for example, reported working an average of 44.8 hours in their most recently completed calendar week, compared to the OECD average of 38.8 hours.

A large proportion of the working hours reported by Australian teachers was spent on administrative tasks. They reported spending 4.1 hours per week on non-teaching tasks, which was more than 50% higher than the OECD average. Only three of the 48 systems participating in TALIS in 2018 – Japan, England and New Zealand – had teachers spending more time on administration.

One of the policy goals recommended by the TALIS international report is to make “the most of teachers’ time to support quality teaching” and, to this end, the OECD notes that effective teaching practices

require “that teachers have enough time for activities that maximise student learning such as lesson preparation, professional collaboration, meeting with students and parents, and participating in professional development.”

Unfortunately, the number of hours Australian lower secondary teachers spent in front of classrooms increased by 1.3 hours per week between 2013 and 2018, while there was no significant increase in the amount of time spent on individual planning or preparation. It is for this reason that clauses in the VGSA 2017 mandating 30 hours for teaching and learning are so important to ensuring that Victorian public schools support the most effective teaching practices.

When asked about education spending priorities, Australian teachers were more likely to identify additional support staff to reduce administrative workloads (58.7%) than teachers in other OECD countries (54.6%). More than half of the Australian teachers also included class size reductions (particularly where classes had a high proportion of students with behavioural problems) and access to high-quality professional development as recommended priorities.

Indicators of job satisfaction for Australian lower secondary teachers were similar to OECD averages. For example, 87.8% felt that the advantages of being a teacher far outweighed the disadvantages. And although only 44.7% of Australian respondents agreed that the teaching profession was valued in society, this




**A policy goal recommended by the TALIS report is to make “the most of teachers’ time to support quality teaching”.**

proportion was higher than the OECD average of 25.8%.

However, Australian teachers were less enthusiastic about their workplaces, with one-quarter expressing a desire to change to another school compared to just one in five in the OECD generally.

Measures of teacher self-efficacy were high, or around the OECD average, for most items representing effective teaching practices for Australian teachers. For example, 80.8% of Australian lower secondary teachers felt that they were able to help students think critically ‘quite a bit’ or ‘a lot’ and a similar proportion felt that they could help students value learning (83.4%).

Interestingly, regarding the various self-efficacy measures in TALIS, the gap between those with more or less than five years of teaching experience tended to be greater in Australia than for the OECD. This could be because, on average, Australian teachers felt their initial teacher education left them less prepared for course content, general pedagogy and classroom management than those in comparable countries. 





## THE LAW AND YOU

# Behaving well online

The traditional principles of 'civil and courteous' behaviour now translate to social media and the online world, writes AEU industrial officer JOHN WIELADEK.

**T**here are innumerable reports on how social media has changed society and the ways people engage with each other. It is now easier than ever to communicate with people you know (and those you don't know), and the way people express themselves has undergone a revolution too.

But how does the teaching profession adapt to this new world? Does it change what we say and how we behave?

Thankfully, the starting point is the same as before. Teachers are professionals engaged by the state to educate young people. They are in a position of trust and responsibility and must act accordingly.

The department's Ministerial Order 1038 provides that teachers must be civil and courteous in their dealings with others and must not act in '*any manner unbecoming [to] his or her position*' (whether during or outside work hours).

So, how can these principles be applied to social media and the online world?

The department has published guidelines on what it considers to be the proper use of social media and other online platforms. The central theme of the guide is the ways any online interaction reflects on the teaching profession, along with the position of trust that teachers are put in. It makes the following notable observations:

- Before engaging in an online or social media platform, consider how your participation would reflect on you professionally, and on the profession.
- It is improper to 'friend' or to accept a 'friend' request from a student on social media.
- Your privacy settings should be set so that your personal and private lives are kept separate.

- Be mindful of the language that you use online and the views that you articulate.
- Despite what your privacy settings may be, consider how each communication or action online aligns with your role as a teacher.
- Department information technology resources should only be used for activities sanctioned or authorised by the department.

It is a worthwhile exercise for any teacher with an online presence to review the guide and refresh their understanding of what the department expects of its employees in the digital realm.

The Department of Education and Training's Ministerial Order 1038 can be found at [education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Ministerial-Order-1038.pdf](http://education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Ministerial-Order-1038.pdf)

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## Strength in numbers

### This year so far:



# 11,615

individual members assisted



# 30,180

calls taken



# 8,800

calls made to members in response to requests for professional and industrial support and information



# 4,100

email replies to member requests for help and advice



# 400

meetings attended at worksites and at the AEU



# 140

members advocated for at hearings with VIT, the Merit Protection Board, the TAFE Dispute Settlement Committee and Workload Dispute Panels



# 300

members assisted with specialised legal advice

### Building a global vision

AEU Victoria branch president Meredith Peace recently travelled to Bangkok as part of the AEU's national delegation to the Education International Congress (EIC). She joined attendees from 391 education unions, representing a staggering 32 million members across 176 countries. These numbers are a reminder that educators are a vast and incredible force, who together comprise a rich network of ideas to draw upon. While we may face different challenges and work under very different circumstances, we can learn from one another's successes as well as from our losses, sharing tactics, processes and ambitions.

The theme of this year's EIC was 'Taking the lead', outlined by EI's president (and AEU Federal Secretary) Susan Hopgood in her opening address. The focus was on promoting democracy, human and trade union rights, and ensuring quality free public education for all. A worthy goal. We live in an increasingly global community, and that interconnectedness brings with it both strengths and challenges.

The proud union movement is one of the strongest connections binding us together across the world – a movement of working people who recognise that we are at our most powerful when we work together, and that we can raise the standards for everyone if we pool our resources. That's why it is so important that the AEU plays an active role in the global conversation when it comes to fighting together for a better outcome for principals, support staff and educators everywhere.

The stronger the union movement is here in Australia, the more we can help our comrades in every corner of the globe. And we have a lot to be proud of here. As the figures to the left show, here at the AEU we have been working hard to support our members – by phone, by email, through workplace meetings and conferences on our premises; through hearings with VIT, the Merit Protection Board, workload dispute panels and other organisations; and by offering specialised legal advice.

We have assisted more than 11,600 members over the past year. In the previous six months alone we have assisted members to win payouts of over \$3.57 million for personal injury during the course of their work. Every AEU member – and every worker – deserves to be employed in a happy, healthy and safe environment. That's why we are also pushing the department to ensure that the 30+8 clause in the VGSA is being implemented for all teachers. Teaching and learning hours should be capped at 30, with a further eight assigned for other tasks, including yard duty and meetings. That is what was agreed, and it is not optional.

We will continue to pressure the DET to keep up its end of the bargain and support principals to address workload for all our members, allowing them to focus on what matters.

## Legal news

### The craziest things lead to dismissals

MICHAEL MCIVER, AEU INDUSTRIAL OFFICER

In June 2019, the Disciplinary Appeals Board (DAB) ordered that an AEU member be reinstated to the position he held before his dismissal. The order concluded a long-running matter that commenced in 2016, when the member was subject to a disciplinary process.

The member was dismissed in 2017 but reinstated by the DAB in 2018 (with a substantial demotion and reprimand). He successfully appealed the board's decision to the Victorian Supreme Court, which gave a judgement in the member's favour in February.

The reasons for the teacher's dismissal were strange. The key facts were that, while teaching a Year 9 maths class, he was asked by a student: "What is one of the craziest things that has ever happened to you as a teacher?" In response, he told a story to the whole class about a student urinating in a bin in one of his classes 28 years earlier.

After this member told the story, one of the students enacted a mock urination in the bin and classmates responded with jeering and clapping. Later, the student urinated in the bin (or again pretended to urinate in the bin) while the teacher was occupied with another student.

The member was dismissed, as the department deemed his management of the class on that day negligent; that it amounted to an act of misconduct; and that the teacher had conducted himself in a 'disgraceful, improper or unbecoming manner'.

He was legally supported by the AEU from his dismissal to his full reinstatement.

Another member, Russell Wakefield, has also had recent success after being dismissed shortly before Christmas last year for 'serious misconduct' due to an example he gave while teaching TAFE students about the use of pesticides.

Russell told a story of a local farmer who some 20 years ago had been spraying a pesticide known as 24D in an adjacent paddock to where he and his staff were working. This pesticide impacted on Russell's employees in different ways and he used this to illustrate a point that chemicals have varied effects.

Russell was represented by the AEU at the Fair Work Commission, which found: "It is not apparent why using someone's name as part of the retelling of an actual story is misconduct at all, let alone serious misconduct."

The commission ordered that Russell be reinstated with an order to restore lost pay.

The AEU has settled a number of other matters this quarter, including a very substantial (but confidential) settlement for a TAFE member, and a settlement of about \$17,000 for an early childhood member – both very pleasing outcomes.

### Aggressive parents and safety at work

LISA PAUL, ADVICELINE INJURY LAWYERS

Adviceline Injury Lawyers recently resolved a claim alleging negligence against DET for failing to provide a safe workplace for a principal. The principal had been subjected to serious threats of violence over a period of months from the parents of two students, leading to an intervention order being taken out against them. During this time, the parents' behaviour was reported to representatives of the department, yet it failed to implement adequate security measures.

As a result, the principal developed a significant psychiatric injury and has been unable to work for some time. A claim was brought on behalf of the principal against DET, which was recently resolved for an amount equivalent to a jury verdict of over \$1 million. Although DET cannot control the behaviour of third parties, it must take all reasonable measures to provide a safe workplace.

### Accidents during a school excursion

Any DET employee injured in a vehicle accident during a school excursion can access help and assistance through the Victorian WorkCover scheme. Immediate benefits include payment for hospital and medical treatment; and, where the injuries take time to subside, loss of wages can be paid at the rate of 95% for the first 13 weeks. Under the current schools agreement, wages are 'topped up' to 100% for this period and for any shortfall up to one year after the injury was sustained. If recovery exceeds this time, WorkCover covers loss of wages at 80% for up to 130 weeks after the accident. If a permanent injury is sustained, a small lump sum may also be payable under the scheme.

Where the TAC, or if necessary a judge, agrees that a 'serious injury' has been sustained, there is a right to sue the negligent driver for pain and suffering, and for loss of income, both past and future. Medical expenses should be provided under WorkCover.

Many cases are resolved without issuing court action through a negotiated settlement between TAC and the lawyers representing the injured employee. If agreement can't be reached, a hearing can take place whereby a jury decides the amount of compensation to be awarded. Lawyer Shyla Sivanas has specialised knowledge in these areas and can be contacted on **03 9321 9704**.

**Adviceline Injury Lawyers**, the personal injury division of Holding Redlich, is AEU's approved provider of legal assistance to members with workplace injury or illness, where legal representation is required. The AEU has a proud, longstanding relationship with Adviceline. AEU members must be formally referred to Adviceline by the AEU, and enter into an agreement with the union about the conduct of their case.

# Treaties: it's time

As a Victorian Treaty edges closer to becoming a reality, **JILL GALLAGHER AO** imagines an Australia where Aboriginal culture is embedded in everything we do.



## TREATY: WHAT'S AHEAD

### 2019:

First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria established

### 2020 onwards:

Treaty Authority (independent umpire) set up

Framework for negotiations agreed

Aboriginal groups and Victorian government begin negotiations

**Y**ou may not realise it, but we are on the cusp of a momentous step forward. In late 2019, Aboriginal communities in Victoria will take a significant step towards treaties. It is now possible to imagine a treaty being agreed and signed.

In some ways, this is extraordinary. Political leaders of generations past have dismissed it as too hard. They have shirked the difficult questions of Australia's unresolved past. Those of today are no longer doing so – and it is vital that you, and your students, know why this is the case.

## Why treaties?

We don't talk about it much, but Aboriginal people do not accept the sovereignty of the Commonwealth. Bluntly, our people were here first. And when colonisation occurred, we never ceded our sovereignty. The colonisers tried to claim that the land was empty (*terra nullius*) but this was rejected when Eddie Mabo went to the High Court in 1993.

We are now in a situation where there are multiple entities which claim sovereignty. A treaty is the agreement that resolves those multiple claims. It is needed because it is overwhelmingly the right thing to do.

I say 'treaties' rather than 'treaty' because there are hundreds of nations in Australia. Each has different histories, cultures and aspirations. The mob in Mildura has little in common, culturally, with those in Mallacoota. It is not culturally appropriate for a one-size-fits-all treaty. It is most likely that we will see

different treaties negotiated, each covering the traditional area of a particular mob.

## Treaties: how did we get here?

Australia is the only developed Commonwealth nation not to have a treaty with its first peoples. The New Zealand, the US and Canada have all agreed sovereign treaties. We are the odd one out. In Victoria, the huge steps to change this are the result of decades of hard, hard work from Aboriginal leaders.

From William Cooper's petition to King George IV in 1938, to the efforts of Auntie Marg Tucker and Sir Doug Nicholls, to those of the past 30 years, we stand on the shoulders of giants. It would be wonderful if you familiarised yourself with this history, and even more wonderful if your students were to learn more about it.

Imagine a world, in years to come, where every student knows about their local Aboriginal culture. Imagine every student learning some of the local Aboriginal language. Imagine an Australia where Aboriginal culture is embedded in everything we do, from the food we eat to the words we use.

## What's happening in Victoria?


Aboriginal communities in Victoria will need support to conduct fair negotiations with powerful governments. The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is being set up to help mobs get to the negotiating table. The assembly will be powerful, independent and culturally strong. No government will be able to shut it down. It is not being set up to negotiate a treaty. Rather, it will help create the framework

for treaty negotiations – this will set out how treaties can be agreed in Victoria.

An Aboriginal vote between September 16 and October 20 will help determine which Victorian Traditional Owners take some assembly seats. (The other seats are guaranteed for each formally recognised Traditional Owner group.) Aboriginal people aged 16 years and older are eligible to vote. Votes can be cast in person, via post or online.

## What can you do?

As an educator, you have a chance to help our nation learn about its true past. You can teach your students about the Aboriginal land they live on. For example, the six, seven or eight local seasons (depending on where you are in Victoria) are much more climate-appropriate than the European imports we commonly refer to. Also, do you or your students know that the eel traps and stone huts of western Victoria are older than the Pyramids or Stonehenge?

These are just two aspects of the oldest continuing culture on Earth. This culture is precious. And it is right here, in the midst of where you live, work and relax. Here, you can hear songs and see dances that date back longer than anywhere else on Earth. 

Jill Gallagher AO is a Gunditjmara woman. She is Victoria's Treaty Advancement Commissioner.



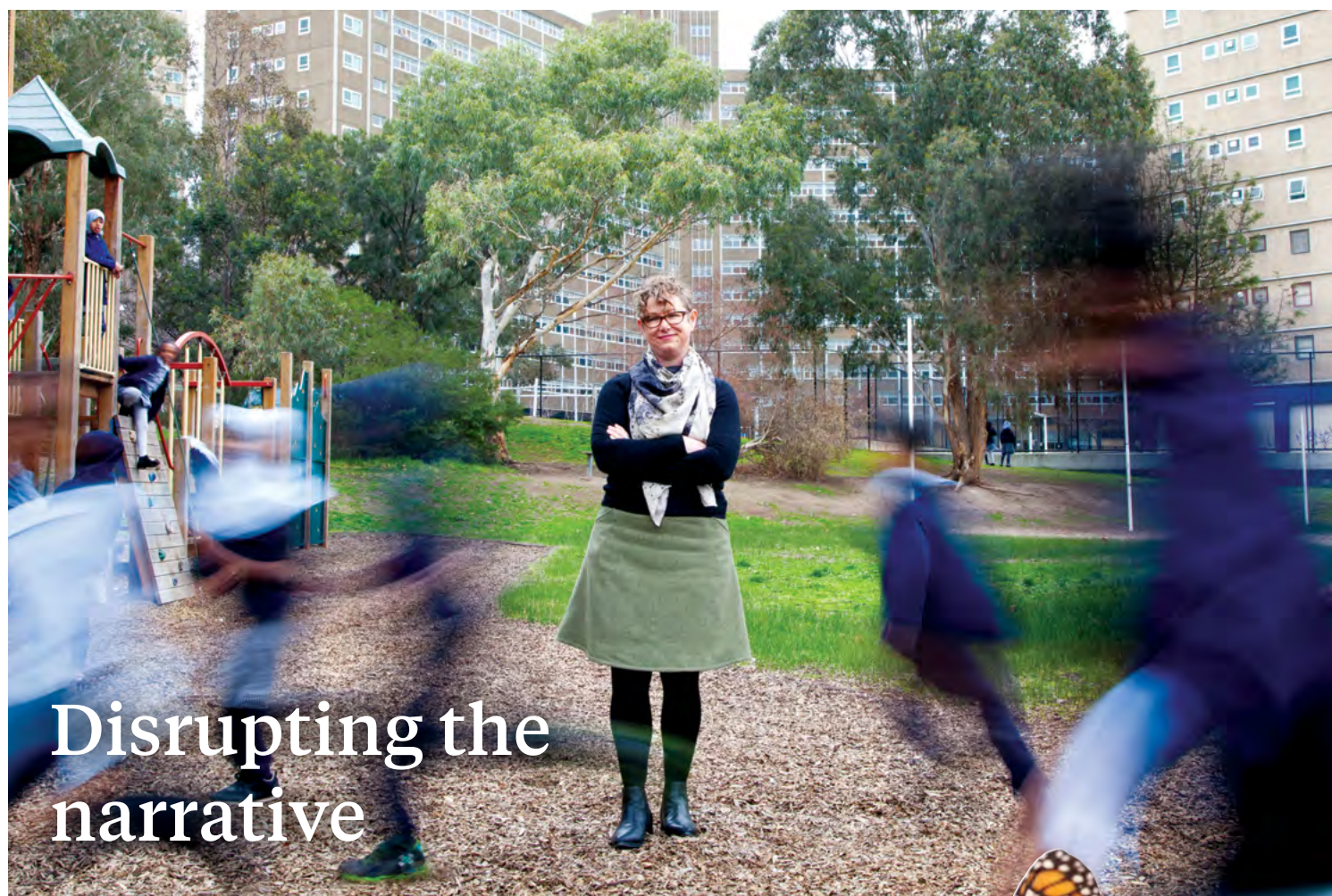
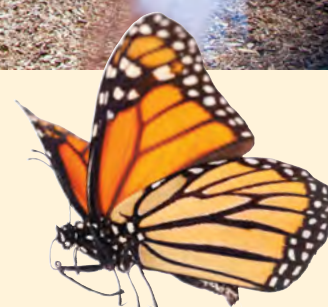


PHOTO: KATIE LANGMORE

# Disrupting the narrative

An inner Melbourne school servicing children from the local public housing estate has prioritised mental health and positive relationships as the necessary basis for learning. **RACHEL POWER** learns about its ‘trauma-informed’ approach to student wellbeing.



**I**n her room near the entrance of Carlton Primary School, student and family wellbeing coordinator Rebecca Harris works amid an array of boardgames, craft activities, kinetic sand and even stick insects – anything that might help her build a relationship with a student needing support.

Built in the early 1970s to service the local public housing estate, the school now caters to a large cohort of refugees from the Horn of Africa. More than 90% of students at Carlton Primary speak a first language other than English.

Rebecca is a ‘touchpoint’ for these children and their parents, allowing her to gather information for both families and staff. On any given day she might be working with a child cooling off after a

playground incident, helping a parent find out about English classes, referring families to external support services or investigating ways the school could better connect with its local community.

“I have the luxury of time to build relationships without the pressure of having 20 children in front of me,” she says. “I can provide a safe space for disclosures, requests or questions, and this contributes to a powerfully holistic approach to teaching at our school.”

It is a unique role, she says. “But it shouldn’t be.”

Central to the school’s approach is a ‘trauma-informed practice’ that Rebecca developed as part of her Community Fellowship with the Melbourne Social Equity Institute. Published online,

the resource is based on research into neuroscience, trauma and memory, and integrated with existing programs, specifically Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships, and School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support.

“Because we have a lot of children with refugee backgrounds, we knew we had to do a good job with this stuff,” she says. “But we’ve come to understand that it’s great for all kids. All families, regardless of their socio-economic situation, are vulnerable to family violence and we know emotional learning is a preventative.

“Students are living with parents with mental illness, poverty, separation in the family – and they bring that stuff to school. We have to differentiate between the child and their behaviour, because



# Putting mental health on the agenda

An AEU survey highlights an urgent need to address the mental health crisis among students and teachers. **RACHEL POWER** reports.



**M**ore than 3,500 surveys flooded in from members working in schools, TAFE and early childhood settings in June, expressing concern at the rising incidence of mental health issues among students and frustration about the difficulty of accessing the necessary support.

Designed to help inform the union's submission into the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the AEU survey asked respondents about their awareness of student mental health issues; the impact of these issues on student learning; the level and accessibility of support, from initial teacher education through to professional development; employment of support personnel; and access to mental health services. We also

sought information about the mental health and wellbeing of members in relation to their work.

The results highlight a major gap between the needs of young people in Victoria's public education system and the resources available, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or living in rural and regional areas. An unmet demand for improved access to expertise within schools, combined with delayed and inadequate access to external services to meet identified student needs, was a common story.

These issues have compounding effects on education staff, some of whom reported feeling overwhelmed by concerns and workload related to student wellbeing. The most common issues were managing

challenging behaviours in the classroom; stress and anxiety related to workload; and a lack of time and resources to meet student needs.

Another considerable concern among school staff was the impact on students of the current testing regimes, particularly NAPLAN and VCE.

The vast majority of respondents said they were observing signs of mental health problems among their students – and, of those, more than 80% believed these were having a negative impact on student learning. Anxiety, challenging behaviours and family and/or parenting concerns were the most significant student issues reported, with those working in low SES and/or regional areas reporting notably higher rates.

*continued from page 15*

they have not necessarily been taught how to behave at school. Punishing them would be like punishing a baby because it hasn't learnt to walk yet."

And for the well-adjusted children who have not experienced trauma? The focus on student wellbeing is great for them too, says Rebecca. At the heart of Carlton Primary's practice is relationship-building and emotional learning, with a "big focus" on teaching all students to self-regulate.

"Relationship is everything; that's where repair and recovery happens. We operate with the phrase: 'They are *all* all of our kids'. We talk about consistent messaging and do top-up reminders every year on the trauma-informed method. A student should be able to approach

anybody and get a similar response.

"What's hardest is being witness to some of the things that kids live with or that have happened to them. More than anything, what's helped us is that we've got very engaged staff who care very deeply and a principal who knows that if you don't get wellbeing right, you can't get learning right."

With 1.4 wellbeing staff, plus a full-time speech pathologist, Carlton Primary sees itself as a therapeutic environment – "as ideally all schools should," Rebecca says, "but that requires staffing and time."

While the 'gold-standard' is a whole-school approach, she believes individual teachers or ES staff have the power to "really see" their students and build strong

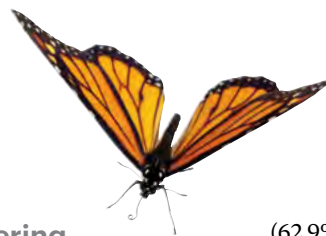
relationships. "We tend to see the kids who externalise – those who are showing us they have pain. But there are just as many sitting there holding it in. If you bring a trauma-integrated wellbeing approach, you will help all of those students," says Rebecca.

"The biggest factor for children is that they have a self-narrative that says, 'I belong, I am worthy, I am a learner'. Maybe then that narrative can disrupt any negative narrative they have about themselves and their lives." **AEU**

Rebecca Harris is running training on trauma-informed practice at the AEU on 9 September. Register at [aeuvic.asn.au/event/trauma-informed-practice](http://aeuvic.asn.au/event/trauma-informed-practice)







**‘We face a lack of support to deal with children suffering from mental health issues and the process is so hectic that it takes most of our energy and time.’**

### Early intervention and training

The need for early intervention was raised repeatedly, especially by early childhood and primary teachers. As one commented:

*I feel as though a lot of support is going into high schools – and I do understand the need there – however, early intervention is key. In the last nine years I have seen a huge increase in students presenting with anxiety, self-harm and suicide ideation. This is not OK, and access to support is always dragged out. Appropriate support from the department (education and DHS) is needed. We face a lack of support to deal with children suffering from mental health issues and the process is so hectic that it takes most of our energy and time.*  
PRESCHOOL TEACHER

Many emphasised the crucial role of classroom teachers in identifying issues and providing support. Despite this, only 7.2% agreed that their teacher training had effectively prepared them for managing student mental health issues and less than half felt they had access to relevant professional development.

*Teachers need further training in order to best support children with mental health problems. Child psychologists should be doing regular visits to preschools in the same way a child’s physical health is monitored.* – PRESCHOOL TEACHER

### Resources

Respondents were highly critical of the lack of resources for students, both in terms of specialist in-house support from qualified psychologists or counsellors, and access to external mental health services. Some, especially in rural areas, said they had no support, while others said the waiting periods undermined their

usefulness, leaving schools to their own devices to meet urgent needs.

*The support services provided by the department are poor – the staff members constantly change, don’t know our school, demonstrate little understanding of how schools actually operate and end up adding to our workload.* – PRINCIPAL, REGIONAL LOW SES SECONDARY SCHOOL

*The children I refer for mental health practitioners (MHP) are waiting six months plus for an appointment with a psychologist or mental health professional outside school. MHPs need to work with schools and parents to support children. Schools are often the first to notice a change in the children, but after initial referral there is no follow up to guide staff on the best way to support the child and their family.*

TEACHER, METRO PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Wellbeing for refugees

Some also identified wellbeing issues associated with homelessness and refugee experiences among their students. As one TAFE teacher reported:

*My students are refugees from Iraq, Syria, Sri Lanka, Somalia. They tell me the biggest trauma for them is dealing with the inhumanity of Centrelink and their job networks. There is no counselling available for them because the college underquoted to run the Adult Migrant English Program and couldn’t afford to keep them.*

### Teacher mental health

Inevitably, this situation is causing a flow-on effect for the mental health of educators themselves, with a staggering number of members agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were affected by stress (96.8%) or anxiety (87.9%). Depression

(62.9%) and bullying and harassment (43.5%) were other significant issues.

*Staff are required to do more and more outside of just teaching. Dealing with the emotional issues of students and parents, increasing individual learning plans, filling in assessments for families seeking funding, differentiated learning, managing increasing behaviours, whilst teaching large classes... Where do I stop?*

TEACHER, METRO PRIMARY SCHOOL


The survey results send a clear message that the education department must move beyond acknowledging the importance of student mental health and wellbeing, and start finding ways to lessen the gap between resources and need, especially in disadvantaged areas.

In its submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, the AEU has urged DET to improve access to early intervention and specialised services for students across all sectors, and identify and implement ways of relieving teacher stress.

The union has recommended a review of current services; the introduction of a Mental Health Service Guarantee, stipulating the right of all Victorian students to timely support; increased support for students at extra risk; and investigation into ways of alleviating the stress caused by NAPLAN and VCE.

The AEU is also pushing for teacher education courses to include compulsory training in student mental health and wellbeing, and the provision of ongoing, free professional development in the area.

The results show chronic under-resourcing of public education and unsustainably high workloads are contributing to an increasing prevalence of mental health problems among educators.

With student surveys showing that teachers are a trusted source of support, the union is seeking a reduction in teacher–student ratios, so teachers have time to meet the full scope of their increasingly complex role. 



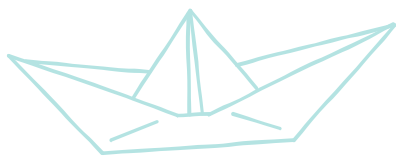
## FINDING HOPE

Having been part of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre since its inception, TAFE is now helping people seeking asylum find a place in our community, MYKE BARTLETT writes.



**T**here's something of a campus feel to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC). Stumbling distance from Footscray's vibrant melting pot of a high street, the centre takes up two floors of an unremarkable shopfront. Downstairs is a chaotic collection of desks and signs that wouldn't look out of place in a student union, whereas upstairs is warm and open, populated by colourful clusters of tables and chairs that recall a university canteen. The space is deliberately designed to be welcoming, providing a first port of call for some of the most desperate people in our community.

The university connection is probably more than simple accident. After all, it was across the road at Victoria University where the ASRC was conceived in 2001. As the Tampa affair unfolded, TAFE teacher Kon Karapanagiotidis was looking for a new project for his social work students. Wanting to support some of the people seeking asylum, Kon and his students devised a project that was intended to last two weeks. Some 18 years later, it plays a vital role in the nation's political and social life, assisting around 3,500 people every year.



Abiola Ajetomobi, director of innovation at the ASRC, says the centre's role in shaping the destinies of people seeking asylum cannot be underestimated.

"We're the only one-stop shop for people seeking asylum," Abiola says. "We've seen a lot of people transition through the space and come back to help. People like myself. I used the service about 10 years ago; now I'm employed helping other people seeking asylum."

For many people seeking asylum, life after arriving in the community can be fraught and bewildering. Those on bridging or temporary protection visas often find themselves unable to work to support themselves and shut out from any means of improving their situation.

Abiola worries that the punitive measures put in place by successive federal governments are creating a cohort who are going through extreme levels of destitution and unable to feel a sense of ownership or agency in their society.

"If you take hope away from people and take away a sense of being safe, it's hard for them to receive anything you give to them," Abiola says. "What the ASRC does is give them a sense of hope and safety. That means people are then in the right mental state to receive whatever support we can offer."

One of the best forms of support for new arrivals is helping them pursue further study. For the past 10 years, the ASRC has been working with the Victorian government on the ASVET program, in which people seeking asylum are subsidised to gain access to TAFE courses. The program has helped more than 2,000 people make the first step towards settling in Australia.

Mujahid is one of those to benefit from the initiative. Having worked as a teacher and secondary school principal for more than a decade in the Middle East, he found himself unable to find a job when — after a harrowing 13 months on Nauru — he was released into the community in 2014.

His visa initially prevented him from finding any employment, but after volunteering as a tutor, he sought teacher registration through VIT. A bureaucratic nightmare ensued, hingeing on his inability to contact the university where he originally trained in time to prove his qualifications. With nowhere else to go, he was directed towards the ASRC, who helped him enrol at TAFE.

"I came in here and said I need a job. I want to live here, I need to work. They said OK. That was hope. If I hadn't come here, I wouldn't have been able to study anything. I wouldn't be working."

Although Mujahid's situation is still desperate — he is yet to be granted permanent residency and has never met his seven-year-old daughter — his TAFE training has allowed him to find employment as an ES worker in a secondary school.

For Diana, the ASVET program meant she was able to continue her studies after finishing VCE. Having attended a Melbourne public school since Year 9, the hard-working student was shocked

to discover that, unlike her schoolmates, she wouldn't be able to go on to university — no matter how good her ATAR score was.

Under the current rules, people seeking asylum are treated as international students, meaning universities require them to pay vast upfront fees with no options to take out a loan.

"I basically gave up on studying," Diana says. "It was too expensive. It was really annoying. All my friends were studying and I was the only one who wasn't. I detached from everyone. I didn't want to catch up as everyone was going to be talking about uni and I didn't have anything to talk about."

After a difficult six months working part time, Diana was directed to the ASRC, where she enrolled in TAFE and was helped to take advantage of a scholarship that would cover her tutorial fees. Now, she couldn't be happier.

"I'm studying a Cert IV in fashion design and merchandising and I'm just loving it. I love all my teachers, they're really helpful and have really great backgrounds in fashion. I love the location of the institution; I love the city."

The aspiring fashion designer is still determined to go on to study at university, but wishes TAFE had been presented as a more desirable option when she was at high school.

"I would say to everyone, put a TAFE course as an option when you apply to VTAC. Don't be so focused on your ATAR score. I was desperate to study at university, but TAFE was actually a better idea. If I'd gone to uni, with English as a second language, I'd have ended up really stressed out. The good thing about going into smaller institutions is they support you much more."

Like many of those helped by the ASRC, Diana has returned to volunteer, helping people like herself to pursue study at TAFE through the ASVET program.

Abiola says the Victorian government scheme has been a great success, but there is room for more federal support when it comes to truly helping people seeking asylum access TAFE and take the next step.

"The challenge we're having at the moment is supporting people into traineeship and apprenticeship courses, because of a number of policy issues. Even though we know it's something that would give people seeking asylum a sustainable settlement."

While recent federal governments have been reluctant to demonstrate support for refugees and people seeking asylum, Abiola thinks organisations such as the ASRC will be key to bringing about a change of policy.

One recent grassroots effort by the centre saw hundreds of folded paper #FreedomBirds sent to Scott Morrison (or posted on Twitter), demanding justice for detainees. As with issues such as climate change, the government seems not to have kept pace with the mood of the electorate.

"We want our federal leadership to take action," Abiola says, "but I feel the community has already moved on." <sup>AEU</sup>

**"What the ASRC does is give people seeking asylum a sense of hope and safety."**



## Pride and safety

Marriage equality might be a hard-won reality in Australia, but statistics show there's a long way to go to achieve true equality, happiness and security for LGBTIQ+ students, writes **STEPHEN A RUSSELL**.

**A**s Prime Minister Scott Morrison prepares to prosecute the campaign for religious freedom laws, many LGBTIQ+ Australians are understandably nervous. Within the education sector, one foreseeable flashpoint is what any new laws will mean for the employment of gender and sexuality-diverse teachers, principals and support staff working within religious schools.

While the Coalition has promised to make students exempt, no such protection has been enacted and many are understandably dubious about this commitment. As Treasurer, Morrison actively pushed for a 'No' during the marriage equality postal vote and abstained from the final vote in parliament against the wishes of his electorate.

As Prime Minister, he was publicly challenged late last year by 13-year-old trans schoolgirl Evie Macdonald for tweeting: "We do not need 'gender whisperers' in our schools. Let kids be kids", in response to an incorrect report in *The Daily Telegraph*.

Macdonald responded on Channel Ten's *The Project*: "There are thousands of

kids in Australia that are gender diverse. We don't deserve to be disrespected like that through tweets from our prime minister."

Words matter. A new Australian study into the sexual health and wellbeing of same-sex attracted and gender-questioning youth reveals a startling 61% have been verbally abused and 18% physically attacked.

The worrying statistics, taken from *Writing Themselves In*, the third such national study, don't stop there. The rate of suicide attempts is six times higher for LGBTIQ+ kids, with 80% of the above abuse reported to have taken place at school.

Despite these distressing numbers, the federal government defunded the Safe Schools program, designed to equip principals and teachers with the tools they need to support their LGBTIQ+ cohort. In Victoria, where Safe Schools was originally developed and launched in 2010, the program continues with state government funding.

Marcus Patching, a visual arts and technology teaching and learning coordinator at Bendigo Senior Secondary

College, understands the importance of creating a safe space for students. That's why he signed up to the school's Ally Network, which supports LGBTIQ+ staff and students.

"Being visible is the most important part," Marcus says of the 50-plus group of teachers and ES staff.

Trained up by Safe Schools and youth mental health foundation Headspace, volunteers post the Ally Network's rainbow sticker on their laptops and office doors, adding the logo to their email signatures. The idea is to let LGBTIQ+ students know that a friendly and informed ear is available, which can be crucial if one doesn't exist at home or in their friendship circle.

"Students feel free to talk to you about anything that's going on and you can be an active listener," Marcus says. "If they need further support, you can direct them, but a lot of the time they just want a bit of guidance."

This is particularly important for Year 11 and 12 students from regional and rural areas, who don't necessarily have access to visible LGBTIQ+ networks, he says. "They're coming from all the



## “Students feel free to talk to you about anything that’s going on and you can be an active listener.”

way down the train line, from Macedon and Castlemaine, Kyneton and Echuca, so we’ve got students who are a little bit anxious about how other people will treat them.” And it’s not just the kids who are benefitting. “I met a guy my age at a party one night and he grew up gay in rural WA,” Marcus says. “He had tears in his eyes when I told him about what we do. He thought it was fantastic.”

The Ally Network has proven so successful it’s been expanded to include students. Around 35 volunteers are receiving leadership training so they can promote inclusion of LGBTIQ+ students, as well as those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander, international or refugee backgrounds, and those with physical or intellectual disability.

At Melbourne’s Sunbury College, music coordinator Candeece Brown founded the school’s Queer-Straight Alliance (QSA) in 2014 in response to the Safe Schools campaign. Now run by colleague Byrona Tweedy, Sunbury’s youth engagement and participation worker, one of the first things they addressed was the use of language.

“We started talking about what saying things like ‘that’s so gay’ actually means to some students and got posters up around school trying to get that message out,” Candeece says.

A fortnightly lunch group soon became weekly, with events like their recent International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) celebration – which included creating a huge chalk rainbow bearing supportive messaging, bracelet-crafting and live music – attracting a large portion of the student body.

Byrona says she’s seen how the event has helped shift existing prejudice. “A lot of students get involved now, including those you never would have thought, which is really great to see.

“When we first did the chalk rainbow, it was called the ‘chalk rainbow of diversity’ and we avoided explicitly referencing LGBTIQ+, even though it was clear that was the message.”

These days, Sunbury openly celebrates IDAHOBIT and Pride Month – “a fabulous change”, says Candeece. “Our school and our principal are very supportive of the message we’re sending: that we’re inclusive and we respect everybody.”

It’s personally rewarding for Candeece. “I’m a lesbian and I would have loved to have had something as accepting when I was growing up. For me, it’s about giving the students a place where they can talk to someone and know it’s OK.”


Brooke Allison, a geography teacher and Year 7 coordinator at Vermont Secondary College, was inspired by the Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective (FEMCO) to create her school’s own inclusive group, SAFER (Supporting Awareness of Feminism and Equal Rights), a bi-weekly lunch club discussing social justice issues.

“We recently celebrated IDAHOBIT,” she says. “There were rainbows everywhere and one of our Year 12s, who works with [LGBTIQ+ youth support group] Minus 18, did a presentation on why it’s important to be inclusive, how far we’ve come and where we’ve got to go.”

Brooke reckons this kind of safe space is vital. “Just knowing there are supportive teachers and students really helps. We’re now seeing some of the juniors coming along to meetings and that’s really important, because it’s a tricky time, potentially, working out who you are.”

The club meets in the library. Fellow geography coordinator Deborah Bowen, also a librarian, has made it easy for gender and sexuality diverse students to find books with LGBTIQ+ content, marking them with rainbow stickers. “Students don’t have to talk to anybody, they can just find them really easily any time,” she says. “We want to keep encouraging diversity and acceptance.”

Brooke argues it’s their job. “If you’re teaching geography well, you’re talking about the world and all its people. SAFER is the natural extension.”

With teachers like this, hopefully the kids will be all right. 



Never over the rainbows!  
Vermont Secondary College  
celebrates IDAHOBIT.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

# On the phones

As the Victorian government moves to ban mobile phones in public schools, **MYKE BARTLETT** considers both sides of the smartphone debate.

**W**e're used to lively debates on the AEU Victoria Facebook page, but few topics have sparked more vibrant discussion than the announcement by the Andrews government that mobile phones are to be banned in public schools from January 2020. While a majority of commentators welcomed the announcement, many felt the ban was unrealistic, unworkable or a backwards step.

For the most part, those against the ban tend to take a pragmatic position – smartphones are here to stay and we should make the most of the educational opportunities on offer. Those for it argue devices are proving more of a distraction than an opportunity – and while there are some benefits, these are outweighed by potentially damaging side-effects for behaviour and wellbeing.

Cameron Denham, assistant principal at Narre Warren South P-12 College, is firmly anti-ban. He's seen firsthand how helpful it can be to have internet access easily available, with smartphones offering a more practical and affordable option than laptops or tablets for some students.

"Probably 80% of what I want my students to do in a maths class, they can comfortably do on a phone," says Cameron. "At the beginning of each year, I say to my classes: 'There's one of me and 25 of you, so that means if you put your hand up, you may be waiting a while. What other strategies do you have to get unstuck?' One strategy is to google it."

"When I've been busy working with others, students can quickly jump on their phone to find a tutorial online so that they can get unstuck with a problem quicker. I've had senior students in VCE classes with the solution guide open on their

phone, so they're not having to bring three or four different textbooks to class."

Students in his class know that they can use phones where appropriate, but inappropriate use will see them confiscated until the end of the lesson. He says that he's seen little evidence that using phones leads to disengagement in the classroom (one of the main arguments for the ban), while exiling them means students are deprived of a vital, real-world resource.

"We talk a lot about preparing kids for the future and worlds of work, and the role technology plays in that future is a really important part of the education we should be providing."

As it is, some public schools will be unaffected by the new phone ban – because they've already put one in place. Since 2018, Daylesford Secondary College students have been locking their phones in specially designed pouches at the beginning of the school day, meaning they are inaccessible until the final bell.

McKinnon Secondary College made waves at the end of the previous year when it announced phones would no longer be welcome on the school grounds. Students weren't happy with the decision but, as principal Pitsa Binnion explains, the school was actually responding to concerns raised by its student leaders.

"They said teachers were having trouble managing the constant disruptions caused by phones," Pitsa says. "When we spoke to teacher groups, they said exactly the same thing – they were having difficulties with confrontations around phone use. When we met with parents to discuss what to do, they said, *Be brave*."

McKinnon prides itself on being tech-savvy, with each student given access to a

**"We talk a lot about preparing kids for the future and worlds of work and the role technology plays in that future is a really important part of education."**

laptop, but it became clear that teenagers had a very different – and potentially damaging – relationship with their phones compared to their other devices.

"When we did our research and had experts come into the school, it was really apparent that phones have transformed our behaviour," says Pitsa. "We wanted to help students understand and manage their phone use, but they're very addictive devices. They're designed that way. Research shows if they're on your desk, even if they're off, your mind is always moving towards them, checking to see if you have any notifications."

Implementing the ban has involved a large-scale culture change. Part of the shift has entailed reminding parents to contact their children via the main office, instead of calling them on their mobiles. Pitsa said she spent a lot of time in the first few weeks wandering the corridors, hanging up on parents and confiscating phones.

"The policy was we'd take them. At first, we had a line a mile long at the end of the day. Students don't like to be kept back after school, but I had 200 phones in the box."

A year and a half later, there are a measly four phones in the box – not bad,



Cameron Denham texts his students about the upcoming phone ban.



PHOTO: MEREDITH O'SHEA

given the school has a cohort of 2,224.

"Some children, to this day, still have to hand their phones in before school, because they have no self-discipline. They just can't manage it. It's not just children who are struggling with this; it's all of us."

Pitsa has seen the biggest change occur at lunchtime. "The thing I notice is that their heads are up. They're socialising with their peers and conversing. It's a real change. The noise level is very high in the yard, because they're actually looking at each other and laughing."

It's this heads-down, anti-social behaviour that explains much of the anxiety about teenagers and smartphones. Parents and teachers alike are concerned that young people simply aren't spending as much time talking face-to-face, with some studies indicating an associated spike in mental health issues.

McKinnon has used its phone ban as a springboard to employ mindfulness techniques, designed to help students focus on being in the moment, away from

the relentless churn of social media.

"Young brains need nurturing," Pitsa says. "All we can do as educators is create a haven, a bit of time out."

"I'm not saying they shouldn't ever be on their phones, but during the school day we want them to engage with their teachers and their peers and build positive relationships. They can be on their phone as soon as that bell goes. And they are!"

Cameron feels concerns about mobiles breeding anti-social behaviour tend to be overstated – and miss the key point that teenagers on phones often *are* socialising, just not in the way their parents did.

"That's the evolving nature of our society. Why keep things the way they have been just because they've been that way for so many years?" he says.

"I actually don't see too many students sitting on their phones at recess and lunchtime. There are some, but it will usually be a group of students who might be playing a game together or sharing something that they have on their phones.

It's very rare that I see students on their phones not engaging with other people."

Cameron argues that taking away phones at lunchtime and recess, without providing alternate activities, is likely to cause more problems than it solves. "If we want the kids to be up and active, schools as much as possible need to provide open play spaces. I don't think the solution is a ban on phones, because we're taking away something that keeps them calm."

Every school has different needs, he says, which means school leadership are best placed to decide which approach to phone use will work best for their cohort.

By way of contrast, Pitsa believes a state-wide ban will give schools the backing they need to deal with phone-related issues in the face of resistance from parents and students. "For me, it would have been easier had there been a policy in place. I think everyone will grapple with it in a different way. But having travelled this journey, I believe it's in the best interest of every child." <sup>AEU</sup>



# Creating the scientists of the future

A new model aims to shift how science is taught in early childhood settings, giving educators the right tools to introduce STEM concepts through imaginative play. CHARLOTTE BARKLA reports.



PHOTO: SUPPLIED MONASH UNIVERSITY

**S**TEM: it's one of the buzzwords of education in the 21st century. And with the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute recently reporting a 20-year low in the percentage of Year 12 students studying advanced mathematics, the consensus is clear: we need to engage students in STEM – the earlier, the better.

Professor Marilyn Fler, Foundation Chair in Early Childhood Education and Development at Monash University, has developed the 'Conceptual PlayWorld' model, which aims to change the way STEM is taught in early childhood settings. Part of a five-year, \$3.2 million study, it is the first evidence-based model for teaching STEM to preschool students.

"Traditionally, early childhood education has been undervalued and under-resourced," says Fler. "Educators [in the sector] haven't had the right tools for the STEM area. Through our research, we've been able to look at what a play-based setting actually means for the teaching of STEM."

A former teacher, Fler is passionate about the importance of early years education in shaping and stretching young

minds. Her Conceptual PlayWorld is a model of intentional teaching that uses the power of story to create engaging, imaginary problem-solving scenarios for young children. Often inspired by a children's book or fairytale, the students are invited to go on journeys, meet characters and solve challenges – all while learning STEM concepts.

"We use our knowledge of children's engagement in play to create imaginary situations," says Fler. "In these situations, drama happens and problems arise that need to be solved in the story plot. The children need STEM concepts to help them solve these problems."

One such example trialled by the research team used a chapter-book version of *Robin Hood*, involving a Conceptual PlayWorld of Sherwood Forest for a class of preschoolers, where the children were tasked with helping the villagers rescue treasure from a castle. The children went back in time to visit the castle engineer – role-played by the teacher – then worked with the educators to prepare an escape plan, build a model of a simple machine and project-manage a rescue.

"Every week, another chapter was read and they got deeper and deeper into the story problem," says Fler. "The children got so excited and wanted to go back in time and visit Robin Hood and see the castle. The story keeps the science learning and engineering alive."

Fler's model provides an alternative to the traditional methods of teaching STEM in preschools, which have often been based on methods from the primary and secondary area. "The challenge that we've had in early childhood education is that they're play-based settings involving infants, toddlers and preschoolers. There's a very small pool of international research on the best way to teach STEM to very young children. Consequently, the models developed and the research that has been done over the years has mainly focused on children eight years and older."

As a result, Fler says, activities such as science experiments and discovery tables have typically been used to explore STEM in early childhood settings, handed down from the primary school setting. While these activities can be effective and engaging, they may not always be the most

**Opposite:** Marilyn Fleer with student

appropriate tool for an early childhood environment. “What’s limiting about these [traditional methods] is that they’re more like one-off activities and so there’s not a model to say: How do you make this deeper?” Fleer says. “Play-based settings are very much about the teacher with the children, as opposed to children all doing the same thing at the same time. It’s quite a different context to a classroom.”

Preschool teacher and educational consultant Rebecca Lewis agrees. “Often the traditional methods of teaching STEM have been for teachers to use songs or story, or to set up inviting hands-on, open-ended play spaces where children are supported to explore and discover. In my experience, ad hoc opportunities don’t develop a child’s level of understanding in the same way a planned ‘PlayWorld’ does, where teachers are prepared with the scientific knowledge to use with children.”

Using this approach in a preschool setting, with teachers actively entering children’s play in a role or character, allows them to teach STEM concepts with more purpose and meaning, Rebecca says. “It’s a shared experience of going on imaginary adventures and solving problems together, which is more engaging and complex than a spontaneous exploration.”

Rebecca believes imaginary play is inherently linked to STEM thinking. “To imagine a science concept – that Earth’s axis is on a tilt, for example – a child is thinking in the abstract. In a similar way to when a child pretends they are a mystical animal or that a pebble they’re holding is a gemstone. But, most importantly, play should be valued because it’s fun and a motivating way to learn.”


And while Fleer’s work primarily focuses on preschool to early primary, the concept could have wider applications. “Why not use ‘PlayWorlds’ to transform [secondary school] laboratories into interesting spaces to learn about STEM concepts?” suggests Fleer. “For example, visiting another planet; researching atmosphere; revisiting the moon landing?”

For now, though, the concept will be tested within early childhood and primary school settings as part of the five-year Conceptual PlayLab project, funded by the Australian Research Council. Fleer’s research will also include longitudinal studies to investigate how children form concepts in STEM, from infancy to early primary years. “That will give us really strong foundational knowledge on what aspects of STEM are of most interest to young children, and how it deepens and changes over time. We also want to look at how families can create engaging situations for children to learn STEM at home and to develop some virtual tools.”

Fleer says her study comes at a time when the formalisation of early childhood education is of increasing concern. “Internationally, there’s been concern about this push-down curriculum [from the primary school sector] and about trying to make early years education more formal. This works completely against the development of children in that period.”

Conceptual Playworlds, on the other hand, fits within a play-based setting, and has the potential to be used for a variety of different subject areas and scenarios in an early childhood environment – from a Scientific PlayWorld to an Engineering PlayWorld, or even a ‘Respectful Relationships’ PlayWorld that supports a child’s social and emotional development.

At the end of the five years, Fleer is hoping to have developed a tapestry of ways for early childhood educators to implement the model. “Conceptual Playworlds will give educators the means to explore scientific, engineering and technologies concepts in more intentional ways. We should see them with the right tools, creating richer concepts in STEM.

“Once the children have experienced this educational setting – being creative and imaginative and solving lots of interesting problems – we’re hoping these excited little people will see a career in engineering, or even wind up being the chief scientists of the future.” 

**‘Now, for the first time, early childhood educators will have the right tools for teaching STEM in play-based settings.’**

## Ways to introduce STEM in your EC classroom

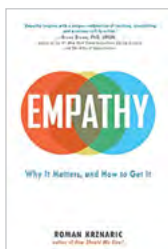
- ‘Taking small bytes’ card deck, a collection of 100 STEM activities published by DET: [fuse.education.vic.gov.au/?ZY2GMP](https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/?ZY2GMP)
- Explore nature and the outdoors through gardening, composting, nature walks and shape/colour scavenger hunts
- Shadow activities using a projector and cut-out shapes or toys
- Reading fiction and non-fiction books with STEM-related concepts
- Activities involving measurement, such as cooking, or measuring/ weighing toys and blocks using scales and measuring tape
- Environmental projects, such as recycling, creating arts and crafts out of recyclables, and fixing/ repurposing broken toys
- Exploration stations, such as sensory stations, sink/float stations and sorting stations
- Sequencing activities, such as completing patterns and ordering objects by size and weight.

For more on the Conceptual PlayWorlds model, download the app: [monash.edu/conceptual-playworld/app](https://monash.edu/conceptual-playworld/app) and join the educator group: [facebook.com/groups/ConceptualPlayWorld](https://facebook.com/groups/ConceptualPlayWorld)



## Reading to understand

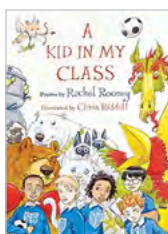
MYKE BARTLETT picks out six books sure to help children develop greater empathy and understanding for those who might seem very different.



### Empathy: Why it Matters, and How to Get It

ROMAN KRZNARIC

According to studies in the US, empathy levels have halved over the past 40 years. This book by Australian philosopher Roman Krznaric attempts to reverse that slide. As well as reminding us why empathy is important – on a personal and societal level – the book offers a few practical tips on how to cultivate it. These include remembering to be curious about strangers (instead of putting in the earbuds and avoiding the risk of conversation), using listening as an attempt to actually understand what our conversation partner is feeling (instead of simply waiting for a chance to talk about ourselves), having a holiday as someone else and reading books about people very different to ourselves. There's an idea.

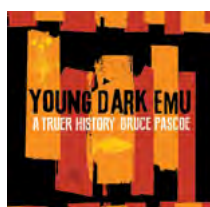


### A Kid in My Class

RACHEL ROONEY AND CHRIS RIDDELL

It's hard to imagine a book that does a better job of capturing the diversity of a classroom.

Poet Rachel Rooney says she thinks of this book as being a collection of people rather than an anthology of poems. Sure enough, the characters – vividly and endearingly illustrated by Chris Riddell – spring off the page, seeming as familiar as they do true. There's a remarkable lack of judgement and labelling (beyond titles such as 'Daydreamer', 'The Poet' and 'Tomboy'). And by keeping her focus on personality rather than identity, Rooney summons up a universal humanity that transcends the usual lazy boundaries that keep us apart from one another. A perfect introduction to poetry and empathy for primary kids.

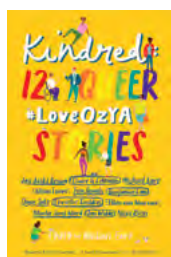


### Young Dark Emu

BRUCE PASCOE

Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu* won a stash of literary awards for its extensive research

and compelling first-person accounts of the early days of colonisation. It went a long way to dispelling long-held myths about our nation's first people – previously labelled hunter-gatherers, they were shown to be careful cultivators of the land who established permanent settlements and farmlands across the country. *Young Dark Emu* makes use of the same techniques in kid-friendly terms, introducing youngsters to Australia as it was before the British declared it empty. By using the diaries of settlers in all their staggering ignorance, young readers will be encouraged to empathise with indigenous Australians, find out more about our native flora and fauna, and rethink their own attitudes.

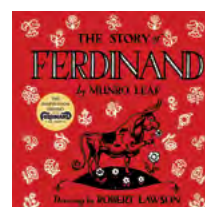


### Kindred: 12 Queer #LoveOzYA Stories

MICHAEL EARP (EDITOR)

Young adult fiction is thriving in Australia, with a rich and diverse community of writers coming together online

via the #LoveOzYA hashtag. This is the second short stories anthology to spring from that tag, recruiting 12 writers of diverse genders, sexualities, backgrounds and identities. The focus is very much on #OwnVoices (another hashtag, meaning writing from your own identity and lived experience) examining what it means to be queer in twenty-first century Australia. The writers are a mix of old hands, such as Christos Tsiolkas and Benjamin Law, and emerging voices.



### The Story of Ferdinand

MUNRO LEAF AND ROBERT LAWSON

Forget the gawd-awful film, this 1936

picture book classic encourages a breaking of gender stereotypes and even a bit of non-violent resistance. The eponymous bull is supposed to be duelling with matadors, but he'd prefer to spend his days flouncing about in fields and sniffing the flowers. His mother worries he'll be lonely and encourages him to fit in, but ultimately realises he's happy being who he is. When his big day in the ring arrives, Ferdinand eschews violence for running around sniffing the flowers worn by all the women in the crowd – humiliating the matador, who is hungry to prove his manliness via a bit of bovine bloodshed.



### Hey Jack!

SALLY RIPPIN

There's a similar bending of stereotypes in this illustrated chapter book series from Sally Rippin. Spun off from her bestselling *Billie B* series,

these tales see the quiet, shy Jack embark on real-world adventures such as school musicals, birthday parties and camping holidays. As Rippin's recent *Polly and Buster* series (also excellent empathetic reading) shows, the author has a real gift for drawing out the emotional lives of kids in all their complexity. **AEU**

These titles were selected from the shelves of Readings Kids, 315 Lygon St, Carlton. They are available in store or online at [readings.com.au](http://readings.com.au).

# Taking the lead

We have to keep breaking down barriers for women with children, writes AEU member **PAULA CONNOLLY**.

**R**ecently, as a participant in the AEU's four-day Women in Leadership Development (WILD) program, I undertook a small survey study into the barriers for women educators with children in taking up leadership positions.

When it comes to leadership positions, Australian women are sorely under-represented in the workforce. As journalist and author Jamila Rizvi notes in her book *Not Just Lucky*, there are more CEOs named John than there are female heads among Australia's top 200 companies.

While many structural imbalances contribute towards that alarming statistic, becoming a parent has a huge impact on women's careers in ways not generally experienced by their male partners or colleagues. Labour participation rates for women fall from 70.8% to just 51% for those with children under the age of four. There is no comparable drop for men in the same situation.

Sadly, despite being a female-dominated industry (women make up 76.7% of Australia's government school workforce), this imbalance is mirrored in the education sector. Women with children, particularly young children, regularly choose not to apply for assistant principal and leading teacher positions, whereas their male counterparts with young kids don't hold back.

In my survey, just over half of the women I spoke to were in leadership positions or had taken on extra responsibilities prior to taking maternity leave (53%). After leave, a similar number reported returning to a position with no extra or leadership-level responsibilities. This represents a significant drain of experience.

One teacher told me that, upon returning at 0.8, she was told: "Leading teachers aren't part time". Another part-time teacher reported being informed that her senior coordinator role could only be regained if she agreed to work 0.8, a commitment she was not able to make at that time.

Even where job-sharing was possible, I found that issues regularly arose regarding the division of labour. "If there were clearer expectations about responsibilities and outcomes in the leadership roles, I believe they would be easier to juggle in our busy lives," one woman said.

**'The guilt over the job or family taking up a disproportionate amount of our time is real.'**

Of those who did return to a leadership role part time, some found they were carrying the workload of a full-time position in part-time hours, making up the difference at home without adequate support in the role.

A clear majority of those surveyed said they wanted to return to a leadership role following maternity leave. However, many felt it would be some time before that was possible. "I know the roles usually mean more work out-of-school hours in order to class prep etc, and I'm not willing to sacrifice the time with my family for that at this stage," explained one woman.

Many believed that flexible arrangements would not be an option at their workplace. As one respondent said, "I feel that I wouldn't be considered". Another said she wouldn't raise flexible hours for fear of being rejected: "My feeling is employers will go with the people who are going to be less 'trouble'."

When I asked whether mothers would apply for leadership roles if flexibility was offered, the vast majority responded 'Yes'.

One respondent flagged that an unfortunate side-effect of making it harder for returning mothers was a school leadership team predominantly made up of teachers with less than five years' experience. Clearly, we're losing invaluable expertise.

So, how can we plug that drain? The mothers I spoke to favoured flexible, equitable work arrangements, an open approach to parenting in schools, and accessible school-based childcare.

"I truly believe more women would apply for leadership roles if there was more flexibility around work commitments," one teacher told me. "The guilt over the job or family taking up a disproportionate amount of our time is real."

As another woman put it, if we're serious about getting more women back into leadership roles, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. "There needs to be consultation with each returning teacher, as we all have different needs."

If we want to build the strongest teaching cohort possible – embracing gender equity and unlocking decades of experience – we need to closely examine how we respect and support women with children. **AEU**





## THE CARING APPROACH

Schools across Melbourne's south-east are focused on fostering positive behaviour among students, with great results for student engagement, writes By L.J. CHARLESTON.

PHOTOS: MEREDITH O'SHEA



**D**ealing with difficult behaviours in the classroom can be taxing for even the most experienced educator. But while the focus has traditionally been on punishment as a deterrent, many schools are now taking a more positive approach to discipline – one that seeks to address the causes, not than the symptoms.

Schools in Melbourne's south-east are no exception, implementing various programs that keep the focus on children's mental health and overall wellbeing.

Berwick Lodge Primary School is currently trialling several such initiatives, alongside visits from the Life Education van and special days such as Harmony Day. Curriculum leader Fiona Froelich says all of these programs are proving to be very effective.

"We have wellbeing coordinators meeting every fortnight to review them and we try to keep the topics consistent," Fiona says. "For example, the whole school might have a focus on confidence for a few weeks, followed by a focus on organisation."

She singles out two programs for particular praise. The first is 'You Can Do It', which builds on the psychological capacity of the student, looking at their social and emotional skills, as well as their confidence and organisational skills.

The second, 'E-smart', takes a practical approach to dealing with technology and cyber safety – skills that have become increasingly vital due to the amount of time most kids are now spending on devices and social media from an early age.

Like many schools, Berwick Lodge PS is seeing a growing number of kids with anxiety – an increase that some studies connect to excessive technology use. To balance out this modern affliction, the school has turned to an ancient practice.

"We teach the kids how to calm themselves down using mindfulness techniques. For example, we might do some quiet meditation after lunch, or some mindfulness colouring-in. We focus on the kids knowing what those

physical tell-tale signs are when they're feeling anxious.

"We've noticed that if any kids come in after lunch quite worked up, we can give them ten minutes of calming music and deep breathing and they often forget why they were riled. Or, if they haven't forgotten, they can at least then talk to you calmly and rationally."

This has tied in well with the 'Respectful Relationships' program used in many schools, which teaches students to be aware of their feelings and encourages them to talk about their emotions.

**"They know that we care about each and every one of them and will do whatever it takes to help them to feel comfortable and safe."**

Narre Warren South PS is a 'Respectful Relationships' lead school, where the program's key lessons have been implemented into the curriculum.

"We're always looking at how we can improve student engagement and in turn student outcomes," says assistant principal Cameron Denham.

The school also runs other programs on an 'as needs' basis, sometimes facilitated by external agencies such as Headspace, and holds annual wellbeing days for each year level.

"We have a wellbeing centre of 10 staff who create short programs on a needs-based level to address concerns when required," says Cameron. "We're also a 'Human Rights' school and have completed the pilot program for this, upskilling all staff."

The need to support the successful integration of students from multicultural backgrounds has led to the school's 'Social Cohesion' program. This involves various initiatives such as a homework club for primary-aged students, and a peer support program to better transition students

from Years 6 into Year 7 with the help of mentors from Years 9 and 10.

These programs are only possible with the support of various grants, volunteers and applications to access professional knowledge and expertise. "We only apply to participate in programs that reflect our values, and which we believe will see positive change for students," Cameron says.

The number of children involved in each program – and their behavioural issues – varies. The school's 'Learning Hub' has proven to be among its most successful and motivating initiatives, says Cameron, helping students recognise the basic benefit of being at school and getting a good education. "There have been students who've come out of the program completely different people compared to when they started."

Students' overall connectedness to the school has increased, with its Student Attitudes to School Survey (ATOSS) data showing the kids are happier. "We believe this is because we address wellbeing needs when they arise and alter the school environment to suit our students' needs."

The students feel supported because they know who to connect with, Cameron says. There are safe places and staff they can always rely on.

"Do we still have behavioural concerns? Yes. But we find that those behaviours are rarely presented when students are engaged in their alternative programs."

Cranbourne West Primary School has established a particularly broad range of programs to address the high rates of family violence and financial stress experienced by its school community.

Overseeing these initiatives is the school's wellbeing team – comprised of the wellbeing officer, parent and community liaison coordinator, one of the assistant principals and a number of teachers and education support staff. This team works together to deal with immediate issues and to identify factors that could adversely

**Previous page:**

Curriculum leader Fiona Froelich with students at Berwick Lodge PS.

**Right:**

Parent and community liaison officer Debbie Dodd with students at Cranbourne West PS.



affect students and parents, so they can develop strategies.

It's all about reducing risks and enhancing resilience and wellbeing, says Debbie Dodd, parent and community liaison coordinator. "These issues can lead to high levels of transience, so every week we have new children starting and other children leaving. That makes it especially important for us to provide additional support programs that run at playtimes, which is often when students feel anxious or unsettled."

These support programs include a breakfast club, brunch club and emergency lunch program, all of which provide a range of healthy and delicious food. To reduce stigma, they are open to any student who chooses to attend, feeding more than 50 children each day.

"Levels of autism spectrum disorder seem to be increasing, so we've been developing a lot more programs where children who don't feel comfortable just playing in an unstructured way in the yard have other activities they can attend at playtime," says Debbie.

The school also hosts a 'clubhouse' every day at recess and lunch, run by adult mentors. Tertiary students studying community services and social work help facilitate a range of activities from playing

cards to board games, drawing, colouring-in or just chatting.

"Some children will spend time in my office if they don't like the noise outside – not as a punishment; these are places they can choose to come to for connection and support," says Debbie. "The tertiary students also provide individual and small group mentoring and social skills development for any children who need it."

**"There have been students who've come out of the program completely different people compared to when they started."**

Children can be referred by their teachers, parents or themselves for additional support. As a result, they have seen improved engagement rates among those students who find it challenging to attend school.

"The mentors provide someone the children can talk to at least once a week about anything that's on their mind, and this helps them build their self-esteem and give them resilience. The enhanced

support programs have been really effective, because they know that we care about each and every one of them and will do whatever it takes to help them to feel comfortable and safe."

While all of these programs tend to focus on the students, none of them would be as effective without an effort to involve the entirety of the school community. This can mean regular phone calls, emails or school visits.

Back at Berwick Lodge Primary, Fiona uses the school's Facebook page to maintain constant communication with parents. "We touch base with all our parents as often as possible. For example, I heard that one of my students who gets quite anxious has been away sick for a couple of days, so I sent her mum a message saying that we're looking forward to seeing her again on Monday.

"We try to make sure that people are feeling very connected and supported, so they're more likely to tell us if there's something other than a physical illness keeping them away." <sup>AEU</sup>

More information on the Respectful Relationships program, including a resource kit for schools, is available on the DET website at [bit.ly/RespectfulR](https://bit.ly/RespectfulR)





## The road to recovery

When a leading teacher was diagnosed with cancer, he found his union and school community were there to support him, writes [STEPHEN A RUSSELL](#).

Gerry Burns (centre) surrounded by colleagues.

**W**hen Marnebek School Cranbourne teacher Gerry Burns was diagnosed with throat cancer, instead of despairing, he became strangely focused.

"I don't think you really realise the enormity of it," he says. "It shocks you, but you just need to get everything sorted, as opposed to thinking that this could potentially take me out."

The father of four emigrated with his family from Belfast seven years ago and was newly elevated into a leadership role at Marnebek, a school that tailors educational programs for kids with physical and intellectual disabilities, when he got the bad news.

Realising he didn't know where to start, it was a shock to discover that, unlike in the UK, even with health insurance he would have to wait three months before receiving any financial support. Centrelink wasn't much use, as he wasn't technically unemployed.

"That's when I got in touch with the union," he says. "Their advice was honestly invaluable, because you're just really on your knees looking for a way out. You don't look into the finer details."

"The AEU told me you can contact your health insurance company and contribute a little bit more every month to get paid almost immediately."

Gerry's principal and teaching colleagues at Marnebek were no less supportive. "Right from the outset, they delivered food packages and baskets loaded with gifts for the kids, especially at Christmas. Even envelopes of money, completely anonymously. So selfless."

One teacher and former Hawthorn player, Russell Greene, arranged for a Hawthorn guernsey to be signed by the back-to-back premierships teams and auctioned it to raise funds, while Gerry's


good friend and ES staff member Ann Barkby would drive the school bus from Cranbourne to Gerry's home on the Mornington Peninsula every month throughout his year-long absence.

"They were angels," he insists. "I mean, it's clichéd, but it really restores your faith in humanity. It changed my whole outlook on life, because you can get caught up in your own work and how that's going, but when something like this happens and so many people step up to help you, you just see a beautiful side of the people you work with."

And it wasn't just the generosity of their gifts. Acting principal Kathy Weston helped coordinate a plan to make sure no additional pressure was put on Gerry while he recovered, removing him from all email chains and checking in on him personally. "It was all done very, very sensitively," he says.

That sensitivity extended to his return to work at the start of this year. "They put my leadership position on hold immediately and then allowed me to decide if I wanted to step back into that, and if I wanted to be full-time or not."

Opting not to resume the leadership gig to minimise stress levels, he did decide to remain full time but initially found it quite hard going. "I was still taking the odd day off and a few times I went home early, but there was never any pressure. They just sorted it right there and then, even when they were hard-pushed for staff."

Gerry says he can't speak highly enough of his colleagues and the kind, clear and concise support he received from the AEU. "I'm new to this country and it just reinforced how good a decision it was to come here. I just got Australian citizenship and I'm really glad I made that decision to bring my kids up here." 

**"When something like this happens, you just see a beautiful side of the people you work with."**

# Child magnet

When Simone Callaghan Dawson Lucas left the advertising industry for preschool teaching, she found her passion and her calling. She tells **L.J. CHARLESTON** why she believes getting early childhood education right could change the world.

**S**imone Callaghan Dawson Lucas had a strong feeling that being a teacher was part of her destiny. It was uncanny the way that whenever she was at a large gathering the children always gravitated towards her.

"It's always been that way. And I'd find myself preferring to hang around with the kids than the adults! I've always been intrigued about the way children learn and the way they process information, so that's what drove me to completely rethink my career," Simone says.

She was working in the 'dog-eat-dog' world of the advertising industry when a chance conversation with a family friend inspired her to become a teacher. The friend was speaking passionately about how much she loved studying early childhood education and care at TAFE, and convinced Simone to take a leap of faith.

She hasn't looked back since, beginning at TAFE and now teaching in early childhood. She loves how spontaneous and diverse her day can be.

"One minute I'm gardening, the next minute I'm singing and dancing, telling a story or comforting children when they're distressed," Simone says.

"Above everything, the thing I value most about my work is making a difference, because where I'm teaching is a very diverse area with incredibly complex needs. I've had parents say, 'I wish I could bring my older child back so you could teach him.' Getting compliments like that just mean the world to me."

Beyond the classroom, Simone is tireless when it comes to actively advocating for students and their families.

It's her passion and compassion for these families that dominates her entire philosophy of teaching, particularly when it comes to children who have been labelled 'difficult'.

"We're increasingly seeing children who are not yet diagnosed or formally assessed with learning and developmental delay. This year I've had one-third of the group present with delay in one or more areas, so that has significantly changed the way I teach. It means I must incorporate a lot of resources to support those children.

**"Above everything, the thing I value most about my work is making a difference. I know I make a difference in my community."**

"It also means a lot of on-the-job training to make sure other educators are accessing the toolbox of resources to support those children rather than becoming frustrated by a particular child's behaviour," Simone says.

"Certain behaviour is a form of communication and that child is trying to tell you something. If we listen to children rather than judge, we can see a totally different child."

A key challenge for Simone, which she believes many teachers share, is 'compassion fatigue'.

"It can be exhausting. So many things weigh heavily on my mind," Simone says. "For example, when I've got a child who has travelled back to Afghanistan, I worry

about those kids when they're away. I had a child who, a few years ago, went to the Philippines to visit family. Then, I heard there was a typhoon over there and I was so worried!"

On top of her hectic work schedule, Simone makes a valuable contribution to the AEU's campaigns related to early childhood education – specifically for government funding for three and four-year-old preschool in Victoria.


She has been getting active on social media, speaking to the office of her local member as well as education minister James Merlino, and attending several rallies in her campaign t-shirts. It has been gratifying to see the impact of those campaigns, she says.

"It is very satisfying to know the Victorian government now recognises the importance of preschool education. But I feel strongly that we're never going to reach the level of maturity and sophistication we need as a nation until we really change the systems we've currently got – and this means investing heavily to turn around the lives of those who are disadvantaged."


Despite the introduction of the national early youth curriculums, Simone says it will take a generation for them to come to fruition.

"It hasn't brought about the outcomes that we want for children and families, because there's too much sectoral focus on outcomes where you just tick a box – for example, 'Yes, the child can do this now'.

"Instead of constantly ticking boxes, we need to look at the foundation of play-based learning and our practice and principles, which require considerable critical reflection. This should be the focus rather than the actual learning outcome."

"We can and must change the systems that deliver early childhood education. In turn, we will change the world. We owe it to this generation and to the next." 





**“We can and must change the systems that deliver early childhood education. In turn, we will change the world. We owe it to this generation and to the next.”**

The most important things I take into the classroom every day are... **bucket loads of passion, endless compassion, an open heart and mind.**

The most important things to leave at home are... **nothing. Bring all of you. Parents relate to you as a human. When they can see that some days are tough, they appreciate that you show up even when it is difficult.**

The best advice I ever received was... **‘Assume nothing’ – Da. ‘Walk a mile in their shoes’ – Mum.**

My top piece of advice to someone starting out in education would be... **join the AEU to receive a range of benefits and support.**

My favourite teacher at school was... **Mrs Bell, my kindergarten teacher, Granville South Primary. She gave us time to lie down and listen to relaxation music after lunch. It helped us to refocus and recharge for the afternoon.**

The people I admire most are... **those who transcend adversity, who follow their dream; the rise of the phoenix is truly inspirational to see.**

The book that changed my life was... ***The Hundredth Monkey* by Ken Keyes Jnr. I read this in Year 8 and learnt that social change was possible.**

In my other life, I am... **a crazy indoor plant woman, a crazy chicken woman, and the best in-car rock concert performer you will ever see (think Janis Joplin meets Sinead O’Connor meets Florence Welch).**

If I met the education minister... **I would share my experiences and stories from working in two states over 20 years and explain why there is no doubt of the benefits to investment in early years education.**

The most important thing the union does for its members is... **engage in activism and advocacy, provide opportunities for professional development and networking, and ensure workers’ rights are defended. There is strength in numbers!**

**Together we travelled the 15-minute trip over Western Port Bay on a boat I would describe as a much bigger and slightly fancier dinghy.**



## LEARNING ISLAND

An eight-week teaching gig became the adventure of a lifetime, writes [ANITA HARDING](#).

**T**he call came in one night while I was spending the weekend at a friend's house: "Would you be interested in an eight-week teaching block, starting Monday?" After working for almost a year as a CRT at far too many different schools across the Mornington Peninsula, I practically screamed "Yes!" down the phone, deafening the lady from the agency.

I began my teaching career in NSW, working five days in a single school, getting paid at a casual rate. However, my husband's work with the military meant an interstate move every two years, so I never felt I could commit to anything more than short-term work here and there. The offer of spending the last eight weeks of the school year at a 'small country school' sounded just perfect to me. Little did I know this small school, made to sound so warm and cosy, was the start of what I can only describe as teaching bootcamp and the rollercoaster ride of a lifetime!

I arrived at Stony Point on Monday morning, ready to catch the ferry to my first day at Perseverance Primary School. The ferry left at 7.50 am sharp and I was still not entirely sure if I was going to be seasick or not. It was there I first met Sharon, the school's ES worker, and together we travelled the 15-minute trip over Western Port Bay on a boat I would describe as a much bigger and slightly fancier dinghy.

We arrived at Tankerton Jetty on French Island, where Sharon led the way through the jetty's dirt carpark to the

school car and drove the 6km dirt road to school with nothing in sight except paddocks and cows. Lots of cows. I honestly don't remember much else of that day, because I felt as if I had just entered a strange land where everything was like nothing I'd ever experienced before.


I spent the next few weeks getting to know the kids and, with much help from Sharon, begin a process that I came to call 'learning island'. Even though French Island is geographically so close to Melbourne, it is somehow so removed, like a different world. The island is completely off the grid, for one thing, which means private properties are responsible for generating their own electricity by solar power and generators, and water supply from rainwater tanks. The school is no exception to this.

One of my first 'learning island' lessons was the cloudy day we arrived at work to find no power to run the school. After exhausting my very limited technical knowledge, I enlisted the help of a lifesaver parent, who asked if I had ordered fuel for the generator, to which I replied: "Generators need fuel?" In my city-girl mind, generators just, well, generated. I thought that was their job; it's right there in the word itself. Almost two years later and we haven't run out of power since. Lesson one learnt.

Managing the curriculum for a class that's P-6 is something I found very difficult to begin with. While it's still not an easy feat, I am becoming a more talented juggler of multiple ages and

stages in the one room. With the entire school's population well under that of a single class size in most Australian public schools, it is easier to plan, teach and assess all the students on an individual basis, rather than according to their respective year levels. This is a huge advantage for the students, because I can easily extend them when they achieve particular outcomes, rather than having to wait until the following year level and corresponding curriculum.

That's not to say this can't be done in a typical mainstream class, but the small numbers definitely provide a clear platform to teach to individual needs. The downside is my term and weekly planner has to incorporate every child's learning outcomes, multiplying my planning time by the number of students I have.

Teaching can be challenging at the best of times – and my job on the island is definitely no exception. My amazing principal spoke with me early on, telling me that if I could handle this, there's nothing I couldn't do. I've certainly had a lot of unusual situations thrown at me while working in this very unique school – from koalas ambling across the school oval and interrupting cricket matches, to school lockdowns due to tiger snakes circling the classroom, to sleeping on the classroom floor overnight because of wild weather and ferry cancellations. Like I said, teaching bootcamp. But I've loved every minute and learned more over these past two years than I could ever have imagined possible. 





Clockwise from top left:  
Students help prepare a  
new garden bed during a  
school working bee; Anita  
visiting spring livestock on  
a local farm; the nextdoor  
neighbours; a one-koala  
welcoming committee.





# Your questions answered

Our best advice on your most common – and uncommon – concerns.

**Q** As an ES staff member, do I get paid for attending an event that is out of my regular hours of duty, such as camp?

**A** If you are directed to attend an event, then the number of extra hours must be recorded by the principal and accrued as time in lieu (TIL). The timing of that TIL is at the discretion of the principal, based on the work requirements of the school. However, it should all be used by 30 June of the following year. You are also able to negotiate payment at your normal pay rate instead of accruing TIL. Note: if you choose to attend events without being directed to do so, then this time is considered voluntary and it will not attract TIL. All schools should develop a TIL policy through consultative committee to deal with such activities.

**Q** I was injured while working as a CRT. What should I do?

**A** Depending on your employment arrangements, you need to lodge a Workers Injury Claim form with the appropriate employer. If you were working in a school as directed by a CRT agency, your form will need to be lodged with the agency. If you were working directly for a school, then the claim form would need to be lodged with that school. Please call the MSC if you need assistance filling in a Workers Injury Claim Form.

**Q** I am employed under the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2016 (VECTEA 2016). I see this agreement has a nominal expiry date of 31 July 2019. Does this mean that I am not covered by the VECTEA 2016 after this date?

**A** Employees will continue to be covered by an agreement even after it has reached its nominal expiry date provided it has not been replaced by another agreement or terminated. The nominal expiry date is generally the earliest date that a replacement agreement can take effect, but existing agreements can continue to apply past this date. The AEU is currently in the process of negotiating replacements to both the VECTEA 2016 and the Early Education Employees Agreement 2016 (EEEE 2016). Once these new agreements are negotiated and approved, they will replace the existing VECTEA 2016 and EEEA 2016. We will keep you up to date with any developments.

**Q** How can our sub-branch make changes to the way our consultative committee works?

**A** Hold a sub-branch meeting early as possible in Term 3 and review current consultative structures and procedures. Canvass the views of sub-branch members and take any proposed changes to the principal via the consultative committee. This may require a few meetings, so consider working with the principal to set up a schedule of sub-branch and alternative consultative meetings. Each school must report to DET on agreed consultative arrangements by 1 September each year. If there is agreement, make sure all processes and procedures are documented as per the consultative clauses in the VGSA 2017, clauses 12.4 and 12.5. These explain the structure and business of the consultative committee, including the meaning of long-

term plan and workforce plans. Reminder: in the VGSA 2017, the default arrangement provides 16 hours time-release for the AEU rep for consultation with the sub-branch, so you should seek to include this in your consultative arrangements. If consultative arrangements are not agreed to, please contact the AEU for support.

**Q** I work in a small disability services centre that is about to merge with a larger organisation. Will my colleagues and I be able to access the portable long service leave scheme?

**A** According to draft regulations, the portable long service scheme will include all Victorian disability services from 1 January 2020. Under the new laws, members will be able to transfer their LSL or other benefits after working in their industry for seven years, irrespective of the number of employers they work for over that time.

**Q** I am employed as a diploma-qualified educator (52/52 model) under the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2016 (VECTEA 2016). I've noticed that the rate of pay for the equivalent role under the Children's Services Award 2010 (CS Award) might be higher. Which rate applies?

**A** The Fair Work Act 2009 states that if the rates of pay under an enterprise agreement (such as the VECTEA 2016) are lower than the rates of pay under the modern award then the modern award applies. The rates in the VECTEA 2016, and the increases that regularly occur, were determined a few years ago, whereas the increases to the rates under the CS Award occur on a year-by-year basis. In this case, the rates under VECTEA 2016 underestimated the increases that have occurred since it was formed. In this case,



For advice on these or any other work-related matters, call our Member Support Centre on **03 9417 2822**.

the rates in the CS Award supersede the rates under the VECTEA 2016, so the higher rates apply. This may also affect certificate III-qualified educators and activity group leaders. If you are unsure whether you are being paid correctly, contact the MSC for advice.

**Q** I am getting married in the first weekend of the September school holidays and have decided that I need to take a couple of days off before this to get ready. I have been employed for five years at my school. Is there leave I can take to cover this time?

**A** As you have not yet been working for seven years, you will not be able to access long service leave to cover this time. Therefore, you would need to apply for leave without pay. This is granted at the discretion of the principal and should be applied for in writing. I would advise that you submit this leave application to your principal with a reasonable notice period so it can be considered for planning purposes.

**Q** Is there a standard hourly rate of pay for CRTs?

**A** We are regularly asked about the hourly rate for casual relief teaching. The current rate for CRTs employed by school councils is \$60.77 per hour with a maximum daily rate of \$364.60. This will rise again on October 1 to an hourly rate of \$61.83 and a maximum daily rate of \$370.98. It is important to stay on top of these changes and ensure you are being paid correctly by regularly checking your pay advices.

**Q** How much APT time am I entitled to in a week?

**A** The current agreement does not talk about 'APT time', rather maximum face-to-face teaching per week. This is

capped at 22.5 hours per week for a primary school teacher within the 30 hours of work as part of the 30 + 8 model. The other 7.5 hours within this 30 hours are to be used for tasks directly related to teaching and learning, such as planning, assessment and reporting. To ensure that you are not in breach of this clause, you would need to look at how long your sessions are and how many you teach each week to calculate your weekly teaching hours.

**Q** As a disability educator, what increase should I receive with the Equal Remuneration Order in July and December?

**A** This depends on your classification and pay level under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010. If you are unsure whether you should have received an increase, log in to the AEU website and

complete the disability wages calculator for an estimate: [aeuvic.asn.au/disability-wages-calculator](http://aeuvic.asn.au/disability-wages-calculator). If the figure is different from your payslip for the first full pay period in July, ask your employer or HR manager to review your rate of pay.

**Q** As a CRT, what are my entitlements in terms of breaks during a regular school day?

**A** When working in a school as a CRT, you should be provided with appropriate time for a break. In general terms, you should be doing the work of the person you are replacing. However, you can also be directed to carry out other duties within the day. With that in mind, it is essential that all CRTs are provided with a half-hour lunch period free from assigned duties. This time is unpaid, so it is important to use it to have lunch and a proper break to set you up for the afternoon ahead.





“Other people’s exceptional is our normal. Everybody gets to be part of it, from the preps onwards.”





L-R: Learning specialist Marcus Mulcahy, students Billy, Julia and Ryan, and principal Clem Langford in the Carrum Primary School chook run.



## Growing up green

The winner of this year's ResourceSmart School of the Year Award is creating the sustainability advocates of the future – and involving its whole community along the way.

STEPHEN A RUSSELL reports.

The seed that led to Carrum Primary School winning ResourceSmart School of the Year at its recent award ceremony was planted by green-fingered teacher Ron Kennett in the mid-1970s. Keen that students understand where their food came from and how it got to their plate, he laid the groundwork for a kitchen garden – and a small but very hungry menagerie – that flourishes today.

“Our kids realise that they can't have lettuce or tomatoes all year round,” Carrum Primary's assistant principal Amanda Carmichael says. “They ask questions about where it comes from out of season, and then we talk about food miles. So, we cook in-season and the children realise that the old-fashioned, sustainable way of doing things works.”

ResourceSmart Schools is a free program run by Sustainability Victoria that supports embedding sustainable practices within school curriculums and recognising schools that spread the word in their local communities. “We've had little bits of recognition along the way, but the ResourceSmart award was really exciting,” Amanda says of the nod.

Carrum kids of all ages help tend the garden and learn how to make healthy meals. Even the waste goes to good use, with scraps feeding two goats, a brood of chickens and a small aviary in the school grounds.

“The goats eat most of our food scraps that the chickens can't, including watermelon peel and banana skins,” Amanda says. “They are very sociable animals and fabulous little composters.”

Working in the garden, and with the animals, appeals to kids with different abilities. “My hands-on learners really love it,” says Amanda. “I've got outdoor or kinetic options for children that don't cope in the classroom as well as others do.”

And their sterling efforts don't stop when the school bell rings. Organising beach and street clean-ups at the weekend, families get involved too, helping to look after the garden and feed the animals during school holidays.

“It's a really nice feeling having our community be part of the school, and that we are part of the community,” Amanda says. “It's a symbiotic relationship.”

Sustainability comes naturally to Carrum's pupils. “They think it's funny that other kids think it's special,” Amanda says. “Other people's exceptional is our normal. Everybody gets to be part of it, from the preps onwards. They help collect food scraps and look after the chooks, so from a very young age, they get involved.”


At the awards ceremony, Carrum students met host Craig Reucassel, presenter of ABC TV show *War on Waste*, and Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate



Change, interviewing them for the school station, Radio Carrum. “I think Craig was impressed by how confident the children were, because they know what they're talking about and walk the talk,” she says.

The win made their year. “Being recognised by ResourceSmart is one of those ‘make a difference’ moments, letting the kids know that what we do is good. They were so proud. It's everyone together, and I'm really pleased that our community effort has been recognised.”

Kids are the best sustainability advocates, Amanda says. “We're hopeful that as they move on to a secondary school setting, they can convince those schools that they should be doing some of these things too.”

She believes small steps lead to big results. “Everything you do makes a difference. It goes out into the local community, and then our global community. It's really about spreading the word. If you want to see how we do it, come and have a look. We're really happy to help out with ideas.” 



## EDUCATION SUPPORT

KATHRYN LEWIS,  
ES ORGANISER

### Dimensions of Work Working Party (DWWP)

Last term, ES members were asked to get involved in our Dimension of Work Working Party to ensure we make the most of this opportunity. The response has been positive, with the AEU reference groups now slowly but surely working their way through the wide range of feedback that is being provided.

The reference groups are meeting online using WebEX and in person at schools, regional meetings and conferences, as well as specific ES training days. We currently have 20 groups all at varying levels of development.

If any other ES members would like to join a reference group, please email [kathryn.lewis@aeuvic.asn.au](mailto:kathryn.lewis@aeuvic.asn.au). ES who don't have the time to be part of a group, can provide individual 'once-off' feedback directly via email.

The AEU has created an online ES meeting space using WebEx, which can be accessed on a smart phone, iPad, laptops or a desktop computer. WebEx is a bit like a Skype call but with capacity for many people to talk and see each other, as well as edit documents.

The online ES meeting

space will be open every Monday between 3pm and 5pm. During these meetings we receive and discuss feedback. Contact Kathryn if needing instructions on how to enter the meeting space.

The 2019 AEU Reps Conference featured two well-attended ES workshops on the Dimensions of Work Working Party and how to organise to win campaigns. Both workshops were focused on setting up ES to get the most out of the current working party and on the log of claims process that will begin early next year.

The AEU is determined to build on the significant improvements for education support staff in the VGSA 2017, and to make sure ES members are ready to campaign strongly to get the improvements they want in the next agreement.

Did you catch our collection of ES activists profiled on social media in the lead up to ESP Day?

This will be our first August in 19 years that we have not celebrated and recognised support staff. I am not sure about anyone else, but this feels very strange to me. Even though we had some great celebrations and many schools took time to recognise their ES on our first international Day of Recognition on 16 May this year, there are some schools who will have their traditional ES Week celebrations this term.

This is a year of transition and I would still like to hear any stories about the ways schools acknowledge the valuable work their ES staff do day in and day out.



## PRINCIPAL CLASS ASSOCIATION

TIM DELANY,  
PRINCIPAL CLASS  
ORGANISER

### Limiting stress and injury

Principal health and safety remains a key focus for the Principal Class Association and we have worked hard this term on a range of projects to educate our members and DET about hazards and the resources required to implement effective controls.

Firstly, the PCA Executive and Advisory Committee along with AEU leaders have provided ongoing and detailed feedback to DET on the elements of the Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy and related supports.

Secondly, regional PCA meetings are now area-based, with a standing health and safety item on the agenda. The regional PCA meetings are a safe place for PCA members to report their health and safety concerns and where we have established principal class designated workgroups. These concerns can be tabled at OHS meetings by principal HSRs and deputy HSRs.

We know that some DET area offices are more responsive to principal eduSafe and other injury reports, so we are also working to educate each area office on their responsibilities, as

defined by the OHS Act.

Finally, early next term we will begin a new series of OHS training for principals. The training will be suitable for principal HSRs and deputy HSRs and other principals interested in supporting their staff and principal colleagues to plan for safety and to work with DET to ensure that when there are hazards, injuries and risks, appropriate controls are provided by the employer.

One of the key causes of injury among principal class employees is workload-related stress. The VGSA 2017 has a clause that requires consultation with principals when the employer plans to introduce work that is a significant change to current practice.

We had an opportunity to remind DET of this clause earlier this term when a new task relating to managing student absences was introduced in one of the regions.

As a result of this, DET regional leaders agreed to amend their expectations in relation to this work and to give principals the opportunity to determine the extent to which their school would engage in the initiative.





## SAFETY MATTERS

MEAGHAN FLACK,  
OHS ORGANISER

### Workload as an OHS Issue

Sometimes OHS can be a straightforward matter: a broken piece of equipment or a missing railing on some stairs are clear risks to health and safety that would usually be fixed quickly.

But what do we do when the risk to health and safety is less obvious but just as harmful?

Our health and safety reps (HSRs) across all workplaces are regularly assisting members with the difficult area of workload. Excessive

and unreasonable workload is an industrial issue and there are mechanisms across all our certified agreements and workplace policies to assist with it. However, when it becomes a risk to health and safety, an OHS approach could also be helpful.

The OHS Act provides a strong framework to understand risks in the workplace, whether they are physical or psychological and it compels employers to control these risks as far as is reasonably practicable.

HSRs can raise issues of excessive and unreasonable workload as a hazardous system of work and consult with the employer to assist individual members or groups of members to address it.

HSRs use the same process to address workload as a health and safety issue as they would should the issue be a physical hazard: identify the

issue, consult on the control, apply the highest level of control that is reasonably practicable and monitor the effectiveness.

The OHS Act also compels employers to monitor the health and safety of their employees and be proactive in addressing safety. OHS committees can work in with consultative committees when developing a long-term plan for the school to foresee risks to health and safety and to identify workload pressures before they occur.

Considering workload as a health and safety issue can provide members with a different approach and a strong set of tools to address the problem.

### Provision of eduSafe reports

I have been assisting many school-based HSRs recently as they liaise with their principals

regarding the provision of eduSafe reports.

While the content of eduSafe reports can be sensitive, and members are often writing these reports at a difficult time, it is important that our HSRs get a clear picture of any hazards in their workplaces and be consulted on the controls put in place to address them.

The OHS Act states clearly that the employer must allow an HSR to have access to information they have relating to actual or potential hazards. In practice, this means HSRs must be provided with eduSafe reports in order to perform their roles appropriately.

Where HSRs are not being provided with eduSafe reports, please contact the AEU for advice and assistance on **03 9417 2822**.

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Andrew, principal & THF member

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## NEW EDUCATORS NETWORK

CHRISTY TAN AND DANIEL LACEY  
WINTER UNION INTERNS

### Networking to tackle teacher workload

When teachers from all schools appear to be facing the same problem, the responsibility does not lie with individuals. Workload and potential burnout are systemic problems; not a reflection on teachers' time management. This is as true for graduates as it is for longer-serving professionals.

Teaching is one of the few professions where workers aren't eased into their full responsibilities. Graduate teachers are expected to

achieve the same outcomes as teachers with years of experience. We need to better support each other at a system-wide level so that we're not each carrying the burden alone.

### Support networks and workload management

Taking on excessive workloads and not having reliable support networks are key issues facing pre-service and graduate teachers in schools today. The AEU has been working towards defining reasonable workloads and providing support through

the Victorian Government Schools Agreement (VGSA 2017) and to continue that work in negotiations for the next agreement. Key features of the VGSA aimed at addressing workload include:

- **Clause 22 (12):** Professional practice days, providing four days per year (pro rata for part-time staff) for teachers to be released from scheduled duties.
- **The 30+8 model,** dictating that a teacher's week will consist of 30 hours directly related to teaching and eight hours for other activities (pro rata for part time).
- **Clause 22 (6):** A minimum 5% reduction in scheduled duties for first-year teachers.
- **Clause 24 (8):** Time-in-lieu when attendance at a parent-teacher meeting results in a teacher's attendance exceeding 38 hours in that week (pro rata for part time).

One of the strongest and most active groups at the AEU is the New Educators Network (NEN). This platform gives graduate teachers a secure space to talk about issues and hear from colleagues facing similar challenges.

The AEU is also working on defining the roles of mentors and leadership in supporting graduate teachers with planning and implementing lessons.

### Work-life balance

With workloads increasing, teachers are finding it difficult to find a balance between their work and personal lives. As a teacher, you deserve time to pursue passions and interests, as well as spend time with family and friends. The more of us who get active and involved in the AEU – taking part in networks and meetings in the lead up to the next agreement – the better placed we'll be to have a strong, unified stance on workload.

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## CASUAL RELIEF TEACHER NETWORK

JON FERGUSON,  
CASUAL RELIEF TEACHER  
ORGANISER

### Looking for work?

#### Try an SDS

CRT interactions with students may be brief but can have a huge impact. One such group of students for whom this is true are children with special or complex needs – both intellectual and physical.

Though most CRTs will have worked with special or complex needs students within a mainstream classroom, many may not have worked at a Special Development School (SDS) where all the students have a significant level of need. This may be due to uncertainty about what might be expected at an SDS, lack of experience in that setting, and lack of training in working with special or complex needs students.

For this reason, it is often difficult for SDSs to get the help they need when regular staff take leave.

I recently spoke to Janet Taylor, principal of Yarra Ranges Special Development School, about what CRTs should know about working in a special development setting. Janet's experience working in a SDS started many years ago as a volunteer and as a CRT. At the time, she had no experience

working with students with complex needs, so she understands the hesitation some teachers may have about working in that environment.

Here is her advice for CRTs looking to work in an SDS:

- SDSs obtain CRTs in various ways – some have their own CRT pool such as former volunteers and teacher placement, while others use an agency that provides strong professional support for CRTs who work in SDSs.
- Volunteering or shadowing a teacher at an SDS or attending the school's induction session to meet the staff and get a feel for the school's environment, educational approach and philosophy will allow you to see if working in an SDS is a good fit for you.
- Your attitude, approach to the work and how you fit in with the school is just as important as whether you have direct experience with or training in working with students with special or complex needs.
- You will not be left alone. The very nature of the work and the complex needs of the students means that teamwork in the classroom is the norm. So, even if you are only coming in for a day or two, you will have plenty of support.

Janet says some of the best teachers she has at Yarra Ranges SDS were CRTs who had little or no direct experience with special or complex needs students. She encourages all CRTs to consider taking up work in this rewarding setting.



## WOMEN'S FOCUS

KERRY GREEN,  
WOMEN'S ORGANISER

### Not bloody fair

It's 2010 and I'm having my monthly argument with my daughter. "Come on, get out of bed and get going!"

"I've got my period, Mum, I can't!"

"Oh, my goodness! Do you think Julia Gillard can do this every month? No, she has to get up and run the country. Do you think she can say to Cabinet, 'I'm not coming to work today; I've got my period.' No, she's got to make important decisions. If she can get up, so can you!"

"It's not bloody fair."

"I know. Here's a Panadol... Up you get!"

I'm sure I'm not the only one who has had to drag themselves, their kids or even their students through the school day when hormones are raging, uterus are cramping and linings are gushing.

And you know what? My daughter was right. It's not fair. It's not fair that women are still expected to use their valuable sick, annual or personal leave during their periods. Menstruation isn't an illness; it's a normal bodily function – albeit one that, for some, can cause a lot of pain and stress.

That's why we're excited about the Victorian Women's Trust's new model workplace

policy for people who are menstrual or menopausal. The policy seeks to support workers to adequately self-care during their period or menopause, and seeks to remove the taboo and secrecy around periods. It includes suggestions such as the provision of a restful working environment for menstruating and menopausal workers.

That might seem like a pipe-dream in our education contexts, so we need to start thinking flexibly about what we need and what could be possible in our settings. 'Restful' can mean more than just taking a nap; it could mean knowing that there's another staff member on hand to allow you to go to the toilet to change your pad, tampon or Diva cup more regularly to ease period stress.

As unionists, we know that we can rely on each other for support – so, it's time to have those conversations with your co-workers that lead to open and honest discussions at the sub-branch level.

Another suggestion is to introduce menstrual and menopausal leave: an extra 12 days paid leave per year. Many women already have less leave available, as we tend to use it for caring duties.

Menstruation and menopause have an impact on the majority of the population for most of their working lives. The time for action is now – it will change your lives and the lives of the girls you teach.

It's great that the Victorian Women's Trust has started the conversation. It's up to us to continue it. Period.



# Recognising our reps

This year's AEU Reps Conference was, as always, a great opportunity for our hardworking reps to meet up and discuss the key issues in public education. Attendees enjoyed a series of workshops and talks, including a rousing speech from ACTU president Michele O'Neil. We also honoured our active members and sub-branches, with this year's awards going to:

**AEU sub-branch/workplace of the year:**

**Fitzroy High School**

**AEU Region of the Year: Peninsula**

**AEU Rep of the Year: Hanae Honda**

Congratulations to all our winners and finalists. With members, sub-branches and regions this proactive and engaged, AEU members are in good hands. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication.

**Clockwise from top:** this year's winners and finalists with our vice president secondary Marino D'Ortenzio standing proud (back-right); guest speakers from the NUW; deputy secretary Martel Menz opens proceedings.





## MONEY MATTERS

GEOFF ALLEN,  
FINANCIAL CONSULTANT &  
AEU ASSOCIATE MEMBER

### 'Death taxes' already exist

During the recent federal election, a scare campaign claimed that the Labor Party was planning to introduce 'death taxes' if elected. Although this was nonsense, the fact is death taxes already exist for superannuation payments, introduced by a Liberal government nearly 15 years ago.

Politics aside, you need to be aware of the likely tax

implications if you die leaving a superannuation lump sum, and how to eliminate or reduce the tax. This is a financial area that can be quite complex and some initial information is required.

Importantly, superannuation lies outside a personal will. Superannuation funds are trusts defined by a trust deed, which is implemented by trustees. It is the trustees who determine who receives your superannuation when you die and so you should ensure that they are aware how you want your superannuation paid out. (It is also important that you have a current and valid will.)

Understanding some basic jargon used in the superannuation world helps to clarify tax implications. There are two broad types of superannuation contribution.

Firstly, **concessional contributions**. These include

employer, salary sacrifice and tax-deductible contributions. As they enter a super fund, they are taxed at a 'concessional' flat rate of 15% rather than the marginal tax rate that applies to your salary.

Secondly, **non-concessional contributions**. These contributions are generally paid from money on which you have already paid a full rate of tax – consequently there is no 'concession' involved. No tax is applied as these contributions enter your super account.

Each type of contribution is 'tagged' as it enters your super fund. Concessional contributions become 'taxable contributions' and non-concessional contributions become the 'tax-free contributions'. These tags remain for as long as you are alive, following you all the way to the grave.

If you read your annual superannuation statement, you will see how your super is apportioned between taxable and tax-free components. This ratio will change from year to year as you make further contributions and earnings are credited to your account. Your beneficiaries and/or your estate may have to pay tax on the taxable component, depending on your personal circumstances and the instructions you have provided to the trustees of your super fund.

I will continue this theme in my Term 4 article.

**Note:** This article is in no way intended to provide you with personal advice and you should discuss your own circumstances with your authorised financial adviser before committing to any decisions on matters raised in this article.



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# A powerful voice:

## a tribute to Maggie Power



**T**he AEU lost one of its most active and passionate members with the passing of Maggie Power on 17 June this year.

Long-standing AMES councillor and sub-branch president, Maggie dedicated her life to improving the lives of others. In their tribute, her AMES colleagues described her as “an accomplished and principled professional” who was “sassy, funny, diligent and clever”.

“There are no words to describe my admiration for Maggie as a fellow unionist and as a friend,” says Elaine Gillespie, AEU vice president for TAFE and Adult Provision. “She constantly stood up for others who did not feel they were able to.”

One notable example was her advocacy on behalf of sessional teachers at AMES who were attending the workplace to conduct student interviews but were not paid if students did not show up. “Maggie was outraged,” says Elaine. “But in her quiet, pleasant manner, she organised these workers and met with management to ensure they were paid and given meaningful work if students did not turn up.”

The memory that stands out most for Elaine, however, was Maggie’s report to TAP council about her time working on Nauru: “What she had witnessed and the changes she was able to make for some of the refugees held there – and, in particular, one small child.

“I do not think there was a person in that room who was not in tears by the end. I know this experience had a major impact on Maggie and, even when she was really sick, she travelled, sometimes interstate, to follow up and support refugee families,” says Elaine.

“Maggie had a huge heart and would campaign for the underdog over and over again. She was patient, determined, and would continue to pursue an issue until it was resolved. She never needed to raise her voice. Her ability to gather facts and tell it as it was earned her great respect from managers and peers alike.”

AEU’s Meaghan Flack worked closely with Maggie after becoming an organiser for the AMES sector in late 2016. She remembers her as a woman with a “remarkable mix of traits”.

“Maggie really was one of life’s magnificent people,” says Meaghan. “She worked tirelessly for her students and colleagues, and she even volunteered to teach children on Nauru when she had the chance. She was kind and graceful and quietly spoken, but she was also a proud, passionate and bold unionist.

“She represented her members with great passion and dedication, and she spoke about her students with love and warmth. When I organised a trip to the CUB picket line, Maggie was the first to sign up to come along. It was a freezing cold morning, but Maggie was excited to be there supporting her comrades. She brought a bag of apples and she baked biscuits to give to the men on strike.”

When Meaghan left the AEU to take up a role at State Schools Relief, it was Maggie who organised a gift and read out thank-you messages she had gathered from fellow AMES members to the AEU branch council. “Her contribution to these statements was ‘Bless your union heart, Meaghan’. I’ll never forget that.”

Maggie’s colleague Daphne Budisavljevic says Maggie would call for an AEU meeting on the spot when there were issues that needed to be discussed. “She would announce in a loud and clear voice: ‘Union meeting now! Everybody gather ’round. Staff room!’


“When I worked at RLI in Flagstaff, she would go into all the offices telling us it was time to do some stretches. She would then guide us in a series of exercises to ensure we were following OH&S principles,” says Daphne.

“For as long as I worked at AMES, I knew Maggie would be on top of things. She was our rep for so long, and I really and truly respected her point of view. It was rare not to see her at AEU meetings. I admire her dedication, her unwavering support for those who needed help. Her voice was gentle and yet so powerful.”

Maggie was born in 1954 in Melbourne – a city she loved and where she has largely stayed, living close by to her eight siblings and her daughter Justine. Her early vocational inspiration came from the migrants she worked with as a conductress on the trams.

During her many years working as an English teacher, she wrote ten books and over sixty scripts mainly focused on themes to help CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) communities acculturate. She also wrote scripts, including the full-length play *The Woman Who Fell Up*, which was performed by the Sydney Theatre Company, and was working on short stories up until her death.

Maggie’s daughter Justine says her mother recently told her she was writing a play set in a brothel to the soundtrack of Macy Gray’s music. “I really wish she had have finished that. It sounded so wonderful.”

She will be greatly missed by her family, friends, colleagues and all here at the AEU. 





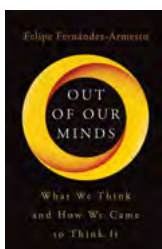
### The Australian Dream (MA15+) MADMAN

★★★★★

The final years of two-time Brownlow Medal-winner Adam Goodes' career were marred by constant booing on ground and bile-filled newspaper columns. This, all because the proud Indigenous man – and one of the finest players the AFL has ever seen – dared to call out a racist heckle from a teenage girl during a match, even though he graciously pointed out that she wasn't to blame.

Although covering similar ground to recent film *The Final Quarter*, this interview-led documentary takes a deeper look at the man, his values and the bigger picture. Together, they reveal a nation that does not take racism seriously enough, continually fails to call it out and refuses to make peace with the sins of its past.

Directed by sports documentary-maker Daniel Gordon (*George Best: All by Himself*) and written by news anchor Stan Grant, it is a powerful rallying cry for a fairer Australia. One that appreciates, and indeed celebrates, the thousands of years of culture that existed here long before British colonisation. **–Stephen A Russell**



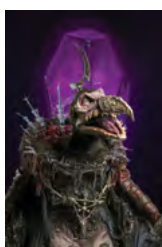
### Out of Our Minds FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO

★★★★★

While there are plenty of books picking apart how the brain – or the mind (what we might call its operating software) – works, there are few looking at how the ways we use our brains have changed over time. Or, at least, few as engaging as this comprehensive tome from British historian Fernández-Armesto.

As might be expected from a historian, the scope is far-reaching, mapping the birth of ideas across science, philosophy, politics, religion and culture. Using the evidence available, he traces the earliest ethics back to the symbols and values used by our cave-bound ancestors, which might bind a community together.

We see civilisations rise, read the words of the first celebrity philosophers, track the role of religions and empires in spreading enlightenment (or ignorance) and, finally, arrive in a modern era full of uncertainties. It's not wholly a story of progress, arguing that we might have reached the end of a golden age of ideas in a homogenised, globalised world where machines do much of the mental gruntwork for us. **–Myke Bartlett**



### The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance (PG) NETFLIX

★★★★★

Announced by Lisa Henson as the “biggest puppet production ever mounted”, the scale of this sumptuous prequel series is staggering. Set before the 1982 movie lovingly crafted by her father, Jim (*Labyrinth*, *The Muppet Show*), it builds the world of Thra in *Game of Thrones* detail.

Once more pitting the sweet-natured and somewhat naïve Gelfling against the terrifying, vulture-like Skeksis, French director Louis Leterrier captures the glowing spirit of the original far better than his dire update on *Clash of the Titans*. There's a fair whack of exposition crammed into the first two episodes, but when the ‘world-building’ is this magnificent, it's forgivable. The vocal cast is equally astounding, tapping *Crazy Rich Asians* star Awkwafina, *Alien* queen Sigourney Weaver and *Star Wars*' Mark Hamill alongside Brits Helena Bonham Carter, Simon Pegg, Eddie Izzard and Toby Jones. There's even a sprinkling of *Thrones* alumni in Lena Head, Natalie Dormer and Nathalie Emmanuel. And while the violence is far less brutal, the Skeksis retain their malevolence, set to spark nightmares for a new generation. Thrilling. **–Stephen A Russell**

### WINE with Paddy Kendler

Aside from the overall improvement in Australian wine in recent decades – and the continued growth in international respect, even admiration, for our wines – the most exciting feature of the current wine scene is the introduction of new grape varieties.

Among the dozens now becoming established are the Italians – arguably the most interesting of all the Europeans. Some are clearly doing better than others, but there is plenty of good news. The most successful proving grounds so far seem to be the King Valley and McLaren Vale, though most areas across south-east Australia can claim some notable success.

Among the new whites is pinot grigio, a somewhat neutral variety of little merit, which has even the wine industry puzzled by its current popularity. That said, the winemakers are happy to keep churning it out. More interesting are fiano and vermentino – both with far more character. Less often encountered are verduzzo, verdicchio and arneis, though all well worth a try.

The reds deserve their own story but, meanwhile, the range from Pizzini in the King Valley is remarkable.

### Charles Melton Rose of Virginia 2019 (\$25)

This has to be the ‘biggest’ of our rosés, featuring deep pink colour, a fresh, fruity bouquet and a palate chock-full of flavour. Compared to all the junk rosé on the market, this stands above the pack.

### Tahbilk Marsanne 2018 (\$16)

A reliable and versatile dry white option for all the lighter flavoured foods, including poultry and fish. Deservedly continues to be one of Victoria's most popular wines.

### Hoddles Creek Wickhams Road Pinot Noir 2018 (\$19)

A very impressive Yarra Valley pinot with plenty of juicy fruit character; not overly serious or complex. May well be the best under \$20 pinot in the nation. The 2019 might be even better!



PHOTO: NICHOLAS PURCELL

**As unsettling  
as the occasional  
adrenaline rush can  
be, it's not bad for you.  
The problem is when  
stress is constant.**

# Making the world slow down

LUCY TRELOAR

I was queuing outside a bakery recently, idly listening to two women, friends, chatting in front of me. One, who worked in education, spoke in a near monotone. "I'm running on adrenaline," she said. She was holding onto the thought of the semester break and to just hibernating for a while. "One more week," her friend said. But she was convinced she'd be sick by then: "A teacher's body always knows when to shut down."

Being an educator is one of the most stressful jobs there is, and that stress has flow-on health effects. Anxiety and alcoholism among teachers in Australia, for instance, is up to three times greater than the population's average.

Who hasn't experienced the ghastly heart thump, shallow breathing, heightened energy and jitteriness of an adrenaline rush when our fight-or-flight response has been triggered? It could be starting a new role or job, the pressure of overwhelming deadlines, or of facing a notoriously difficult class. For others, me included, it may be public speaking. My throat tightens and my heart races.

As unsettling as the occasional adrenaline rush can be, it's not bad for you in isolation. The problem is when stress is constant. Stress hormones disrupt most of your body's processes, and their constant presence in your body can lead to a raft

of health issues – anxiety and depression, heart disease and sleep problems among them. In a cruel twist, the very things you need to be working well when you have a lot to do – your concentration and memory – might be affected too.

Since different things cause us stress (one person's pile of marking is another person's public-speaking event) it's not surprising that different things reduce that stress. Doctors commonly recommend practising mindfulness – an activity (and, more recently, a therapy) that's been around for at least 2,500 years. That's because studies show it works, reducing the effects of stress on your mind and body.

One common mindfulness activity is to find a quiet place, sit and calmly focus on your senses or on your breathing, without analysing them. Start with a short session – no more than five or ten minutes. The idea is to be in the present, so that your worries about past and future recede. If stressful thoughts and feelings appear, that's OK: try to observe them without judgement and then let them go.

These approaches are not for everyone. Indeed, for me, thinking about my breathing is a recipe for hyperventilation. The aim is to find a practice that suits you. Yoga, a regular run, or even a spot of doodling or colouring-


in are other ways of practising mindfulness.

Or, in winter, there's nothing like quietly watching an open fire.

I know that I need a daily walk and time to potter around the garden after work, weeding or deadheading flowers, to stay calm. Somehow, they put life into perspective, and when I return to my desk I work more efficiently.

Recently, in the grounds of a university, I saw a stand with a wooden puzzle on it and the word 'mindfulness' posted above. A person striding along stopped suddenly and began moving the pieces around. His shoulders settled. From a distance, I could almost feel his mind calm and his breathing slow down. There, just like that, it happens... past and future recede for a while and there is peace.

Those working in education face a multitude of professional and emotional challenges. Mindfulness can't solve these, but it can help us tackle them with a calmer body and a clearer mind. It's easy to feel as if we haven't got a minute to take on one thing more – but even a five or ten-minute relaxation session can make a big difference to how we cope with the day.

Find a regular practice that works for you; it can be the simplest thing. I keep thinking of the teacher in that bakery queue – the moment when the sun broke through and she held her face up to the light. I did too – and, for that moment, it was all I was thinking about. 

**Lucy Treloar is a writer and teacher whose work has appeared in many prestigious publications. She is the author of two novels: *Salt Creek* (Picador, 2015) and *Wolfe Island* (Picador, Sept. 2019).**

Our real job, our  
most important job,  
is to create valued  
members of society.

# Keeping it together

TRAVIS MCKENZIE

Soon after I trained, I did what many young teachers do and worked for a year in London. My first contract was at an inner-city public school with a low socio-economic population, metal detectors at the doors and a police outreach unit next to the staffroom. My job was to teach two dozen 15-year-olds *Lord of the Flies*. Things, as they say, did not go well. Golding's allegory soon felt more like a documentary. Luckily no one died, but it took me a decade to work out what had gone wrong.

Returning to Australia, I continued to combat chaos with discipline, and when that proved ineffective, I tried the more enlightened pedagogy of individualised moderated work. I used on-demand tests to map special learning needs. I even accepted that segregation into vocational sessions was a necessary step for some. But all this achieved was to push students from the class – and the class, in turn, was diminished by their absence.

Disengaged students had developed an identity, I realised, even a sense of pride, in being the outsiders. Interestingly, the same thing was occurring at the other end of the bell-curve, when advanced students segregated themselves out of frustration with their less aspirational peers. The lesson in *Lord of the Flies* was right there, staring back at me.

You have to keep the group together.

The solution, I discovered, was to make participation more desirable than separation – to show my students that there was more to gain from joining in than there was in staying apart.

Humans have a built-in desire to be part of a community. We have to feed the

things that help a community grow: class discussion, active listening, peer feedback and, most importantly, democracy.

In Term 1, my current Year 8 English group asked if we were going to watch the film version of *Animal Farm*. I had a writing activity planned, but allowed it to be put to a vote. The result was unsurprising: the movie won. And yet, 10 minutes in, my students started to complain about how bad it was. So we put it to another vote: keep watching or return to the lesson I had planned. A spontaneous argument erupted about the various merits of each and I took on the role of conch shell to their council.

The teacher I had been in London would likely have put his foot down after five minutes of the ensuing debate. Instead, I moderated the impromptu senate, facilitating the discourse between the various factions. In the end, the lunch bell went before we had a chance to vote. Some of the more conscientious students were dismayed we had neither watched the film nor completed the planned lesson. I reassured them that it had been one of the better classes of the year.

After the recent federal election, I was thinking about that lesson. My Year 12s were shaken by the result. We'd spent some time in class analysing the media coverage of Brexit and the Trump election, and they probably assumed that the rest of Australia was capable of seeing through the hype and fear-mongering that tends to accompany national campaigns. They were shocked to find that wasn't the case. It wasn't just that the 'wrong' government had been elected – their faith in democracy itself was shaken.



PHOTO: TANIA JOVANOVIĆ

I told them what I'd explained to my Year 8s at the end of the seemingly chaotic *Animal Farm* class. The process of participating in democracy is more valuable than any particular outcome. The ancient Greeks knew it. We need to remember it.

Our job as teachers goes beyond the work we give our students. We are the frontline of community construction. This doesn't just mean creating young people ready to work, but citizens who can participate in the discovery of knowledge for its own sake.

Maybe the solution to improving our society is the same one I needed to improve my teaching. We need to focus less on the individual, and more on the whole. We need to measure the health of the entire community as much that of any single member.

In London, I tried to fix a broken community by further dividing it. Now, I try to give voice to those who set themselves apart, reminding them that their participation is a right and a privilege worth suffering for. <sup>AEU</sup>

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# A uniform approach

A.J. BETTS

Students complain about a great number of things, and much of the time I can sympathise. Homework certainly *can* be annoying. A whole period without using your phone *can* be a challenge. The canteen food *is* mostly over-priced and the coffee-machine coffee definitely leaves much to be desired.

But I draw the line when it comes to uniforms. Who cares if the sock-length is preordained or the ties make them look like a backbencher in training? So what if shirts are baby-poo mustard and skirts are a tartan that would make Groundskeeper Willie proud?

Some mornings I dream of such things. Not the tartan per se, but the pre-determination of it all. The bliss of mindlessly opening the wardrobe and reflexively taking out a uniform (ideally perfectly cleaned and pressed by someone else) and simply putting it on, my thoughts already drifting somewhere more pleasant: lunch, perhaps, or my next holiday destination. I crave the sheer, effortless delight of not having to think, morning after morning, about what to wear and what my outfit says about me.

Clothing means a lot – especially when you're in front of hundreds of unforgiving young people every day. They may look disinterested, but do not be fooled. They are

expert assessors and they miss nothing: your accessories ("Miss, you wore those earrings last Wednesday"), the unfashionable length and/or width of your trousers (why must trends keep changing!?!); and all your failed attempts at mixing-and-matching.

I recall, as a teenager, being far more interested in my history teacher's outfits than in the causes of World War One. She wore brand names – real, not fake; and purchased in Milan, no less! – with such pastel aplomb that teenage girls adored this teacher unequivocally. I submitted my assignments purely to please her.

When I first found myself in a classroom as part of my teacher training, aged 18, I didn't have the money or know-how to replicate such sophistication. Styled instead by my mother – who insisted I wear my hair in a bun to 'look the part' – I arrived looking like a minor character from *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. "Where *did* you get those shoes?" students asked, their fascination tinged with pity. Some of the teachers assumed I'd dressed in costume for Children's Book Week. It was a confusing time for all of us.

During my final placement, aged 20, what I *really* wished for was a large hessian sack. Having found myself placed at a boys' school, I suddenly understood the meaning of 'the male gaze'. Starved of females under 40, the pubescent boarders turned into juvenile Hannibal Lecters, carnivorous eyeballs tracking my every move. In self-defence, my outfits became increasingly solemn and ill-fitted, until finally I resembled a gender-neutral Charlie Chaplin. Even so, a senior boy asked me to accompany him to his formal.

Again: a confusing time.

Now that I'm in the over-40 category, the risk of distracting teenage boys has long since passed, yet I am still haunted by all the things that can go wrong when dressing for the workplace. There is a tightrope we must walk: professional yet practical, conservative yet relevant, smart but not too try-hard (lest those mean girls notice). Which means



that exactly half of my wardrobe is filled with 'teaching clothes', in all their inoffensive, unexceptional forgettability – with comfortable shoes to match. It's a black and beige surrender: a 'teaching uniform' of least resistance. My very own cloak of invisibility.

In a way, I've created a kind of uniform for myself – and I can tell I'm not the only one. Many of my colleagues have also fashioned their own 'teacher brand', whether it be a revolving door of subdued florals, dapper waistcoats or button-up cardigans.

Some are more successful than others: doesn't every school have that teacher (male or female) who is always impeccably turned-out in linen suits or silk scarves? The one putting the *class* back in classroom?

Yet, all of us – even the best of us – are somehow recognisable out there in the real world. Last weekend, I was 'outed' by a cabbie. "You're a teacher, aren't you?" he said as soon as I got in, clearly just to annoy me. Whether it's our clothes or the way we wear them (or that frenzied look in our eyes as we clutch our piles of marking), something keeps giving us away.

And so I tell the students to enjoy the convenience of their uniform; to embrace the predictability and lack of decision-making. This way, they have so much extra mental energy for the important things. Perhaps even for achieving great things – just like Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg, who proudly wore (and wear) the same clothes day after day.

"Who?" the students say with a roll of their eyes, before finding something else to complain about. And I'm left to think that, like so many things, uniforms are wasted on the young. <sup>AEU</sup>

A.J. Betts is a teacher, speaker and author of award-winning YA novel *Zac & Mia* (Text). Her latest book is *Hive* (Pan Macmillan). Its sequel, *Rogue*, will be released in July.



The faculty were rather freaked out by Mr Jacobs' new daily teaching uniform, but Year One were fully on board.

# TAP

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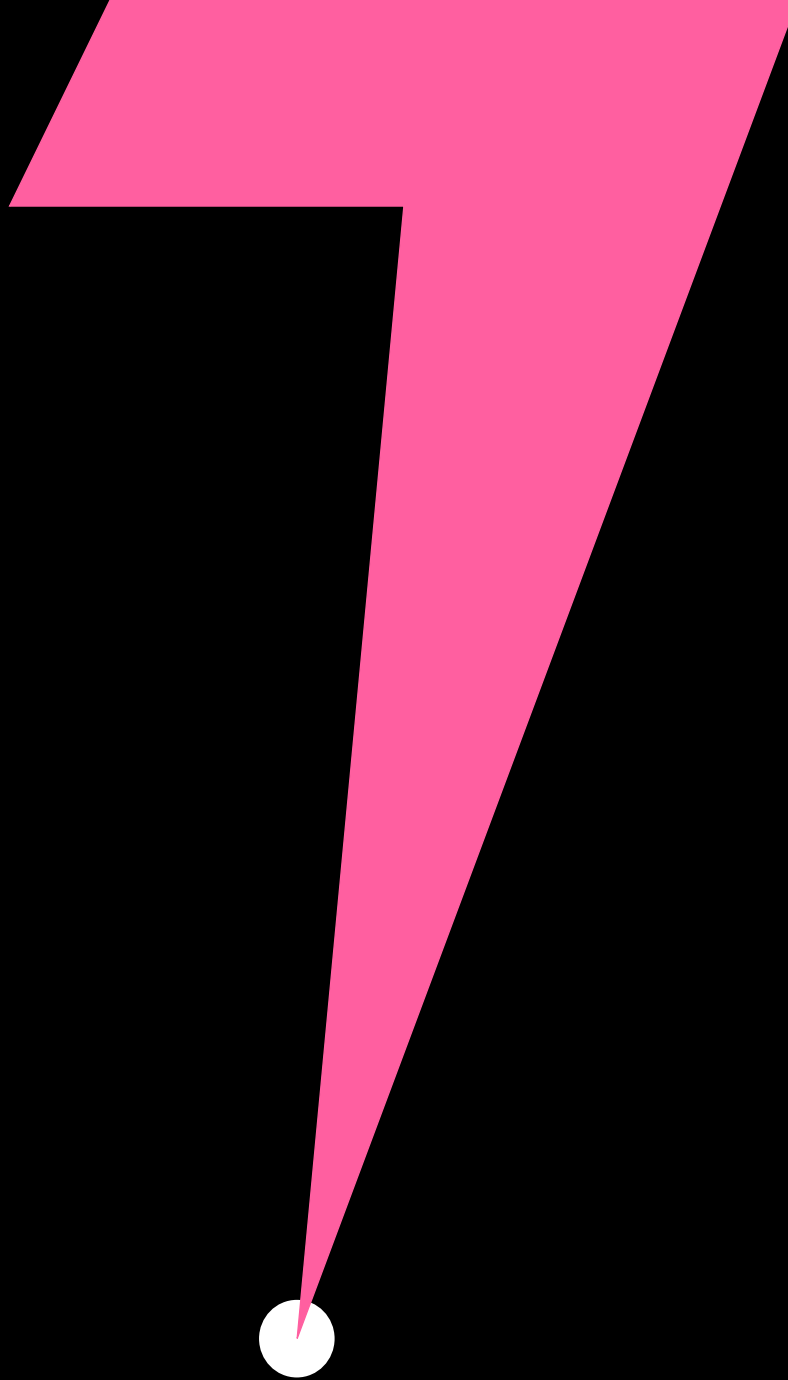


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