

Catholics sign on to better schools

THE Catholic education system has agreed to sign on to the Better Schools Plan, formerly Gonski, after securing a reported extra \$600 million in funding for the sector. Despite new confidence for Catholic educators on funding, the IEU continues to approach with trepidation the true impact of the new agreement on the working lives of teachers.

UNDER the Better Schools Plan, the Catholic education system, like participating state government systems, will have the ability to distribute Federal Government funding as they wish. Reservations previously held by Catholic Education regarding minimal additional funding beyond 2014 for South Australian schools and the appropriate attendance of the Federal Government to the “unique” needs of Western Australian schools, are to be addressed, according to a statement released yesterday by the National Catholic Education Commission.

Despite new funding certainty for the Catholic sector, the IEU continues to hold grave concerns regarding the true implications of the Better Schools Plan for teachers.

Federal Secretary Chris Watt said little attention had been paid by stakeholders to the effect of increased regulations and compliance for teachers. In a media statement released this week, he said the plan included additional work and reporting, additional powers for the Education Minister and raised questions about the degree of micro-managing by the Federal Government.

“It is still not clear as to whether the additional funding is enough to meet increased expectations associated with the plan,” he said.

Mr Watt earlier this month met with newly installed Minister for Education Bill Shorten.

Acknowledging union concerns about implications for member’s jobs and a lack of available current data, the new minister promised the IEU calculated data for all schools.



A NECEC statement thanks Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Education Minister Bill Shorten for helping to resolve catholic concerns. *Photo from Google*

Better Schools recap

- Participation in the plan by Catholic schools comes after an agreement was reached this month with the Independent Schools Council of Australia.
- Thanks to an extended deadline, Victoria is continuing negotiations over the reforms. Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory have not yet signed onto the plan.
- To execute recommendations made by the Gonski report, the Better Schools Plan still includes a per-student base-funding amount, to be topped up with “loadings” targeting disadvantage.
- **While the Australian Education Bill ensures federal funding will flow to all non-government schools under the new system, full benefits to the sector will only flow in for states that have signed up.**

Branch News

Victoria

Fair Work Commission steps in on new agreement for members

James Raynes

VICTORIA is currently negotiating a new Agreement for schools, after the present agreement expired at the end of 2011.

Council expressed its deep concern last month at a lack of progress and called on employer representatives to stop 'dragging the chain' and move to secure a deal.

Our union has since been negotiating several times a week, trying to draw employers towards a fairer deal for members in Catholic education.

The Catholic Employer Negotiating Team last week tabled a 'package', finally setting out in full their positions on a number of matters they would be prepared to agree on, provided that the IEU accept a raft of changes to current conditions.

While some elements of this offer

would be welcome to IEU members, the price to be paid for them is, in our opinion, far too high.

Among the conditions proposed by CENT were proposals that would end automatic incremental progression, reduce breaks for some non-teaching staff, make termination of employment easier, adversely change processes around management of performance and conduct and reduce some allowances for positions of leadership.

Although wages for teachers over the life of the Agreement are

The IEU is closer to breaking a stalemate in employer negotiations by seeking the assistance of the Fair Work Commission.

settled and the parties are reasonably close to a fair outcome for a number of other classifications of staff, the wages CENT propose for support staff and Schools Services Officers are still unacceptably low.

To break the deadlock the IEU negotiating team have proposed seeking the assistance of the Fair Work Commission and CENT have agreed. The IEU is hopeful that Fair Work can assist the parties to move forward.



Western Australia

As the state least likely to sign on to the Federal Government's education reforms, *Branch Out* spoke to secretary Theresa Howe about complications for Western Australian schools.

Remote schools in WA rely heavily on National Partnership monies to fund specialists in Indigenous Education. Under the Gonski model this money would be withdrawn and it would be three years before that level of funding is restored.

Is it OK that indigenous children in remote and country schools in WA could suffer a three-year interruption to their learning? These are real funding cuts in the areas of the most fundamental disadvantage and it will take time for schools and systems to readjust budgets. In the meantime real children will be further disadvantaged. We know that Independent Schools have signed up to the Federal funding model, but we don't know whether the current funding levels will be maintained. The IEU in WA remains ambivalent; exactly what funding will Independent and Catholic schools receive in 2014? Are our concerns around National Partnership monies well founded and why don't we know? Is another bureaucracy a good use of public monies? Will another layer of managerialism improve student outcomes?

Where does the Wikileaks Party stand on non-government education? Superannuation? Asylum Seekers?

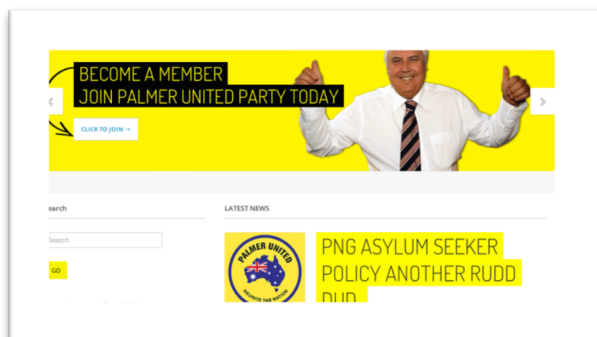
...the IEU has taken on just a few of the great enigmas surrounding the Australian Federal Election 2013, asking candidates to pin their cards to the mast.

TO BETTER address questions and concerns of teacher members, the Independent Education Union of Australia has written to key candidates in the Australian Federal Election 2013 asking for their position on key election issues including the future of funding for the non-government sector, changes to industrial relations laws, asylum seeker policy, superannuation levy increases and pay parity for early childhood education workers.

Teachers working in the non-government sector look forward to new Australian political parties including the Clive Palmer United Party, the Wikileaks Party and Bob Katter's Australia Party sharing their views on education matters.

Questions were also sent to incumbent parliamentary leaders including Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Opposition Leader Tony Abbot and Leader of the Greens Christine Milne.

Any responses received by the IEU will be shared with members through our union's branch publications and websites.



"It's been a rocky year for non-government teachers, having little assurance as to the future of funding for their sector. Teachers need answers on a range of education matters before being able to make the best choice to secure adequate resourcing, good conditions and increased job security" Mr Watt said.



Wikileaks is among a host of new political parties running for a seat in the Federal Election - but what do they all stand for?

QLD/NT GONSKI UPDATE

by Martin King

Despite describing as "productive" negotiations with the Federal Government, Premier Campbell Newman seems unlikely to commit to the new school funding model. The Queensland state government cites a base funding decrease as the key barrier to agreement. Queensland Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek has said he cannot see "any point in meeting with Bill Shorten about Gonski again".

The Northern Territory government has been granted a third extension and remains in talks with the federal government. However, Northern Territory Education Minister Peter Chandler has indicated his government is unlikely to commit to the scheme.

With the new funding model to apply to all non-government schools, regardless of whether state governments opt into the scheme, our union is concerned that many non-government schools have not been provided with certainty of funding.

More Branch News **QUEENSLAND** IEU hosted an Early Childhood

Education Professional Issues Conference this month, providing a meaningful professional development opportunity to members in the sector. Conference workshops included future challenges in the sector, the critical link between industrial recognition and professional recognition, legal issues, special needs in Early Childhood Education and the assessment of centres in relation to the National Quality Standards. An **EREA**

Leaders Conference also proved a hit, where members from Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) schools participated in a range of presentations to help members develop their workplace leadership skills.

TASMANIA became the fourth, and last state this month to sign on to the education funding reforms, formerly known as Gonski. Tasmania has said it will ensure resources are targeted at the neediest schools, in line with the principles of the Gonski report. Almost two-thirds of students in Australia will be covered by the new arrangements, according to *The Australian* newspaper.

NORTHERN TERRITORY this month hosted a NT Catholic sector Day of Action, where members of our union rallied together for a replacement collective agreement after negotiations stalled around key issues of Middle Leadership and Teacher Work Practices. Members wore stickers proclaiming "It's Just Not Right", convened chapter meetings, and considered resolutions about the ongoing bargaining issues.



Pic cap: The conference, themed around union values and identity, enabled participants to discuss with fellow activists the direction EREA members want to take in their workplaces and to reflect on the importance of strong Chapters in EREA schools.

NSW LEADS THE WAY CHALLENGING INCREASED WORKING EXPECTATIONS FOR TEACHERS AS PART OF THE BETTER SCHOOLS PLAN

Tara deBoehmler

Whether we call it Gonski, Better Schools or NERA - the National Education Reform Agreement – the NSW/ACT IEU is telling members it's time to focus on the hoops they are being asked to jump through in order to qualify for funding under the reforms. NSW/ACT Branch says the model passed by the Senate is so different from that proposed by David Gonski, it should be called Gonski no more.

Conditions underpinning the deal, contained in the National Plan for School Improvement, propose compliance burdens on schools and systems that will have budgetary implications. Many also have potentially serious consequences for the work and working conditions of teachers and support staff.

Responding to the industrial implications of these conditions will shape the NSW/ACT IEU's agenda over the coming months. IEU General Secretary John Quessy states in *Newsmonth* and in its July video bulletin: **"At the core of the introduction of the new curriculum, school readiness assessments, data collection and the like, is the provision of adequate resources. New work requires new investment or it simply fails. Nowhere is there a list of work they want us to stop doing. Time will tell how seriously these 'reforms' are to be treated."**