

SPECIAL EDITION

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

SYDNEY 2014



National Conference 2014 a Success

The IEU National Conference 2014 provided over 80 executive members with the chance to focus on issues of importance to educators and teachers, and those central to this year's theme: the ongoing provision of quality education in our sector.

Members enjoyed an opening address by ACTU National President Ged Kearney, and heard from Early Childhood experts Lisa Bryant and Gabe Connell.

A member-led panel discussed initial teacher education and ongoing mentoring and support systems, followed by a talk by Ian

Dalton from the Australian Parents Council regarding the role of parents in the operation of robust school communities. Mr Dalton applauded the IEU for their work in campaigning for students with disabilities.

Day Two featured an insightful address by NZEI National Secretary Paul Goulter, who spoke on their union's fight for the betterment of education in New Zealand.

A Students with Disability Panel included Children with Disability Australia's Stephanie Gotlib and ASPECT's Kathie Lane, who canvassed issues of concern for students with disabilities including limited opportunities,

low expectations, exclusion, bullying and inadequately trained staff. See Page 4.

Members enjoyed a bus ride to the scenic Mrs Macquarie's Chair, staging a rally for Quality Education, attended by a news crew from Channel 10.

Ged Kearney calls for union activism against new government

ACTU President Ged Kearney asked IEU members to "summon the spirit" and come together to join a fight against what she called an "attack on living standards". Ms Kearney said that historically, Labour had done much to create the 'fair go' society we now enjoy...

Continued Page 1...

however, union members needed to push back on the current Government's undermining of basic human rights such as healthcare, aged pensions, quality education and employment.

She said the battle to keep these essential services for our members would be played out in a highly unsympathetic political



"Despite having the most stable economy in the OECD, the Abbott Government was able to succeeded in their attacks on the social compact with their "budget emergency" – Ged Kearney

context. She said the "attack" had been successful on account of the creation of the Abbott government's "budget emergency" - despite the having the most stable economy in the OECD.

The Prac Paradox

While providing mentorship and support to pre-service and beginning teachers is crucial for the development of the profession, fitting it in to the day-to-day routine of a teacher is a challenge.

The National Conference's Quality Education panel discussed mentoring and included academic Sean Kearney, an Associate Dean at the University of Notre Dame, and Leith Brennan, an English Teacher at Holy Spirit College,

Lakemba.

Mr Kearney argued that the high attrition rate of new teachers could be put down to a lack of support in early years, and that the entire teaching professional had a responsibility to help. He said more release time for beginning teachers and those assigned to mentor them was necessary.

However, Ms Brennan said support at the school level was often difficult to achieve. Unique in the position of Pre-Professional Practice Coordinator, she said she had a lighter teaching load to properly administer the numerous requests for practical placements from universities. "Every school should have one of me," she said.

"Universities are graduating too many student teachers in NSW, with 5500 graduates a year for only 3500 jobs." Ms Brennan

Early Childhood: a quest for recognition and funding

Fairfax contributor Lisa Bryant has worked as a consultant and journalist in ECEC for a decade. Co-author to many titles focusing on early education issues, she has acted as the campaign coordinator for NSW's Teachers are Teachers campaign.

Q Is ECEC undervalued in Australia?

A Absolutely! It is undervalued for a range of reasons. Mostly because it is really only in the last 10 years or so that neuroscience has shown the importance of early education and we haven't yet gotten the message out. Australia spends just .01% of its GDP on early education (compared to an OECD average 6 times higher) and a frighteningly small proportion of its education budget on early education.

Early education and care costs money. Governments are reluctant to admit how important it is because then they would have to fund it commensurately.

It is also undervalued because its workforce is predominantly female. A 97% female workforce in any sector ensures that the work you do and its importance is underestimated!

Q What are the current...



Continued Page 2...

challenges faced by the industry?

A Early childhood teachers have gone through a period of intense change over the last few years as they have implemented the improvements to quality needed under the National Quality Framework for education and care services. Although this is now settling down we are now facing a range of inquiries that seek to wind back quality

early education. These inquiries include the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning and the Reviews of the National Quality Framework and The Universal Access to Early Education National Partnership. These reviews seek to separate out childcare from early education, downplay the importance of early education for children except those in the year before schooling, and suggest that early childhood teachers are not as crucial education and care

as the research says they are.

Q What is the most constructive activism we can undertake to raise awareness about the benefits of quality ECEC?

A Educate ourselves on the challenges that the sector faces and the value of early education. Get involved in the sector's campaigns. Talk to people, especially other educators and families about the value of education and care. Every time you meet a politician raise early education.

ECEC Now: Grassroots Gab with Gabe

Ms Connell's career spans 32 years in Early Childhood, as both a teacher and director. She is currently the director of Albury Preschool. Gabe has spent six years as the Vice President Early Childhood on the NSW IEU Executive, and has been an active IEU member for 20 years.

Q Describe your experiences working in Early Childhood Education and Care?

A At the moment it is a very difficult sector to work in. It can be so rewarding working with families and young children and to see the positive outcomes that are achieved by a child having an early childhood education with a degree qualified teacher. However, we have a critical staff shortage – graduates are choosing to work in primary because the wages are better, those working in the sector are ageing, funding in NSW is well below funding in other states so fees are high; participation is affected by high fees and the most vulnerable children in our society are missing out.

Q What does ECEC need right now?

A An education program aimed at young parents and families in regard to the value of early education. If families are informed and demand an equitable, accessible and affordable early childhood education system for their children then this can help change policy at a government level and more funding will be provided.



"Participation is affected by high fees and the most vulnerable children in our society are missing out. "

Fast Lane to success; living and working with ASD

An IEU member since 1982, Kathie Lane has worked in education for over 40 years. For the past six years, Ms Lane has worked with students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), currently filling the role of Education Outreach Consultant with ASPECT, a service provider for autism and other disabilities. Ms Lane talked to *The Bulletin* about helping teachers and school children better understand students with special needs, and about being mum to Camilla, 22, who has ASD.

In a sentence, what do you do?

I work in mainstream schools as a consultant, advising teachers and families on programs for children with autism. I go in and solve problems teachers and families are experiencing with students' educational needs.

What was your first ever job?

A teacher in 1971 in Britain. When I came to Australia in 1973 I taught English as a second language at a primary school. In those days, there were thousands of immigrants to Australia, from mostly non-English speaking backgrounds; children from Italy, Greece, Asia and a lot of Lebanese Christians as a result of the civil war.

How did you come to work with students with disabilities?

I've been with ASPECT for seven years, but previous to that I had a job with the department working with children with language disabilities. I got a Masters in special education, and soon after my daughter, Camila, was diagnosed with ASD at four- and- a half. It just became a logical step sideways to working with children with ASD.

How has being a parent to a student with ASD shaped your career?

It certainly gave me direction. It's something I feel very strongly about. Schools are simply not equipped to deal with students with special learning needs, and it's all down to funding and training. Because of my work, I understood the system and was able to ensure Camila went through certain programs –by year 2 she was back in mainstream classes. I had to fight for everything for Camila. However, most parents don't have the same exposure to the education system, and their children don't have access to the support they need.



Do you have a favorite career moment?

A boy in a class I was advising was extremely sensitive to the sensation of touch; as part of his ASD, touch triggered a very strong pain reaction. During football games, when tackled, he would throw himself to the ground in fits of hysteria. Once it was explained to the students why he did this, the children were suddenly able to understand the needs of their friend. One boy, exasperated, said "I have been asking this for five years!" Sometimes it's not just teachers who need guidance in understanding kids with special needs.

How common is ASD among students? It is known why more boys have ASD than girls?

1 in 84 students and for every four boys diagnosed there will be one girl. ASD manifests in different ways and I believe that

socialization has a lot to do with it, but there's not the data yet to support that. Society has different expectations for boys than girls - girls seem to be able to fly under the radar a bit more.

Has Camila's gender affected her experience as a student with ASD?

I don't know because I haven't had a boy with ASD. I know that she wouldn't have had as much support with her education if I hadn't pushed for it. Camila is 22 now and has done her HSC. She has qualifications and has part-time work as an animal attendant; animals are her passion. However, the vast majority of graduates with disabilities are not working after they leave school, and this is because of the social nature of work; 90 per cent of a job is about communicating with your co-workers.

"Schools are simply not equipped to deal with students with special learning needs, and it's all down to funding and training."

News from the Federal Office

Our take on the Curriculum Review

The IEU has endorsed the recently published Australian Curriculum Review's assertion that the current national curriculum is too overcrowded in primary schools. The IEU has also called for the sensible application of cross-curriculum perspectives, and has reminded stakeholders that the best education experts in any proposed restructure of ACARA, are teachers in classrooms.

The IEU published a media release last week expressing support for recommendations in the review regarding improved accommodation of students with a disability.

However, the IEU outlined some contradictions contained in the review - as outlined in an excellent critique by Libby Tudball, a Senior Lecturer at Monash University. She writes:

While they cannot agree on the way ahead for schools, they argue the curriculum needs to be pared back, but also should have more depth.

They recommend that the focus in the early years of primary school should be on literacy and numeracy, but also that schools should include a more holistic approach, with a focus on values, morals and an increased emphasis on spirituality and student well being.

Financial Report

An electronic version of the Audit and Financial Report is now available on the IEU's website, for

branches who wish to display the link on their website.

Secretariat Report

The Federal Secretariat report, detailing its work for 2014 is now available on the IEU website.

Media Quote of the Week

According to Federal Secretary Chris Watt "Everything you need to know about the 'success' of the Gonski funding model could be found this week in one statement appearing in The Age newspaper: The Victorian president of the Australian Education Union, Meredith Peace, said: "What our schools are clearly telling us is that there is no additional money beyond what they would normally expect to receive to cover enrolment growth and pay increases that are due," she said.

A (small) win for Students with Disability

The IEU has welcomed proposed legislative changes to the Australian Education Amendment Bill.

The legislation, recently passed by the House of Representatives prevents funding cuts from January 1 next year for students with disability in some special schools as a result of the transition arrangements.

"However, we require not only a few tweaks to correct current failings, but an inclusive change in attitudes, sound leadership and the creation of robust



policies supporting additional funding to address a gross deficiency of support for students with disability."

Photography Awards 2014 Winners announced

Dr Kerrie Corcoran will receive \$1000 prize money after winning the People's Choice Award for her submission "Learning Starts Young in Visual Art". Her photo was selected from a selection of works by other state finalists displayed at the National Conference in Sydney.