

A. Secretary's Overview of 2007

The arbitration decision of 12 January 2007 ended the longest running industrial dispute in the history of the teaching workforce in the ACT with 18 months expended between the serving of the log of claims on the employer and the handing down of the decision by Dr Iain Ross SC former Deputy President of the Industrial Relations Commission on salaries and secondary hours of teaching.

An incompetent Treasury advising a secret Review of Government Services, a panic struck government, believing it was heading for "bankruptcy" attempting to cut 145 school based and 90 office based positions, six strikes during 2006, the ambit claim of 39 preschools and schools to close and a 5% cut to CIT funding made 2006 the most difficult year of the ACT education system's history.

Part way through Dr Ross' arbitration hearings it became clear that the ACT's financial circumstances were far better than the figures that the ACT Government had based its slash and burn 2006/2007 Budget on. January saw the Budget deficit halved and by the end of the financial year at 30 June 2007 the projected \$90m deficit had become a \$117m record surplus.

By this time however, schools had experienced their worst start to a school year.

The 2020 school closure program decisions were announced by Government in the last week of the 2006 school year with 22 preschools and schools to close over a three year period. Within the restructuring of the system's infrastructure, new models of schooling were announced with full service preschool to Year 2 schools, P-5 and P-6 schools, a 6-10 secondary school and a 6-12 twin campus school. With these new models, as well as large numbers of school amalgamations and site rationalisations, the work of school leaders and their staff began for 2007 before the year commenced.

Secondary schools began the teaching year having to accommodate the "19th" hour decision of Dr Ross and the Government-imposed staff cut of 5% on secondary schools. For high schools, the loss of 35 positions represented the equivalent level of resources as had been promised as additional in the Stanhope Government's election platform of 2004. For secondary colleges, internal reorganisation of teaching loads saw many staff on five classes – a 12% increase in workload from the 4.5 class standard that had existed for the previous 30 years. The imposition of additional workload by the systemic restructure and resource cuts was to have a massive and ongoing impact on teacher morale throughout the year.

The EBA process incorporating the Arbiter's decisions was finally concluded with an 11.5% increase over 18 months, maintaining ACT teachers' salaries as the highest or second highest in the country. This however, was scant recompense for the 18 month delay between salary increases from July 2005, the personal financial and emotional cost to teachers and the disruption of 2006. The Government's financial incompetence had trashed its reputation as both an economic and educational manager destroying the goodwill of the previous term of office.

While the EBA underwrote a salary claim just short of the 12% sought by the AEU, the Government's decision to axe the employer contribution for PSSA superannuation scheme for new entrants to a 9% base undermined the attractiveness of the ACT public system. The superannuation now on offer is bettered by the private sector and the Commonwealth Public Service, both major competitors for graduates seeking employment.

The teacher shortage, already serious in the ACT secondary sector and for relief teachers, became chronic with schools unable to retain quality staff in many subject areas with few if any replacements available. The shortage of teachers is of course national and international in scope but there is no question that the decisions of the ACT Government in 2006 left the public education system less competitive in the increasing competition for quality staff.

The 2020 announcements do have some positives to weigh against the massive negatives that surrounded the process and some of the specific outcomes. The decision to create a new \$50m P-10 school at Kambah and the P-10 amalgamation at Caroline Chisholm High if properly supported are significant decisions supported in our submissions to Government.

The fair and equitable management of workload for teachers throughout 2007 has been an enormous issue for schools. The EBA has created a vehicle for workplace and systemic resolution of workload issues through workplace committees. However, many schools have struggled to deal with the problems associated with staffing reductions, increased face-to-face teaching, class sizes, teacher shortages, particularly relief teacher. Ensuring fairness and equity in workload distribution remains a significant challenge for us in most workplaces.

Despite the pressures on schools and staff and the massive cuts in the Schools Office, members have worked continuously to provide for student need, the most obvious area where this stands out is the creation of the new P-10 Curriculum Frameworks to be implemented commencing 2008. The AEU has been represented on the Curriculum Taskforce and Consultative Committee while hundreds of members have been engaged in developing and testing the new Essential Learning Achievements. The quality of the Framework and its broad acceptance by the profession is despite the \$2.5m cut in budget funds to support the program. If we are to avoid the hostility and disruption that has occurred in other States over new curriculum it will be because of the professionalism of members and other stakeholders, not through the efforts of Government.

In addition to workload, members raised significant concerns with the AEU office over the issue of student behaviour management and welfare problems exacerbated by the staff cuts in secondary schools and the disruption of the start to the school year.

While the Union office was involved in supporting members dealing reactively in workplaces, the broader issues of lobbying for additional support from Government and the DET were taken up. A Safe Schools Taskforce was established with DET and parent and principal representation while the Union began a process of consultation and research which led to two meetings with the Chief Minister in June and August at which a set of proposals based on enhanced pastoral care and student welfare programs were provided. These programs, along with significant other initiatives on alternative education, ESL, VET and CIT needs were also incorporated into Budget submissions provided to the Government after Council authorisation in September.

These proposals had at their core the need to better support teachers and students following the 2006/2007 Budget cuts. On World Teachers' Day – 26 October 2007 – the Government announced the return for 2008 of the resources cut from the high school sector in the form of an SLC pastoral care co-ordinator and teams of adjunct professionals [social workers, disability workers and community nurses] to support high schools and three alternative programs to be located north, south and central.

The Government's \$14.6m over 4 years was welcomed as an important initiative consistent with AEU proposals and the 2004 election commitment. However, on the promises made in 2004, the high schools were meant to have the resources as additional to the then staffing formula. The ACT Government therefore remains in deficit on several counts as it works towards the 2008 October election. Firstly, nothing has yet been done to replace the 35 classroom teachers cut from high schools or to address the college cut of 25 positions, other educational needs have to be addressed in the 2008/2009 Budget if the Government is to face the electorate with a positive record on education beyond simply the building of new and replacement schools and improving the maintenance backlog which it has done successfully.

At the national level, the AEU and its membership have contributed throughout to two major ongoing campaigns. The AEU's National Public Education Campaign has expended \$1.5m on a media campaign this year. The bulk of the funds [\$1.3m] supported television advertising in marginal seats including Eden-Monaro. The campaign highlights the enormous and growing disparity between the Federal Government's support for private schools and that for public schools.

The need for a Federal Government which supports public education has never been greater and the alienation of the teaching profession towards the Federal Government has been particularly reinforced by the policy positions taken by the Federal Government in the electioneering throughout 2007.

The re-election of the Federal Government will, if it happens, entrench the industrial relations imbalance inherent in the *WorkChoices* legislation ensuring the massive advantages of employers over their workforce. The use of the funding powers of the Federal Government will mean that intervention on political and ideological grounds in the operations of State school systems will become the norm. Nationally imposed curriculum, performance pay systems, reporting and assessment, league tables, public examinations, individual contracts, principal hire and fire are simply those elements that are on the table at the moment.

The Liberal Party's commitment to create an alternate system of vocational education with the Australian Technical Colleges expanded by the Federal Government to over 125 institutions will have a significant destabilising impact on State school and TAFE systems.

The AEU's national and public education campaigning effect was contributed to by ACT Branch members through normal affiliation fees to the Federal Office and by a campaign levy that has become an ongoing feature of our budgeting at \$2 per member nationally.

Our contributions to the national campaign on behalf of workers' rights and in opposition to the *WorkChoices* legislation has also been funded through a levy to the ACTU of union members of \$5.50 per member. This has paid for the television advertisements, public rallies, radio and print media etc that have given the momentum to the ongoing campaign against the industrial relations legislation.

The ACT Branch made a significant contribution once more to UnionsACT of \$10,000 to assist in their campaigning efforts against *WorkChoices* in the ACT and local region.

Obviously the November 24 election outcome will be the determinant of whether or not the campaigns will have been successful and whether we move further into a hostile punitive environment for work, people and public education or into one that is better and more equitably resourced.

The ACT Branch will enter into 2008 well positioned to meet the challenges whatever the outcome of the Federal Election. Membership density is high following the high level of recruitment in 2004, 2005 and 2006 with the recruitment levels of 2007 around 200 new members. This is down because of cuts in positions in schools and the Office as well as a 1% decline in student numbers. It is expected that numbers will increase in 2008 with the opportunity to recruit expanded numbers of high school staff and school support staff.

Staff changes at the AEU office during 2007 have been significant with the retirement of Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] Robin Ballantyne, the departure of long serving Membership Clerk Ros Tovey and the retirement of Finance Clerk Terry Butters. Robin Ballantyne will be honoured with a Life Membership of the AEU at Federal Conference in Sydney in January.

We have welcomed new staff in Michelle Kirby [Membership] and Sue Lai [Finance] with Organiser Cathy Smith taking on the role of Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] from September Council and new Schools Organiser Glenn Fowler joining the Union office from November.

It should also be noted that Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] Penny Gilmour, in addition to being elected unopposed to UnionsACT as Assistant Secretary, has won one of two Australian Trade Union Scholarships to Harvard USA for January/February/March 2008. Penny will have the opportunity to study trade unions not only at Harvard, one of the world's most prestigious institutions but also to have a number of work placements with American unions.

It is pleasing to see that Schools Organiser Bill Book has been reappointed to his position for the next three years and will be able to continue his committed representation of Union members.

Throughout 2007 the Union has met regularly with DET officers, Principals' Associations and special interest groups. However, it is disappointing to see that meetings with the ACT Parents & Citizens Association have not been as frequent as they might have been during the year. It is important during 2008 that this issue is addressed. There have, however, been regular discussions with the Save Our Schools organisation which has been very helpful co-ordinating responses to some Government national and local initiatives.

The AEU has also worked closely with our colleague union the Independent Education Union where there has been a community interest and liaison has included a joint submission on teacher registration and exchange of advice and information on issues such as teacher recruitment, workplace relations and other professional matters.

The AEU office has worked closely with the Federal Officers of the Union with the ACT Branch being represented at Federal Executive meetings, ACTU Congress and the plethora of committees and working parties that make up our national organisation. Significant representation during the year has been undertaken by Executive members, including Vice Presidents Sue French, James Hamilton [TAFE] and of course our President Annamaria Zuffo. Executive itself developed a strategic plan for 2007/08 with the assistance of former Vice President of the ACT Teachers Federation and now Chief Executive of the Australian College of Educators Cheryl O'Connor.

It is particularly important to note too the individual contributions to the work of the ACT Branch during 2007 made by Federal President Pat Byrne, Federal Secretary Susan Hopgood and former Federal Secretary now Industrial Officer Rob Durbridge whose advice and support along with that from ACTU President Sharan Burrow saw the ACT Branch come through the conflicts of 2006 and the beginning of 2007 successfully.

Of course, the work of the ACT Branch is nothing without the support of its general membership and office bearers on Council and in Sub-Branched. These are the people who also lead the contributions from schools campaigning positively for public education throughout the year and who are also responsible for the positive public face of the profession during Public Education Week. Many of our longest serving and hardest working office holders are now retiring as the baby boomers reach that point in their careers.

It is important for me at this stage to note that at the end of May 2008 I will be retiring from the Teaching Service and as a consequence it is appropriate that I will be retiring from the position of Branch Secretary which means this is the last Annual Report for which I will be writing an Overview. Obviously there will be the opportunity much closer to the date for me to record my heartfelt appreciation for the opportunity that I have had to lead the ACT Branch since 1995 and prior to that to work under former President Rosemary Richards from October 1988.

My career as a Union officer has been a wonderful experience for me personally and it has given me the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the needs of individual members, of students, of the profession and public education as a whole. I have had an enormous level of support from the officers and staff of the Union, Executive and Council members, the general membership, friends and associates and, of course, my family.

The opportunity to attend the Education International Conference in Berlin in July 2007 reinforced my strong view that it is because of teacher unionism and public education that much of what is good about Australian society is as it is despite the social, economic and political trends that in the last 20 years have worked to undermine civil society and the public good.

CLIVE HAGGAR

Branch Secretary

B. Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] Report

The last 12 months have continued to be challenging on the industrial front with the focus on finalising new Union Collective Agreements, implementing them once they have been registered, and the campaign against the Federal Coalition Government's unfair industrial laws.

Finally - new Agreements for Schools and CIT

At the end of 2006, CIT members had a new Union Collective Agreement in place, and the first payment under the new deal was in CIT members' pockets. During 2007, implementation of the CIT UCA has been proceeding slowly. The reason for the delay was initially the focus on achieving a settlement in the schools sector, but in more recent times the advent of another restructure at CIT has slowed the process for a second time. Meetings continue to occur and some progress is being made, but there is still quite a deal to do.

Unfortunately the schools sector did not begin the 2007 school year with a new Agreement in place. Following the failure of negotiations and endorsement by schools' members in late October 2006 of a renewed round of strike action, the ACT Government agreed to private arbitration on the non-agreed issues of teaching loads and salary quantum. After 5 days of hearing in the last week of Term 4 2006, the arbiter handed down his decision on 12 January 2007: an increase in secondary teaching loads from 18 hours/week to 19 hours/week, and a salary increase for all schools sector teachers of 11.5% in the 18 month period from December 2006-July 2008 with the agreement expiring on 30 June 2009.

Following the translation of the arbiter's decision into clauses for the new Agreement, and the finalisation of drafting, the proposed *ACT DET Teaching Staff Union Collective Agreement 2007-2009* went to ballot in early March 2007. The Agreement was endorsed in the ballot and it came into effect on 14 March 2007 when it was lodged with the Office of the Employment Advocate [now the Workplace Authority]. Payments under the Agreement began to flow in late March.

The arbiter's decision did not address the issue of the ACT Government's proposed job cuts at all. Once the decision was known, the AEU lobbied the ACT Government not to cut any jobs in the secondary sector but rather to allow the increase in teaching loads and maintenance of teaching staff numbers to provide an opportunity to increase resource support for students in ACT government schools. Sadly, the government did not adopt this position, with the result that positions equivalent to about 25 full-time teachers were cut from colleges and positions equivalent to about 35 full-time teachers were cut from high schools.

The job cuts were a budgetary decision of the ACT Government, and not linked at all to the EBA arbitration or the finalisation of the Agreement. Following the Government's decision, high school and college timetables for 2007 had to be re-jigged to accommodate the loss of staff, and most of the flexibility schools might have previously experienced disappeared with the reduction in teaching positions and bodies. The system has been under enormous pressure at the school level for all of 2007 as teachers try to manage the increase in individual teaching workload and schools attempt to manage the non-teaching workload with fewer bodies among whom the tasks can be spread.

As this Annual Report is being written, the AEU is awaiting the Auditor's Report on the implementation of Section O of the ACT DET Teaching Staff Union Collective Agreement 2007-2009; this is the section of the Agreement that incorporates the arbiter's decision about teaching loads. The AEU hopes that the Auditor's Report will contain some feedback about the effect of the job cuts and increased face-to-face teaching loads in the secondary sector on the broader school life – both non-teaching tasks and extra-curricular activities. In the primary sector the increasing administration load on schools has continued to cause concern, and it is hoped that the Auditor's Report will also deal with this aspect of workload intensification.

A new area of membership coverage and a new Agreement to service

The AEU has picked up a 3rd industrial agreement to service with the advent of joint coverage with the CPSU of non-teaching classifications in schools [except the front office and maintenance staff]. The AEU's membership among preschool assistants, STAs, Library Assistants and other relevant classifications is growing, and our developing knowledge of their conditions of employment will be an important asset in attracting more members to this new sector of the Union.

The Industrial Relations Campaign

Following the introduction of the Federal Government's so-called *WorkChoices* amendments to the Workplace Relations Act in 2006, the ACTU and union movement's fears about the new laws have been confirmed repeatedly as story after story has been told of working people ripped off by unscrupulous employers prepared to use the new laws to the detriment of their workforce. Forced movement onto AWAs that contain reduced pay rates and/or remove conditions, sacking workers and re-employing them on inferior conditions, sacked workers with no right of appeal against their termination ... the list goes on, and the situation is all the more appalling because the employers' actions have been completely legal. Despite the "quick-fix" introduction by the Federal Government of the Fairness Test and some other small changes, the essence of their unfair industrial relations laws has remained and *Work Choices* has continued to allow the worst excesses of employer behaviour to flourish.

In the midst of all the politicking around industrial relations and fairness in the workplace, the ACTU's *Your Rights At Work Campaign* has continued with TV ads, information brochures, a website and meetings around the country. All of the State and Territory Trades & Labour Councils have engaged in the YRAW campaign; in common with other unions the AEU has continued to be prominent in its support of the *Your Rights at Work Campaign*. It is pleasing to note many AEU members wearing YRAW t-shirts or displaying other campaign paraphernalia. As Assistant Secretary of UnionsACT I, and other officers, have had the opportunity to play a part in the broader ACT and region campaign activities on behalf of workers and their families.

The YRAW Campaign is in full force in the lead-up to the forthcoming Federal Election. It is clear that unless there is a change in Federal Government and a more moderate approach to IR, there will continue to be a need for the AEU and its members to continue on the campaign trail.

Other work throughout the year

There have been fewer meetings involving the Industrial Officer this year as focus across the union movement has been on the YRAW Campaign and preparations for the Federal Election; most of the meetings convened by the AEU have had a dual focus with the Rights at Work Campaign being included on Agendas as well as the AEU matters for discussion. These national AEU meetings/discussions continue to be a valuable opportunity to exchange information and strategy, supplemented by a steady flow of information from the Federal Industrial Officer.

Apart from these specific "industrial officer" activities, involvement in the running of the ACT Branch has continued, as has interaction with members through Sub-Branch meetings, Council and in individual contacts. Regular reports to Executive and Council have also continued, along with representation of the AEU in a range of activities with the employer/s and ACT Government.

PENNY GILMOUR

Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial]

C. Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] Report

1. Research and Professional Issues

Submissions

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] was charged by Executive with preparing a major paper on Classroom Management Discussion Paper during May/June. This paper was provided to Executive, then Council, for discussion in Sub-Branches. The Executive then called for a further paper to be written as a formal proposal to Government. This was done during July/August, and the paper *Many ways to learn: supporting the needs of all students in the ACT* was endorsed by Branch Council on 18 August. The recommendations in the Position Paper were taken to a meeting of Jon Stanhope and Andrew Barr the following week.

This year the Union was asked to return to speak with the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education regarding its Inquiry into Restorative Justice. The terms of the Inquiry had been broadened to cover behaviour management in general. The Union did not provide a formal submission to this inquiry but provided informal written input through the Union's Classroom Management discussion paper.

Surveys

At the start of the year, in response to teaching staff cuts in the secondary sector, the ACT Branch surveyed principals in all sectors on the capacity of their schools to comply with the class size guidelines. Results of the survey were presented to Executive and informed the work of the Secretary. We also sent out the Federal AEU's national survey of principals the *State of Our Schools* survey and the national survey of beginning teachers. Local results from these national surveys will be made available to us as returns are analysed. The Union submitted a paper to the inquiry into the establishment of the Emmaus School in Belconnen and, later in the year, a formal Budget submission as part of the community consultation in relation to the 2008-2009 ACT Budget. The Budget submission was informed by Sub-Branch and individual member feedback, particularly after three sector-based meetings focusing on workload.

Committees and Boards

The Union has also been represented on various Departmental committees during 2005:

- Special Education Reference Group
 - Equity and Diversity Committee
 - LA Reference Group
 - Literacy and Numeracy Fund Committee
 - Teaching and Learning Support Committee
 - Curriculum Renewal Taskforce and Consultative Committee
 - Australian Government Quality Teaching Program Reference Group
 - DET/University of Canberra Joint Liaison Committee
 - Government Schools Education Council
 - Teacher Registration Working Party
 - Safe Schools Taskforce
 - ESL Consultative Group
 - Qualifications Committee, ESL Committee, LOTE Committee, Schools Equity Fund, School Sports Council, Scholarships Committee, Board of Senior Secondary Studies.
- [Our thanks to those of our members who have taken on formal representational roles for the Union on these committees.]

The Assistant Secretary [Professional] also sat on the VETA Board until its demise, and the TAFE Organiser sits on the Registration and Accreditation Council, both as nominees of UnionsACT.

National Perspective

Through the national Curriculum and Professional Issues Committee of the AEU and through the Assistant Secretary's role as research officer, we have had input to the work of the Federal AEU research officers' written submissions and papers.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] met with research officers, women's officers and training officers during the "Super week" of AEU Federal meetings in May. *The ACT Teacher* continues to act as a forum for discussion of professional issues, through its *Pedagogy Page* and other ad hoc articles.

The outstanding professional issue this year from ACT members' perspective has been the question of behaviour management. It has been necessary for the officers of the union to take a strong stand to protect the safety of our members' working environments, particularly in the light of decreased staffing in secondary schools. This had led to the writing of papers [see above] and the proposal to Government of measures to address concerns regarding pastoral care, behaviour management and OH&S. In addition, the Union has invested heavily in our own training program related to classroom management [see below].

A-E reporting on student performance has continued to place a strain on members, particularly those in primary settings. We continued to lobby government against comparative reporting at the student, school and system levels.

2. Training Program

The Union continues to expand and refine its training program for members. Attendance has been solid, but with a small number of sessions having to be cancelled. Courses were offered under the areas of *Your Workplace*, *Your Professional Life* and *Your Other Life*. In total around 40 training sessions took place this year.

A number of forums were organised on particular issues or themes:

- A half day OH&S forum, on manual handling with speakers from Workwatch and demonstrations of equipment by members and enterprises.
- A full day New Educators Conference, with Meegan Stuart as the keynote speaker and workshops on the themes of behaviour management, communication with parents/carers, and authentic assessment in primary and secondary.
- During Terms 2 and 3, two classes were delivered in Classroom Management and Instructional Strategies. This outstanding course from WA involves 5 full days of PD and 4 coaching sessions for each participant in their home classroom. The Union invested substantial monies in providing the program and principals also contributed on behalf of their teaching staff. It is hoped that the program can be rolled out to many more teachers through a partnership between the Union, DET and schools.
- Steve Provins continued to provide his popular courses *Writing an Application for Transfer or Promotion* and *Preparing for a Job Interview* through a number of sessions over the year.
- Jane Caro conducted a session on *Promoting the Positives of Public Education* to principals and deputies, following up on her speech at the Public Education Day dinner.
- Separate Superannuation talks were arranged with Jennie Murray for both CSS and PSS members, 5 sessions in all.
- The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] conducted two facilitation sessions for TAFE Council as part of their development of a Strategic Plan and action plan for their work over the next 12 months.
- In response to concerns re workload early in the year, the Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] devised and co-delivered training sessions entitled *Work Smarter Not Harder*, with the Secretary, Peter Kent and Jenny Blackall.
- Biff Ward presented a 2-session course in *Negotiating in the Workplace* for new educators and other teachers.

In addition, New Educators Network meetings have also been held during the year, focusing on a range of issues. Beginning teachers were able to attend these meetings using their allocation of professional learning days as support.

Evaluation of courses and their presenters continues to be very positive, with participants enthusiastic about the value of the training program.

3. Women's Issues

AEU Federal Women's Conference/National TAFE Women's Committee Meeting.

This year a delegation of members attended the Conference with Cathy Smith. Caroline Clancy, Deborah Bultitude, Joanne Burns and Ruth Edge were elected by Executive to accompany Cathy. Deborah Bowman attended the TAFE Women's Committee and the Federal Conference to represent TAFE women.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] continued to pursue matters of interest to women members through the DET's Equity and Diversity Committee and the national AEU Women's Officers' meetings and teleconferences.

4. Indigenous

Our annual Reconciliation Awards were given out at the Public Education Dinner in May. Winners were Robina Jeffs of Latham Primary and Ann Gillett of Charnwood/Dunlop Primary. Daniel Greene and Beth Craddy continued to represent Indigenous members at a national level at Federal Conference and on the ATSIEC body. Efforts to find a TAFE ATSIEC rep have so far proved unsuccessful.

The ACT Teacher continues to have a double page *Indigenous News* article/s in each edition.

5. Special Education and ESL

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] has been a member of the Special Education Reference Group throughout the year. This is a dynamic group with strong community representation. An email list of members interested in Special Education issues was constructed late last year and has been used to allow the Assistant to the Secretary to receive input from members working in the area and bring these issues forward to meetings in DET.

6. Communication

The Executive Officer worked towards the provision of an online membership facility, and a major revamp of the Union's website was achieved through her efforts.

The ACT teacher continued to appear regularly, in full colour and often with expanded page numbers.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] attended the ACTU Media Conference in Melbourne in March; the focus on the Your Rights at Work Campaign leading up to the Federal election.

ROBIN BALLANTYNE

Assistant to the Secretary [Professional]

D. Schools Organisers' Report

Bill Book and Cathy Smith have managed a diverse range of responsibilities in 2007 on behalf of AEU members.

Much of the Organisers' time has been spent on the provision of AEU services to members – advice, advocacy and support to assist in improving working conditions for teachers in ACT public schools. There has been a marked increase in the number of member enquiries this year in regard to workload issues, retirement options and resignation procedures. All likely to be attributed to a combination of issues such as the drawn-out industrial action of 2006, the school closures, the delayed transfer/placement round and the arbiter's decision in January to increase face-to-face hours in secondary. However we continue to hear from members about issues relating to communication with colleagues, Occupational Health and Safety, school leadership/management, leave entitlements, transfers and mobility, and applying for the Teacher Welfare Fund. The Organisers' involvement in member issues ranges from a one-off telephone conversation where advice is provided through to accompanying the member to several meetings with Departmental officers to assist with the resolution of an issue and monitor the process [and the associated work that goes along with such meetings]. Members are sometimes referred onto other services for further support and assistance. These services include:

- Legal advice – Pamela Coward and Associates, Solicitors
- Financial advice – Hillross Financial
- Free, confidential counselling – Davidson Trahaire, provide by the Employee Assistance Program

Members are able to make use of the ACT AEU website [www.aeuact.asn.au] for information on current campaigns, working conditions [via the Certified Agreement], AEU policies, New Educators' page, OH&S page, AEU Training program and other services. A new-look, more user-friendly AEU website was launched on 30 January 2007 at Forrest Primary School.

Recruitment of new AEU members

About 160 teachers and staff of the ACT DET were introduced to the AEU at the DET Induction Program at the beginning of 2007. A similar number were inducted at the mid-year DET Induction in July 2007. Dozens of teachers joined the AEU at these events, met the Organisers and discussed working conditions and expectations for their future career. The AEU recognises the importance of maintaining a high membership density, and recruitment is a significant part of our role particularly as a number of teachers are retiring now and in the next few years.

Early in 2007, the AEU began covering School Services Officers - STAs, Preschool Assistants, Home School Liaison Officers, Youth Workers etc. – any DET employee working directly with students. The AEU came to an agreement with the CPSU [the union which has traditionally covered such members] and is very excited to now be an education-wide union that supports all workers in education. Membership numbers in this SSO group are increasing and will continue to do so as awareness of this new coverage and of our various services increases. The AEU will be putting together a claim in 2008, in consultation with members, for both the Staff Collective Agreement and the Teaching Staff Collective Agreement, ready for negotiating with DET in 2009 when the CAs expire.

We have also increased the membership in the preschool sector as a result of an Organisers campaign to visit every preschool site in the ACT during Term 3. The purpose of these visits was to discuss with teachers and assistants any concerns or issues they had. The major issue arising out of these visits was the government's decision to amalgamate preschools with primary schools. As well as increased membership, these visits resulted in improved activism by preschool members and a better understanding of how AEU members, Organisers and DET officials can work together to build communication across the public education system.

MembersEquity Bank sponsored a series of AEU recruitment competitions throughout 2007. They generously donated 8 x \$50 starter accounts to new members who were drawn out of the hat, 2 per term.

We have met with members around the sub-branches and acknowledge their efforts in recruiting new members on an ongoing basis and for encouraging them to become active participants in the union. These members realise that speaking one-to-one with potential members [casual, contract and permanent] about the benefits of AEU membership is the most effective way of bringing new members on board. High union membership in each workplace is an important way to protect and improve working conditions for all staff within each worksite and is important in maintaining the strength of our union as a whole.

Branch Council has seen a number of new representatives participating in the decision-making processes of our union.

The organisers also met with future teachers currently studying at the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University in order to establish a clearer understanding of the role our union plays in public education. Cathy addressed final year students about the role of our union in supporting members professionally and industrially. Pre-service teachers with duty of care in their final practicum are eligible to join the AEU immediately. For others, it is informative to learn about education unions and services in preparation for the time when they become part of the profession.

Sub-Branch Visits

As well as visiting every preschool at least once this year the Organisers have visited many sub-branches throughout the year, primarily to meet with members about the Certified Agreement [CA], particularly the Workload clauses, as well as significant national education and industrial relations issues. Included in these meetings have been discussions about the impact of the Howard Government's new Industrial Relations laws on teachers and the continuing frustrations the restrictions have generated. Other issues discussed have been Professional Pay, Teacher Registration and the Federal Election.

While strictly speaking Teacher Librarians do not constitute a sub-branch, they have been an effective lobby group for some years. The AEU officers met with the TLs in April to discuss the implications of Section "O" of the CA and the changed definition of face-to-face teaching. It was agreed that Bill would continue to meet with a TL working party to draft new AEU policy in regards the TLs. This policy is a work in progress. There continue to be disturbing stories about the direction some schools are moving in regard to their use of TLs. The lives of specialist teachers are possibly less secure than others in the system as it appears that as budgetary constraints are applied, it is the specialist areas including teacher librarian positions that are regarded by school managers as least affordable or most expendable.

Organisers continue to encourage all members to promote the positive message of *Public Education Works*. This can be in a simple form such as displaying a sign in the workplace, wearing a t-shirt or badge on a regular basis, putting a sticker on your car or speaking proudly of public education at every opportunity. The message of *Public Education Works* is an important one. It is not simply a mantra espoused by a few ideologues. With public school enrolments dropping every year and ACT having the lowest percentage of students attending public schools, it's vital to support public education and it is the role and responsibility of all members to be actively involved in promotional events and activities for public education. The online link for *Public Education Works* merchandise is www.aeuact.asn.au/promoting-public-education

We have also now got the link to AEU merchandise [www.aeuvic.asn.au] where members can purchase a range of shirts, jackets, fleeces, caps and other accoutrements for members interested in enhancing their wardrobes.

National Public Education Day – 17 May 2007

The annual celebration of the public education system and the contribution of students, teachers and parents to their community drew praise and media coverage from all once

again. The number of public performances, venues [Civic and regional shopping centres] and art displays increased this year, with the co-operation and hard work of teachers in various schools. With the support of the events co-ordinators at the Canberra Centre school performance groups performed at 4 different locations in and around the Centre. The Centre's logistical support to assist in the setting up and breaking down of performances and displays ensured the seamless transition from one act to the next. The Canberra Centre has indicated that they are eagerly anticipating Public Education Day celebrations will occur there again next year. They have expressed interest in seeing the period of entertainment extended over a longer time frame but were satisfied with the "tasters" that ran at the Centre at lunchtimes in the week leading up to Public Education Day. The public libraries and hospitals again provided display space for student art works for periods of at least two weeks [the Canberra Hospital] and up to a month [Calvary Hospital]. The talent exhibited drew favourable attention and comment from employees and visitors alike. The schools have also established relations with their regional shopping centres that now happily provide a performance and display venue for choirs and bands giving a community focus to PED. Every year we have seen an increase in the number of schools participating in the celebrations in a number of ways, with some of their bands performing at multiple venues. The Department has taken on more of the responsibility and has contributed additional resources and Public Education Day and week 2008 promises to be even bigger and better. Ensure your school community isn't left out of the program – put **Thursday 29 May 2008** in your calendar now and start planning how you will celebrate.

Committee Work

The Organisers continued to represent AEU members on a number of committees and working parties during the year.

Bill carried on his role as representative on the Occupational Health, Safety and Rehabilitation Advisory Committee [OSHRAC]. One of the principle points of the discussion during the year was the government's response to the rising costs of premiums as a result of the rise in the number of psychological injury claims. Urban Services has managed to reduce such claims, and as such the premiums, by introducing a proactive training program for all employees rather than relying on the train-the-trainer model adopted by other departments. It has meant significant investment resulting in significant returns. The Federal Government's response however was to amend the Comcare Act to redefine illness and disease thereby making it more difficult to prove work-related psychological injury. At the same time the amendments to the Act removed Journey Protection Cover from the responsibility of the employer and shifted that onto the employees. That meant that from April 2007 until November 2007 AEU members were not protected by employer's insurance in the instance of lost time injuries sustained during the travel either to or from work. However, the AEU assumed responsibility for our members' welfare and purchased Journey Protection Cover effective for 12 months from November 2007 to November 2008.

The Department's OHS Committee met each quarter also, in the weeks following the quarterly OHS Northside and Southside Network meetings to discuss issues raised through those meetings and review and develop policies. Among the issues raised by Bill were concerns about the low morale among teachers across the system and the issue of liability of individual teachers working in technology areas without appropriate or adequate training. In each case the issues were taken for further investigation by Shared Services on the instruction of the Department.

The Career Transition Advisory Committee [CTAC] discussed the trialling of transitions officers to move with Year 10 students into their colleges in Year 11. The recommendation from the Transitions Working Party is that such an officer should be appointed to every college with a 50% teaching load. There was also discussion about the Canberra College initiative [T-10 Program] to accept Year 10 students experiencing transition difficulties early into college. The trial will continue in 2008 and may be taken up by other colleges as well. The issue of Careers Advisers under mobility was also discussed as the training provided and qualifications achieved by many teachers who were actively involved in careers advising when they undertook training more often than not are no longer involved in careers counselling.

The P-2 Reference Group met to develop the P-2 Framework and Bill Book represented the AEU on that working party. The four P-2 schools proposed for the ACT will see a combination of community services [health care, child care, parenting classes, counselling services] and early childhood education. The Co-op School is the nearest existing model but the concept has been refined substantially and looks an interesting and progressive model. The framework was released by the Minister in August/September 2007 and the recommendations will be implemented from the beginning of 2009.

Both Bill Book and Cathy Smith represented members on the DET Relocation groups to ensure that the process was managed effectively and fairly [Bill on the Manning Clark Office group and Cathy on the Stirling group].

Cathy Smith and Robin Ballantyne spoke to representatives of a Legislative Assembly inquiry into Restorative Practices in June.

Professional Development

Cathy and Bill attended a number of professional development courses and AEU officer meetings this year in order to assist them in their role as Organisers. Cathy attended the ACTU Organisers Conference [Sydney], the AEU Welfare/Services meeting [Adelaide] and the AEU Federal Women's Conference [Melbourne]. Bill attended the ACTU Workers' Compensation Seminar [Brisbane] with representatives of unions from across Australia.

Both Schools' Organisers shared tasks of the Assistant to the Secretary [Professional], position [for Robin Ballantyne] in an acting capacity for a period of 4 weeks.

Member Training

Bill co-ordinated a half day workshop on Manual Handling Issues for OHS representatives, deputy representatives and others at the request of the reps. There was also a small "trade expo" at which Southern Shop and Office demonstrated a few pieces of equipment to assist people to a better appreciation of some manual handling aids available. The forum was also enlightened by a valuable contribution on people lifting and moving by member from Black Mountain School, Gendy Mitchell.

Cathy and Robin Ballantyne organised the highly successful New Educators Conference which included workshops on Classroom Management, managing workload and a "meet the principals" session. New educators and more experienced teachers have participated in the full course of Classroom Management and Instructional Strategies with coach Meegan Stuart. The AEU has sponsored 2 CMIS courses in 2007, with participants indicating they have improved their classroom management and co-operative learning strategies.

BILL BOOK AND CATHY SMITH

Schools Organisers

E. TAFE/VET Organiser's Report

Training Environment

If members were unconvinced about the impact of market philosophy and the privatisation of public utilities, the year 2007 would have them converted. The impact of increased Federal Government funding to private providers [RTO's, Schools, Australian Technical Colleges etc] serves to demonstrate the continuing undermining of public education and training.

CIT and College teachers in the ACT were amongst the hardest hit in 2007 with both sectors experiencing continued cuts to public funding. Added to this is the push by CIT management for increased external funding; through increased commercialisation and "user pays", on going increases in student fees, increased competition with private RTO's for local training opportunities. Member concerns about this new environment frequently hinge on the value placed by funding bodies on the concepts of "life long learning" and the personal development, through holistic education, of our students, our youth and the community at large, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

CIT Union Collective Agreement for Teaching staff 2006-2009 [UCA]

The past year saw the operation of the first year under the new "WorkChoices" flavoured Collective Agreement which lacks "prohibited content" [including all references to Union participation in work place negotiations] as described in the WorkChoices legislation. Late in 2007, the ACT Government will sign off on a "Deed" which will fortuitously address some matters not covered within the UCA. Unfortunately, CIT has been somewhat slow in opening up the discussions around implementation and agreement of outstanding matters in the UCA [including OH&S issues, Class Sizes, Nominal hour issues etc]. Discussions are now in progress to address these issues.

CIT Restructure [for Implementation in 2008]

This second CIT restructure within 12 months is principally a reorganisation of the management structure of the Institute; characterised by elimination of the Faculty structure in favour of industry based Centres, with a Board of Management constituted by SES Executive positions and the resultant loss of Dean and Deputy Dean positions at CIT. The AEU is concerned at the potential loss of teacher-based management positions on the BOM the CIT and will keep a watching brief on the upsurge in focus on commercialisation within CIT to ensure that teacher conditions, education quality and student focus are not casualties in this restructure. The full AEU response to the restructure proposal, listing member concerns and recommendations, is on the AEU website [www.aeuact.asn.au].

Of course, some of the wording of the current UCA and the composition of CIT Boards, Committees, Working Groups etc will necessarily change in keeping with the new structure, new roles and positions.

While the CIT CEO suggests that the impact of the restructure on Band 1 teaching staff at CIT will be minimal, there is concern expressed by members who have experienced several previous restructures and who note that none of these restructures have delivered other than increased workload. Weston campus members will be impacted significantly by the closure of that campus envisaged for 2010 and the transfer to Bruce of the staff and students.

Outstanding Working Parties from the 2003-5 EBA

Casual / Temporary Employment & Streamlining Working Party

This group has ceased to meet in 2007 but CIT has agreed to reinstate the Casual Trigger from Semester 1 2008 while the Contract Streamlining arrangements have continuously operated throughout 2007 and will continue into 2008.

Teacher Time and Workload Working Group

It is anticipated that this Working Party will be ongoing into 2008. In June 2007 the Working Group published the results of Trials and Case Studies undertaken over the preceding 18 months. Unfortunately, few applicable and insightful results could be gleaned from the trial results as the CIT restructure imposed in early 2007 impacted the operation of the trials,

inhibiting the establishment of potential work trials aimed at flexible and innovative approaches to work.

The Working Party will reconvene in early 2008 to identify an alternative approach to measuring teacher workload, aiming to ensure maintenance of appropriate work/life balance for staff whilst the second restructure in 2007/8 is becoming established.

Promotions Positions Review Working Party

The second restructure of 2007-2008 has the potential for throwing up some challenges including alteration of the roles of Band 1-4 teachers and the AEU is keen to hear from members who may be impacted in such a manner by the restructure. The Promotions Positions Review Working Party will meet in 2008 to negotiate any role changes occurring in the teacher positions at CIT. In 2007, the AST Selection Criteria Review was completed by the Working Party and agreement has been reached by the CIT and AEU as to the Selection Criteria for AST. It only remains for negotiation and agreement on the actual application and selection processes for AST teachers.

Professional Development Fund Committee [PDFC]

The CIT allocation of Fellowships, CIT Strategic and Initiative funds, for access by teaching staff, was significantly reduced in 2007 from previous years. The AEU seeks to ensure that teacher PD opportunities are promoted and resourced adequately to ensure that teachers remain current leaders in their fields and disciplines.

Public Education Day

Public Education Week was once again launched at CIT Reid on 14 May 2007. The TAFE Secretary, Pat Forward, gave the address and the Minister for Education, Andrew Barr, also spoke to the audience of more than 1000. The events were well organised, creating a happy and festive atmosphere while many Faculties and Departments were represented in the displays throughout the green. Many thanks to Sally Holdsworth and her team in the Events Management crew at Reid and also to Stuart Walsh for his excellent role as compare on the day.

AEU TAFE Strategic Planning Day

Robin Ballantyne, [AEU Assistant to the Secretary, Professional who sadly retired in August] facilitated two Strategic Planning workshops in 2007 which were well attended by TAFE Council and interested members. High priority concerns of members included:

- deterioration in services, resourcing and facilities
- reduction in teaching delivery hours [impacts on teachers and students]
- administrivia and workload implications
- management concerns [eg Super-Departments].

Many other concerns were raised but those members present listed these concerns as top priority.

Strategies to deal with these issues were discussed and members were empowered to take active roles to ensure that their concerns were presented to the appropriate individuals and bodies within CIT. One strategy to evolve from the discussions was the need to reorganise the AEU Sub-Branch structure around "communities of interest". The Organiser and TAFE Vice President attended several work place meetings to engage members of Faculties, which were previously unrepresented in geographically based Sub Branch meetings, to ascertain the level of interest in establishing such new Sub Branch structures. The AEU recognises that the new CIT "Centres" are themselves communities of interest and these will most likely form the basis of the new AEU Sub-Branch structure in 2008.

The AEU seeks input from members and active member participation in establishing constructive dialogue between members and the new Centre Directors early in 2008 and ongoing. The AEU seeks to encourage consultation and negotiation to ensure that the Centres have every opportunity to succeed in their educational and commercial goals while not compromising educational goals and teacher work/life balance during the establishment of

the Centre structures which are subject to the modified ideology of current ACT Government and reflected in the management of CIT.

The Federal election gives people the opportunity to have their say if they believe that the erosion of public education and training which has taken place over the last decade is desirable for the Australian community. Next year's ACT Government election is time for feedback to the current ACT Government about these concerns on the local level. Members, please use your votes wisely.

Vocational Training and Education in Schools [VETiS]

The loss of 25 teachers from ACT colleges in 2007 has impacted heavily on teacher workloads in colleges, resulting in the departure of experienced teachers from the VETiS sector due to the issues around sustainability of workloads. Teachers in the VETiS sector were canvassed by the AEU during 2007 to ascertain the impacts of the ACT Government funding cuts, and consequent staffing cuts, on the college system and the comprehensive results of this survey are presented on the AEU website. A paper on VETiS needs was presented to the Chief Minister in August and in a Budget submission in September.

The major issues raised by members are frequently related to the increasingly unsustainable workloads associated with additional VET administration, workplace visits, student counselling, additional curriculum and assessment tasks, lack of adequate funding to support VETiS and many more matters. Recommended solutions to these issues include the establishment of a single RTO for colleges [to minimise administration duplication], administration assistance for coordinators and teachers, more manageable and equitable teaching loads, appropriate PD offerings and support, alignment of BSSS and VET assessment requirements etc. The AEU seeks ongoing input from teachers in the VETiS sector to identify issues and potential solutions to these problems.

Despite repeated approaches by the AEU to DET and to the Minister for Education, and despite the efforts of members and concerned individuals to raise these matters in the public arena, little movement to address these college specific issues has been forthcoming from the ACT Government at the time of writing. The AEU encourages members to keep the pressure on the Government to "listen to" and address VETiS member concerns.

MIKE FITZGERALD
CIT/VETiS Organiser

F: Working with UnionsACT: Trades & Labour Council Report

The AEU - ACT Branch has continued to maintain a strong presence within UnionsACT during 2007.

The AEU was entitled to 12 delegates to UnionsACT for 2007, and we filled all delegate positions, as well as maintaining 10 Alternate Delegates. Attendance at the meetings has been regular, with our delegates & alternate delegates rostered to attend the quarterly meetings to ensure that the AEU presence is consistent. The full ACT delegation continues to attend the UnionsACT AGM which is held on the first Wednesday of November. The ongoing commitment of the ACT Branch representatives to attendance at the meetings is commendable. The UnionsACT Executive continues to meet monthly, managing the affairs of UnionsACT between Council Meetings.

Your Rights at Work continues to be the major focus of UnionsACT activities, and it has been great to see the AEU's banner held high in the protests and other gatherings organised by UnionsACT in support of an Australia which respects the right to fair treatment at work. The AEU has continued to be prominent in its support of the *Your Rights at Work* Campaign, and it is pleasing to note many AEU members wearing YRAW t-shirts or displaying other campaign paraphernalia. The campaign has moved up a gear in 2007 in the lead-up to the Federal Election, and the AEU has been engaged with the rest of the community in making YRAW a focus of this election campaign.

This year has seen a significant change at UnionsACT. Kim Sattler was elected as Secretary for a 4-year term at the 2006 AGM, and has spent her first year in the position working hard on the YRAW Campaign and UnionsACT's participation in it. The temporary Campaign Co-ordinator position has been replaced with a substantive position of Industrial Officer which has had a role in co-ordinating the ACT's contribution to the ACTU's *Your Rights At Work* Campaign, but also works on other industrial issues as directed by the Secretary.

Over the last year, UnionsACT has made some major decisions to position it well for the future. The first major decision was to sell the UnionsACT property at Dickson and to relocate to premises that better meet the needs of UnionsACT in the future. The sale of Woolley Street was finalised on 28 September, and UnionsACT is now a tenant for 6 months in its old premises, with an option to lease month-by-month once the six-month lease expires. Much time and effort has been expended seeking a new home for UnionsACT; it has been difficult to find suitable property in the very tight ACT market, and members of the Property Trust have viewed a number of sites without settling on any as yet. In terms of the future, UnionsACT is likely to invest in a commercial development on Civic which should provide a substantial revenue stream into the future. It is expected that all of these moves will be finalised over the next 12 months, so the 2008 UnionsACT report will again provide an account of UnionsACT as an organisation positioning itself for a long-term future.

Assistant Secretary [Industrial] Penny Gilmour has continued the work of co-ordinating the Branch delegation, and of representing the Branch on the UnionsACT Executive, a role that has been juggled with her responsibilities as Honorary Assistant Secretary of UnionsACT.

The AEU – ACT Branch is proud to continue to play its part in supporting the on-going activities of the ACT's peak union body.

PENNY GILMOUR
Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial]