

A. Secretary's Overview of 2008

This year has been one of major change in the AEU – ACT Branch. While the Branch has not been involved in a major campaign over the last 12 months, there have continued to be issues arising from the 2007 Union Collective Agreement [UCA] settlement to address. In addition to workload and the implementation of the UCA, members continue to raise significant concerns with the AEU office about issues of student behaviour management and welfare problems for both students and staff. Despite the high quality of teachers in our system, the job is continuing to become more complex and difficult, with consequent increased pressure on attraction and retention of staff.

The implementation of Section O of the UCA has continued to cause some issues, but data from the audits confirms system compliance with the requirements.

Preparation for the next salaries and working conditions claim has been a dominant task this year. In Term 1 the AEU began consultation with members about mobility policy, and the changes to the current policy steered through the Mobility Committee have been endorsed by the Council after lengthy consultation with the membership. The changed policy will form part of the UCA claim.

The ACT Branch has continued to engage with the issue of professional pay for teachers, and submitted a proposal to DET as part of that consultation process. No outcome has been reached, but the Branch UCA claim contains a serious attempt to introduce such measures. Similarly, the debate within the ACT about teacher registration has seen the AEU engage and make submissions on this matter. No outcome has been announced on this issue by the ACT Government, but the AEU continues to press for the creation of a credible registration process for the Territory, and has asserted that this should be a priority for implementation ahead of the School Standards Authority proposal circulated for comment during the year.

Following a membership survey to identify major issues and themes, October Branch Council endorsed a draft UCA claim for debate among the Sub-Branches. It is a comprehensive claim, addressing issues of workload and resourcing in the system as well as the perennial matter of salary quantum. It is expected that the claim will be finalised by November Council and served on the employer in early 2009.

Staffing continues to be a pressure point in the system. The number of applicants to the ACT public education system has declined over the last few years, suggesting that it no longer ranks as highly for prospective job applicants as it has in the past. This may be explained by the current salaries gap between the ACT and our nearest competitor NSW, and also by the uncertainty caused by school closures the current round of which will finally come to an end at the end of 2007. Added to the declining number of applicants, the system has experienced pockets of acute shortage in some subject areas, and of general difficulty in the supply of relief teachers. This teacher shortage, already serious during 2007 in the ACT secondary sector and for relief teachers, is now chronic with schools unable to retain quality staff in many subject areas and few if any replacements available. Particular areas of shortage remain in school counselling and the AEU is working with members and DET to address this issue. Teacher-Librarians and some LOTE teachers are also in short supply. The shortage of teachers is of course national and international in scope but there is no question that the current disposition of the ACT Government public education system means it is less competitive in the increasing competition for quality staff.

The AEU has continued in 2008 to undertake significant joint work with DET and other system stakeholders. The new Leadership Framework is an example of the quality of collaboration in the best interests of the system. It will provide for teachers at all levels an indication of the qualities and attributes sought at promotion levels, and should be a valuable tool for self-reflection and planning personal development to achieve the goal of promotion. The fundamental shift in the Framework is a move to describing SLA, SLB and SLC positions in terms of Capabilities. Principal [SLA] selection has been undertaken using Capabilities for some years now, and it has always been intended to flow them downwards. Training for

panels selecting using Capabilities is expected to commence during Term 4 2008, with training for prospective applicants in writing to Capabilities anticipated for Term 1 2009.

The AEU has also worked with DET to shape the new SLC positions attached to the Quality Teaching Program. Once the Implementation Team had developed the general disposition and role of the positions, the industrial aspects of transparent appointments processes were finalised and the positions are currently being filled.

The AEU continues to be represented on the planning groups for new schools – Kingsford Smith P-10 School in West Belconnen opens in 2009, and the planning for the new Gungahlin College is well-advanced. Planning has recently commenced for the Tuggeranong P-10 School, due to open in 2011. The AEU has taken a role in the planning of all of these sites, and will continue to do so.

The relationship between the AEU and CIT continues to experience difficult moments, none more so than the dispute which arose from the latest CIT restructure which remains partially unresolved more than 5 months since the conflict came to a head. The negotiation of resolution to most aspects of the dispute was a successful – if tortuous – venture, but in the way of some disputes there remains a single outstanding issue that the parties have been unable to agree. The AEU's lobbying for a political solution to the impasse was interrupted by the ACT Elections; it is expected to resume once the new Assembly has been formed and there is a Minister with whom to prosecute our case.

Despite these occasional difficulties, the AEU has also had a range of productive outcomes with CIT this year, and continues to seek common ground on issues of mutual interest. The changes at CIT and increasing pressure on the VET sector seem to have breathed renewed life into TAFE membership, resulting in some excellent lobbying activities with Federal colleagues, as well as a somewhat revitalised TAFE Council. At the time of writing the Federal Government's VET Agenda as being proposed through COAG is causing deep concern about the future of public VET provision, and the AEU has taken every opportunity to raise its concerns both locally and in the national arena on this matter.

The 2008 ACT Election campaign saw the AEU Council again determine a list of Election Priorities and prosecute these with the major parties and some of the minor groups. Invitations to address AEU Council in August were accepted by representatives of Labor, Liberal, Greens, Community Alliance, Pangallo Independents, and Richard Mulcahy Canberra Party. For the most part the addresses did not provide much more detail than was known at that time, but post-Council saw the start of the release of policies and programs. At the time of writing the final outcome looks to be an Assembly composed of Labor, Liberal and Greens members, but it is unknown which party the Greens will support to form minority Government for the Territory. Once the Government is known, the AEU will resume its lobbying effort to bring the needs of public education to the attention of Government. The AEU provided policy documents for members when parties released these, and prior to the election policies of the 6 groups who had addressed the Council were lodged on the AEU's website for member information. It is important to note that the AEU is not affiliated with any political party at national or ACT level, and does not donate to any political party at national or ACT level.

The ACT Branch has continued to support AEU Federal Campaigns, both through the normal affiliation fees and through the special levy of \$2 per member. The Federal Office has made significant efforts to lobby Prime Minister Rudd and Deputy Prime Minister Gillard about the Federal Government's education agenda, especially the decision to maintain the current iniquitous funding arrangements through another quadrennial period. The AEU commissioned national research into the outcomes and projections for federal contributions to public education over the last decade, and achieved positive and widespread media coverage of the disturbing evidence of continuing decline in support for public education provided in Professor Jim McMorrow's report. The Federal Office also commissioned research into the state of infrastructure across the nation – again a disturbing picture of lack of maintenance funding for public school facilities which achieved a measure of media interest. The AEU has undertaken lobbying exercises with Federal parliamentarians around the national campaign issues for both schools and TAFE, and the ACT Branch has been a willing participant in both activities.

In mid-October the AEU launched a new federal campaign website, www.forourfuture.org.au, as a vehicle to lobby Federal politicians about the funding issue. The website launch has been supported by a series of campaign ads, media reports and by visits to politicians. The site features an easy method for AEU members to send a letter to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and local politicians about the issues that matter, and the ACT Branch has been encouraging our members to participate in this action.

The ACT Branch has hosted a number of international delegations over the last year, including groups of education department and teacher union officials from countries as diverse as China and South Africa. It has been interesting on each occasion to hear very different perspectives on the development of quality systems and excellent teachers, and to share aspects of the ACT experience with our international colleagues.

The ACT Branch has continued to maintain productive relationships with other stakeholders in public education. The ACT Public Education Alliance [ACTPEA] was inaugurated in Term 1 2008, and has met sporadically during the year. While the start has been slow, ACTPEA may yet provide a useful vehicle for campaigns on which the ACT Public Education Community wishes to focus. The ACT P&C Federation office-bearers have changed again this year, and with the flux in that organisation there have not been as many discussions as might have been expected. However, there are very cordial relations between the AEU and the major parent organisation, and the AEU intends to ensure these are nurtured as we move into a UCA campaign year. We have maintained a good relationship with Save Our Schools, and have certainly benefited from access to some of SOS' research efforts. Apart from these groups, the AEU maintains close contact with the Independent Education Union when we have matters of mutual interest, and has continued to exchange advice and information on various aspects of system organisation across both public and private sectors.

The last 12 months have also seen major changes in the AEU office.

The retirement of former Branch Secretary Clive Haggart on 30 May 2008 brought to an end his long period of service to AEU members as a union official. Clive served both the ACT Teachers Federation and the AEU – ACT Branch over a period of twenty years, and his contribution was marked with a series of events prior to his departure. It is most fitting that Clive's formal farewell took place at the Public Education Day Dinner, an event that he was always proud to have instigated. Since his retirement, Clive has developed a keen interest in exploring the options of life post-work!

Clive's retirement precipitated a number of other Officer changes in the Branch. I was elected to replace Clive as Branch Secretary for the remainder of the 2 year period which expires on 31 December 2008. Peter Malone was appointed to the vacancy of Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial], a welcome return to the AEU office which he left in 2002 to take up the Secretary's role at UnionsACT, and then as UnionsNSW Marginal Seat Co-ordinator for Eden-Monaro in the *Your Rights At Work* Campaign. Peter returned to the AEU at the beginning of 2008 in a temporary capacity, acting as Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] when I was absent on study leave with the Harvard Trade Union Program. Upon my return, Peter remained on board as a project officer, concentrating on the issues of the reviewing mobility policy and developing the Branch position on professional pay/teacher standards. His re-appointment to the substantive position of Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] ensures that the Branch has an experienced and committed Officer in this role as we move into the next EBA round.

Glenn Fowler has just been re-appointed as a Schools Organiser until Term 1 2012, and this is a welcome development. Glenn is coming to the end of 12 months in the Schools Organiser role, and in that time has shown himself to be enthusiastic, committed and competent. Along with Bill Book and Mike Fitzgerald, the members are well-served by our organising team. Cathy Smith continues as Assistant to the Secretary [Professional], a role that provides essential support to the work of the Branch and the members. In 2008 there has been a particular demand on the role for production of submissions, and the AEU has continued to produce high-quality work in this regard.

On the administrative side of the office, there have been milestones and changes in 2008. Finance Officer Sue Lai left the AEU after only a brief stay due to changes in her personal circumstances. Joelle Dulac took up the Finance Officer's role in January 2008 and has now been through almost one complete cycle of the AEU year. Michelle Kirby has continued in the Membership Clerk role, and Janet Anderson continues her work as Receptionist/Admin Officer. Janet was the well-deserved recipient of the 2008 Public Education Award, presented in recognition of her continuing contribution to the AEU over 25 years of service. Sue Billington remains the Executive Officer/Office Manager, and the longest-serving member of the team. Members are very fortunate to have such experience and commitment in the office to ensure the administration of the Branch continues to be top-notch.

This is my first Annual Report as Secretary, and I would like to place on record my gratitude for the confidence shown by Council in electing me to the Branch Secretary's position, and my appreciation of the help and support I have received from AEU officers, staff, Executive, Council and membership as I have settled into this new role. Finally, I acknowledge the support and guidance of Clive Haggard, who has left large shoes to fill but encouraged me to re-size them to suit my feet!

PENNY GILMOUR
Branch Secretary

B. Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] Report

The last 12 months has seen the political landscape of Australia change dramatically: a Federal Labor Government, a minority Labor Government in the Northern Territory and the ACT and a minority Liberal Government in WA.

Within that context the following report details the key industrial activities undertaken in 2008.

YRAW Campaign – New Federal Government

In the wake of the Federal Election outcome, which saw not only the Liberal Party lose government but also the sitting Prime Minister lose his seat, the AEU has continued to support the *Your Rights At Work* Campaign.

The changes to the *WorkChoices* legislation put forward by the ALP Government do not by any means address all the key concerns of the union movement. Hence, the YRAW campaign has continued and every effort has been made to persuade the ALP to honour in full its election commitment to restore fairness and justice to the workers of Australia.

Sadly, the education policies now touted by the Federal Government are nothing short of a betrayal of the teaching profession. The ACT Branch, together with our colleagues across the nation, have sought to convince the parliamentary representatives of the need to substantially increase investment in public education and to reject simplistic, market-driven ideology that undermines the ability of teachers to deliver quality outcomes for their students.

New Industrial Claim for TAFE and School Sectors

As the TAFE and School Sector Union Collective Agreements expire in March and June 2009 respectively, Branch Council has been actively debating the priority issues for the next industrial agreement.

As part of that process the following activities occurred:

- An e-survey of TAFE members on industrial priorities;
- An e-survey of School sector members on industrial priorities;
- An e-survey of School sector members on mobility;
- A committee of 34 school members developed an alternative mobility policy;
- A new industrial claim was developed based on the survey results and member feedback.

The final new industrial claim for both TAFE and School sectors was tabled at the November Council meeting for endorsement.

School Support Officers

During 2008 the AEU – ACT Branch, under an agreement with the CPSU, continued to be formally able to recruit new members from the ranks of the School Support Officers such as STAs, SLAs, Preschool Assistants etc.

The SSO Union Collective Agreement does not expire until 31 March 2010. However, the Union has begun to discuss with SSO members the areas of concern for them and to develop effective means of involving these vital educational support staff in the activities and decision making processes of the Union.

Committees

During 2008 the following committees were attended, usually on a quarterly basis: CEO Consultation [DET], Director Deputation [CIT], Promotion Review Working Group [CIT], UCA Implementation Working Group [DET], DET Staffing Meetings.

Schools Standard Authority

The AEU promoted the establishment of a Teacher's Professional Board. The creation of such a body was unanimously endorsed by all participants on a committee created by the ACT Government to provide it expert advice.

Unfortunately the ACT Government's response was to put forward an entirely different concept: A School Standard's Authority. This Authority could potentially embrace a range of functions including assessment, evaluation, independent and home based schooling registration with teacher registration, with just one minor role within the broader Authority.

The AEU rejected this new model and no decision on a final position was made by the Government prior to the ACT election in October 2008.

PETER MALONE
Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial]

C. Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] Report

1. Research and Professional Issues

Submissions

The following written submissions were prepared during the year:

1. Addendum 2008/2009 Budget Submission to the ACT Government [to supplement the main 08/09 Budget Submission sent in November 2007] on Supporting Students with Special Needs.
2. Submission to the 2009/2010 Budget consultation process.
3. Submission to DET on Increasing Young People's Engagement in Education, Training and Work [School Leaving Age].
4. Submission to DET on a Schools Standards Authority.
5. Submission to the DET policy review re Gifted and Talented Students.
6. Submission to the DET policy review re Curriculum Requirements in ACT Public Schools, Preschool to Year 10.
7. Submission to DEEWR on The Future of Schooling in Australia Report.
8. Submission to DEEWR on the Draft National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.

Surveys

The ACT Branch conducted surveys on Mobility; Casual Relief Provision; the CIT and Schools Sector UCA claim [key issues for members]. The Branch also sent out the Federal AEU's national survey of principals, the *State of Our Schools* survey, and the *National AEU Survey of Beginning Teachers*. Local results from these national surveys will be made available to us as returns are analysed.

Committees and Boards

The Union has also been represented on various Departmental committees during 2008:

- Special Education Reference Group
- Equity and Diversity Consultative Committee
- LA Reference Group
- ESL Consultative Group and ESL Committee
- Teaching and Learning Support Committee
- Professional Learning Fund Committees
- Curriculum Taskforce
- Safe Schools Taskforce
- Australian Government Quality Teaching Program Reference Group
- Quality Teaching Model Implementation Committee
- School Improvement Framework Review Reference Group
- School Leadership Framework Consultation
- DET/University of Canberra Teacher Education Advisory Committee
- Government Schools Education Council
- Board of Senior Secondary Studies.
- Qualifications Committee, Teacher Scholarships Committee, ESL Committee, LOTE Committee, Schools Equity Fund.
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The TAFE Organiser sits on the Accreditation and Registration Council as a nominee of UnionsACT [TAFE Vice President is the Alternate].

Our thanks to those members who have taken on formal representational roles for the Union on these committees. [There was no AEU representative on the School Sports Council for 2008.]

National Perspective

At the national level, Senior Officers have been involved in the National Schools Network and attended consultations with DEEWR officials on the National Secondary Schools Computer Scheme; and Teacher Education. The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] met with AEU Women's Officers during the year but was unable to attend the Research Officers meeting in

Melbourne as it fell at the same time the ACT 2008/2009 Budget was announced. 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 such as the *Draft National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* and the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*. The *ACT Teacher* continues to act as a forum for discussion of professional issues, particularly through its Pedagogy Page.

2. Training Program

The Union continues to refine its training program for members. Attendance has been solid overall however one or two sessions went ahead with only a few participants [due to some participants not notifying the AEU office of their inability to attend]. A couple of sessions were cancelled due to lack of numbers.

This year our Professional Development courses were offered under the areas of *Your Workplace*, *Your Professional and Career* and *Your Other Life*.

In the last few years the AEU's sessions focusing on workplace issues have not been well attended but this year members attended such training in good numbers. These included *Running Meetings Effectively*; *Skills for Resolving Workplace Issues*; *Understanding My Workplace Rights* [for teachers]; and *My Rights and Conditions at Work* [for our new School Services Officer members]. All of these sessions were presented by AEU Organisers Bill Book and Glenn Fowler. We offered *Managing Your Workload*, a workshop where participants shared their strategies for dealing with workload issues and achieving a work-life balance. The AEU also arranged *Negotiation Skills* and *Managing Change: How to Take People with You*, both presented by Biff Ward. Cheryl O'Connor, President, Australian College of Educators, presented two separate courses entitled *Dealing with Difficult People* [one for teachers and support staff and another for school leaders].

We once again held an *OH&S Forum*; the theme this year was dealing with workplace bullying. Presenters were from Workwatch, the ACT Human Rights Commission and the AFP.

The bi-ennial *New Educators Conference: Meeting the Needs of All Students* was held in April. There were workshops on classroom management, cooperative learning techniques, assessment for learning and learning by design. The Conference is complemented by a half-day seminar in alternate years.

The AEU and school principals continue to support the excellent *Classroom Management and Instructional Strategies* course presented by Meegan Stuart. We have lobbied the ACT Government to fund this popular and practical course. All those who complete the course are full of praise and it is a model which we will continue in 2009.

The AEU once again ran the course for women members on assertiveness and confidence, *Speaking up with Style* presented by Biff Ward. This course was run twice in 2008.

In collaboration with the School Counsellor Sub-Branch, the AEU arranged an *Information Session about Becoming a School Counsellor* for interested Union members, DET employees and parents. This was one way to promote the important and rewarding role of the school counsellors and provide information on further study, scholarships and employment options.

We once again offered repeat sessions of *Writing an Application for Promotion and Transfer* and *Preparing for a Job Interview*, presented by Steve Provins. Each of these sessions, held once per term, was appreciated by members.

All members were invited to attend a *Public Education Forum* held at the National Press Club. As well as the launch of the ACT Public Education Alliance, there were 3 key note speakers - Trevor Cobbold [who spoke about the need to address equity]; Jane Caro [spoke about the funding of public education] and Michael Hall [new ways of meeting the needs of students]. About 80 people attended the forum and the response was very positive.

Whilst in Canberra for the forum, Jane Caro, a media and advertising expert and supporter of public education, presented *Promoting the Positives of Public Education* to a group of school leaders and parent representatives. This session resulted in the ACT Department of Education inviting Jane back to Canberra to present her workshop to another group of ACT public school leaders.

On a personal development front, *Retirement Planning Sessions* from Jenn Murray of State Super Financial Services were very well attended. The AEU also offered a session on *Better Banking, Better Super*, presented by Jenn Murray and Simon Milner [Members Equity Bank].

Evaluation of courses and their presenters continues to be very positive, with participants enthusiastic about the value of the training program. Next year we intend to build on the success of the issues-based/membership group-based forums. We will run another OH&S Forum, a Beginning Teacher event early in the year and, if no Government funding is forthcoming, we'll continue to support our classroom management course. The AEU will again offer something for those considering career promotion through the system, retirement planning and something for women members.

3. Women's Issues

Training/Events for Women Members

The Union continues to offer specific training for women members. This year *Speaking Up with Style* was offered twice, due to its popularity. However, other events for women members were offered but not taken up, such as the International Women's Day Pamela Denoon lecture at the ANU and a Women's Network meeting. A group of educators, including the Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] is planning an IWD event in 2008.

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

This year the delegation of members attended the Conference with Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] included Sascha Colley, Robyn Craig, Jenny Hanson and Janet Harris. Janet also attended the TAFE Women's Committee meeting prior to the Women's Conference.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] continues 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 Matters

Our annual Reconciliation Awards were given out at the Public Education Dinner in May. Winners were: Ainslie School under the leadership of Jo Padgam, and Richardson Primary, with particular mention for Kristy Grady, Melonie Lloyd, Natalie Rose and Fiona Stevenson.

Daniel Greene and Beth Craddy continued to represent Indigenous members at a national level at Federal Conference and on the ATSIEC body, with Beth also attending a conference in New Zealand. The TAFE ATSIEC Rep has not been filled in 2008.

Cara Shipp, Vicki Lucas and Beth Craddy will be ACT AEU representatives at the *World Indigenous Peoples Conference in Education* and the *Education International Seminar* in Melbourne, 6-11 December 2008.

The ACT Teacher continues to have a double page Indigenous News 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 an articulate group of people who advocate for students with special needs, including those with autism, hearing impaired and disabilities.

The AEU provided a submission to the ACT Government in February this year making a range of recommendations such as a review of the Student Centred Appraisal of Need process and increased resources for special needs students. The ACT Government announced in August that it will initiate a Special Education Review.

The Union is represented on DET's ESL Committee by Elizabeth Salamon from Florey Primary School and the Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] is the AEU representative on the ESL Consultative Group. The AEU has advocated for increased funding to support ESL students through budget submissions and letters to the ACT Government.

6. Communications

The Executive Officer, Sue Billington, is exploring the possibility of adding a facility for new members to join via the AEU – ACT Branch website [www.aeuact.asn.au]. Currently it is possible for current members to pay their union dues online via the Members Payment System [<https://secure.aeuact.asn.au/memberpayment.php>] but it is not yet possible to join online.

The AEU membership database enables communication with members via a number of email groups such as Sub-Branch Representatives [President, Deputy President, Secretary, Councillor/s, Alternate Councillor/s]; Women's Contact Officers, OHS Representatives and Principals. This has meant that members are kept up-to-date with upcoming membership surveys, calls for submissions, Award nominations, AEU Training and email campaigns. It is possible to also email every single member when this is deemed necessary.

The AEU website is a major aspect of the union's communication. It is regularly updated by the Executive Officer, particularly the Latest News page. The website also features sections on Membership; Campaigns; Member Groups; Info Centre [working conditions, UCAs etc] and Contacts.

The ACT Teacher journal remains an important part of our communication strategy and its layout and appearance was redesigned for the beginning of 2008. A recent survey of members showed that 43% of respondents "always" read the journal and 53% read it "sometimes". Members who were surveyed read most of the regular articles in the journal and particularly seek out the feature article/s.

The Union mail drop provides a range of material for members in hardcopy such as the journal, minutes and recommendations from Executive and Council and flyers for various membership groups.

CATHY SMITH
Assistant to the Secretary [Professional]

D. Schools Organisers' Report

Bill Book and Glenn Fowler managed a diverse range of responsibilities in 2008 on behalf of AEU members.

The Organisers spent the bulk of their time on the provision of AEU services to members – advice, advocacy and support, to assist in improving working conditions for teachers in ACT public schools.

Membership enquiries and our associated actions covered a large range of topics including:

- the current Union Collective Agreement [UCA], particularly in relation to *Section O* for secondary teachers;
- retirement options and resignation procedures, balanced somewhat by recruitment enquiries;
- teething problems associated with the amalgamation of preschools with primary schools;
- issues relating to communication with colleagues;
- Occupational Health and Safety including allegations of workplace bullying;
- school leadership/management;
- leave entitlements, transfers and mobility;
- probation and contract reports and pathways to improvement;
- part-time working conditions and the desirability for permanent employment;
- conditions for casual relief teachers;
- legal assistance;
- applications for the Teacher Welfare Fund.

A common frustration of members in 2008 was the lengthy delays experienced in dealing with the employer, most probably caused by the relationship between the now separate entities of DET and Shared Services, Department of Treasury. The Organisers' involvement in member issues ranged from providing advice in a one-off telephone conversation through to accompanying the member to meetings with DET and/or Shared Services officers to assist with the resolution of an issue and to monitor the process [and the associated work that went along with such meetings]. Members were sometimes referred to other services for further support and specialised assistance. These services include referrals for:

- Legal advice – Pamela Coward Higgins, Solicitors;
- Financial advice;
- Free, confidential counselling – Davidson Trahaire, provided by the Employee Assistance Program.

This year, numerous efforts were made to support members through the acquisition of data, with a view to strengthening the AEU's bargaining position. To support the work of the Senior Officers in obtaining member views on mobility and other matters through two online surveys, Organisers sought and obtained information from members regarding casual relief provision and behaviour management processes. Further, at the request of Organisers, DET provided statistical information to the AEU with regard to numbers of resignations, long-term leave applications, Comcare claims, teachers teaching outside their area of expertise, the provision of qualified Teacher Librarians and School Counsellors, new applicants to the ACT system and permanent jobs offered.

Members were able to make use of the AEU – ACT Branch website [www.aeuact.asn.au] for information on current campaigns, working conditions [via the Union Collective Agreement], AEU policies, New Educators' page, OH&S page, AEU Training program and other services. The website was updated at regular intervals.

Recruitment of new AEU members

More than 200 teachers and staff of the ACT DET were introduced to the AEU at the DET Induction Program at the beginning of 2008. A smaller but significant number were inducted at the mid-year DET Induction in July 2008 and again at the October DET Induction. Many

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 we have sustained that density, recruitment being a significant part of our role. It is particularly important as the number of teachers retiring now seems to be increasing and is likely to remain significant in the next few years.

The recruitment focus this year was on younger/new teachers, many of whom do not seem to regard the decision to join the Union as an automatic one. The Organisers made special efforts to make multiple visits to schools where young members were in abundance and density lower. Early in the year, a recruitment banner was designed and produced providing a thumbnail sketch for potential members of the achievements of the union movement over time. The banner highlights the myriad of benefits of AEU Membership and it worked as a backdrop for the organisers when presenting information at Sub-Branches.

Last year, the AEU began covering School Services Officers; that is, LSAs [STAs], Preschool Assistants, Home School Liaison Officers, Youth Workers and any other DET employees deemed to be working directly with students. Membership numbers in this SSO group grew significantly in 2008 and will continue to increase as awareness of this relatively new coverage and of our various services increases. Organisers worked on strategic plans in this regard with Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial], Peter Malone. So far, special meetings have been organised for SSOs, specialised training has been provided and there have been advertising efforts targeting this group in the journal and various drops. SSOs were always invited to attend Sub-Branch meetings in schools in 2008.

Organisers are currently consulting with members and assisting in the preparation of a claim for teaching staff in 2008, ready for negotiating with DET in 2009 when the current UCA expires. The UCA relevant to SSOs expires in the following year, so these members will be consulted in a more targeted fashion during 2009.

Members Equity Bank sponsored a series of AEU recruitment competitions throughout 2008. They generously donated 4 x \$100 start-up accounts to new members who were drawn randomly each term.

Organisers met with members around the Sub-Branches and acknowledge their efforts in recruiting new members on an ongoing basis and in 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. Potential members have been made aware that only union membership truly gives them a voice in their profession. The provision of *journey cover insurance* has also been a useful recruiting tool, though we would not like this to be the focus of recruiting efforts, preferring instead to concentrate on the industrial, professional and intrinsic benefits of union membership.

This year saw a number of new representatives participating in the decision-making processes of our union – through Sub-Branches, Executive and Council. The Mobility Committee, formed to guide AEU policy in this area, attracted 37 members who attended a series of meetings to draft the AEU's new mobility policy.

Sub-Branch Visits

Organisers attended every Sub-Branch in 2008, many of them multiple times, dealing with specific site-based issues or providing general information and discussion forums regarding the issues confronting teachers in the public education system. The current UCA has been the subject of discussion, along with the preparation of the claim for 2009 and the AEU's ACT Election priorities. Professional pay, teacher registration, the proposed ACT Schools Standards Authority, the proposal to increase the school leaving age [*Pathways to the Future* consultation] and the AEU's mobility policy were all prominent issues in 2008. Members were

regularly made aware of the opportunity for SSOs to join the Union, and benefits of Union membership such as journey cover insurance were explained in some detail.

The preschools have retained the Northside and Southside Sub-Branches for the time being, providing another avenue of assistance for preschool teachers and assistants through the process of their amalgamation with the primary schools. It will take a couple of years more to see the amalgamation completed and functioning smoothly at every site but the Sub-Branches have made significant contributions to the process during this year. The Organisers maintained close contact with the preschool action committee throughout and commend the members for their diligence and active involvement in the process.

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 [TL] positions that are regarded by school managers as least affordable or most expendable. The Organisers worked with the Teacher Librarian Working Party to develop a new AEU policy in regard to TLs and have also been participants in the TL Review in keeping with the requirement under the terms of the current and previous UCAs.

Organisers again encouraged all members to promote the positive message of *Public Education Works*. This could 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 one's car or speaking proudly of public education at every opportunity. The message of *Public Education Works* is an important one and 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 is 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 also have a link to AEU merchandise [www.aeuvic.asn.au] where members can purchase a range of shirts, jackets, fleeces, caps and other accoutrements for those interested in enhancing their wardrobes.

National Public Education Day – 29 May 2008

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. School performance groups performed at two locations within the Canberra Centre and one location outside the east entrance of the centre. However, it was disappointing that the Centre management's desire to minimise the sound of music in the centre led to several potential locations being deemed unsuitable. It was also disappointing that Centre Management elected to censor the life drawings of college students, insisting that the Organisers remove them from the public areas [the drawing were relocated to the Legislative Assembly]. For this reason, and for reasons of cost, it is unlikely that the Canberra Centre will be used again for the display of artworks during Public Education day/week/month celebrations. In fact, it is intended that the art works in 2009 will be exhibited at the Legislative Assembly and the Civic Public Library from the beginning of May and the celebration will be launched at the latter venue in the first week of May. 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 increased their presence during Public Education Week, providing banners trumpeting the benefits of public schools. Ensure your school community isn't left out of the program – put **Thursday 21 May 2009** in your calendar now and start planning your school's celebrations.

Committee Work

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

Glenn attended the Learning Assistance [LA] Reference Group once, and attended forums on the use of former school sites and the proposed ACT Schools Standards Authority.

Glenn and Bill met regularly with Workforce Management's Staffing and Injury Management teams to discuss individual member cases.

Bill continued in his role as representative on the Occupational Health, Safety and Rehabilitation Advisory Committee [OSHRAC]. The committee provided input and feedback on the Workplace Health Strategic Plan 2008-12 launched in October 2008 and on the new ACT Work Safety Bill 2008 as well as debating other issues. Each of the Government departments is represented on OHSRAC as are most of the unions and Unions ACT.

The Department's OHS Policy Committee met only twice this year due to a glitch in the organisation caused by the movement and shortage of DET staff. Things are back on track at the time of writing this piece and the committee will be convened following the northside/southside OHS representatives' network meetings from the beginning of next year. The purpose of the committee meetings is to discuss issues raised through the network meetings and to review and develop policies. Among the issues raised this year by Bill were concerns about the lack of training requirements for science lab assistants, working at heights in theatre arts productions/areas, and behavioural issues as contributing to a hazardous workplace. In each case the issues were taken for further investigation by Shared Services on the instruction of the Department. Bill also presented a [Draft] *Bullying Prevention Commitment* for consideration by the committee. It is planned to have that item trialled in some schools from the beginning of 2009.

The Career Transition Advisory Committee [CTAC] met on four occasions to discuss a number of issues, not least of which was the allocation of qualified Careers advisers at high schools and colleges. This included further discussion of Careers Advisers under mobility and the implications that has had on students' ability to access appropriate advice. An appropriate recommendation out of CTAC discussions was that all Careers Advisers must have a recognised Careers Counselling/Advising qualification or will be provided the opportunity to achieve that qualification. The trialling of transitions officers to move with Year 10 students into their colleges in Year 11 proved to be highly successful this year and will be extended across all high schools and colleges into the future.

Bill also represented the AEU on the Agency Consultative Committee formed to discuss issues of concern to our SSO [non-teaching staff] members. It was through representations there and in meetings with DET Staffing and Recruitment that it was finally agreed that assistants who have been in continuous employment with DET for 14 terms would be offered permanency. We also managed to sort out and access the Special Education allowance for some of the new non-teaching members earlier in the year.

Professional Development

Glenn 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.

Glenn attended the AEU Federal Conference [Sydney], the ACTU's Fundamentals of Organising Course [Sydney], ACTCOSS and Parker & Partners Media Skills Workshop [Canberra], Jane Caro's Marketing Public Schools seminar [Canberra], the ACTU's Federal Right of Entry course [online] and Workwatch's Occupational Health and Safety Representative course [Canberra]. The AEU office has gained yet another Authorised OH&S Representative.

Bill attended the Conference for SSOs in Melbourne in August, meeting with Organisers from Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and WA. The latter, like the ACT, is very new to the option of recruiting SSOs whereas the other three have long been able to do so and

effectively represent all of them so were able to contribute substantially to our knowledge. Bill also completed the Red Cross Senior First Aid certificate course and the AEU office can once again call on a qualified first aider in house.

Member Training

Organisers were directly involved in a number of the AEU's member training courses in 2008.

Bill and Glenn jointly co-ordinated *Running Meetings Effectively* [April], *Understanding My Workplace Rights* [May] and *SSO's Rights and Conditions at Work* [June]. The latter session was attended by an enthusiastic number of one of our emerging membership groups. Bill also ran two sessions during stand-down, July and October, *Running Meetings Effectively*. All of these workshops were well-attended and productive.

Bill co-ordinated a half day workshop on Prevention of Workplace Bullying for OHS Representatives, Deputy Representatives and others at the request of the representatives. The forum was addressed by Mark McCabe the new ACT OHS Commissioner, Belinda Barnard from the ACT Human Rights Office, and Gina Ramsay Project Officer from the Australian Federal Police, who presented the model applied in the AFP to manage and prevent workplace bullying and harassment. The outcome of the forum was positive in that the participants contributed to the development of a Bullying Prevention Commitment to be trialled in schools from early 2009.

The Organisers worked with Sub-Branches at both primary and secondary sites to resolve OHS issues generated by some students' extremely challenging behaviours. While the process of undertaking a Risk Assessment is onerous and time-consuming on the face of it, the results achieved have been generally positive in so far that it provides members with a safer workplace and a clear strategy to manage such behaviour. Members have become more familiar with the process and are more comfortable initiating the process when they experience the impact of an initial assessment. In fact, a school does not have an option following a violent incident between a student and staff member – they must initiate a Risk Assessment to ensure that the workplace is as safe as practicable for all staff and students.

It has been a pleasure working for members, assisting them where we have been able, and we look forward to the challenges presented to us in the future.

Glenn is pleased to have been reappointed for a further term, ending January 2012.

BILL BOOK AND GLENN FOWLER Schools Organisers

E. TAFE/VET Organiser's Report

Training Environment

Across Australia, public funding of TAFE education and training is under siege. The Federal Government appears to be cajoling State and Territory Governments to increase the contested offerings in each jurisdiction. This policy translates to the need for TAFEs across the country to compete for funding of programs which have traditionally been the domain of publicly funded TAFE profile programs.

The agenda to privatise public education across Australia has impacted locally with CIT teachers and students in the ACT experiencing continued cuts to public funding. At the time of writing the ACT has just elected a minority Government, with the Greens controlling the cross benches but the final make up of the Government is still to be determined. The previous Minister and shadow Minister for Education had both expressed doubt about the ability to redress the national privatisation agenda of public education while the Greens advocated for maintenance of public education funding and a moratorium on further privatisation. There is therefore some reason for hope at this time.

In the meantime, CIT management have imbedded the restructure of Centres within the Institute and have pressured these Centres to increase commercialisation and "user pays" ideologies while focusing on increases in student fees, instigation of Fee Help and VET Fee Help. Member concerns about this new environment frequently hinge on excessive workloads, the requirement for teachers to transform into entrepreneurs [without training or support], the loss to the CIT vocabulary of "life long learning" replaced by "just in time, just enough learning", the redefinition of "client" to mean industry and employers instead of students, and the redefinition of education Centres as "cost centres" implying that education is in fact a cost burden to a TAFE institution.

Other losses to the CIT management dictionary include any reference to "expanding the quality and quantity of teaching and learning" as being the reason for CIT's existence. This concept has been replaced by the words "growing the business" in an attempt to devalue the education experience as a transaction which in turn devalues CIT's engagement in educating the ACT community to being a simple business venture.

The diminution of delivery hours for programs continues so that the discrepancy between actual classroom delivery time and Nominal Hours for subject delivery is an ongoing matter of concern for students, teachers and the community. The most serious casualties of this "education revolution" impacting TAFE nationally include the concept of holistic education of our students, free, second chance education prospects for our youth and the community at large, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and equity groups. In addition, managers in many Centres relate that they are unable to attract sufficient numbers of skilled personnel to teach at CIT given the work conditions and payment schedules.

Despite the difficult work environment and conflicting demands on teachers at CIT full credit must be given to the teachers and their managers who continue to maintain excellence in training and educational opportunities for the ACT community.

CIT Union Collective Agreement for Teaching staff [UCA]

The current Union Collective Agreement concludes in March 2009 and the AEU is preparing a log of claims for the next Agreement. This has necessitated a survey of members to identify the issues and concerns that members wish to have redressed in the next agreement. Survey results clearly demonstrated that workload issues and workplace stress were the major concerns of members. The log of claims will aim to address these matters.

At the time of writing the ACT remains under the unrepealed *WorkChoices* legislation and unless this changes, negotiations are likely to occur within the same anti-union environment as the last Agreement.

CIT Restructure

The latest CIT restructure has delivered a Board of Management [BOM] constituted by SES Executive positions. The AEU is concerned at the loss of teacher-based management positions on the BOM and other relevant management groups across the Institute. Indeed, CIT has actively eliminated AEU involvement in most management committees and has refused to expand consultation with the Union except at Deputations. The AEU's attempts to keep a watching brief on commercialisation within CIT and to ensure teacher workplace conditions, education quality and student issues rely principally on the information from concerned members.

AEU TAFE Sub Branch Restructure

The AEU responded to recommendations from members and from TAFE Council by restructuring the Sub-Branches along the lines of "communities of interest" at CIT, which coincidentally matched closely the new Centre structure of CIT in 2008.

The AEU continues to encourage consultation and negotiation within Centres to ensure that the Centres succeed in achieving reasonable commercial targets while not compromising educational goals and teacher work/life balance.

Dispute

The AEU and CIT remain in formal dispute over the fate of Band 4 positions at CIT and the designation of the Centre Director positions in teaching based Centres. CIT has attempted to eliminate Band 4 positions from the teacher promotion stream, except for one position which is to be reviewed at the end of 2008. In addition, CIT management have attempted to define the Yurauna Centre as a non-teaching Centre and to designate the Director position to a general staff position. The lack of interest initially displayed by CIT to negotiate on this dispute and other matters is a source of concern for members and clearly indicates potential for a hostile industrial environment.

Outstanding Matters from the 2006-2009 Union Collective Agreement

A range of outstanding clauses in the Union Collective Agreement 2006-9 remain to be explored jointly by CIT management and the AEU, despite the AEU's requests for resolution of these matters. The CIT has failed to engage with the AEU in good faith negotiations to address the following agreed clauses in the agreement:

- reviewing the existing guidelines for the use of Institute and private vehicles for Institute business [Clause 22,.2]. Access by teachers to vehicles for work related use remains unresolved to date and CIT refuses to quantify the teacher demand for Institute vehicles.
- exploration of Nominal Hours and Delivery strategy [Clause 166.1 ii].
- occupational health and safety/risk assessment [Clause 166.1 iii].
- measurement of teacher work in relation to flexible delivery modes [Clause 136.1].

In addition, the CIT has been in default of timely payments for casual teachers throughout 2008 and despite the many examples which the AEU has cited it appears that the payment arrangements between the teaching Centres with the Central Service Centre and Shared Services remain fraught with inefficiencies in need of redressing. The poor treatment of casual teachers with regards to payments has been identified as a major impediment to casual teacher employment at CIT and this factor has exacerbated teacher workloads and associated stress.

Teacher Time and Workload Working Group

In brief, CIT refused to continue engagement in this Working Party in 2008. Members will recall that the working party published results of trials and case studies undertaken in 2007, few of which informed effective future directions for measuring teacher workload. Teacher engagement in these trials were ambushed by the 2 CIT restructures of 2007 and 2008 which provided a workplace environment which was contra-conducive to risk elaborate workplace trials. CIT recognised the lack of trial success to be related to these restructures, yet failed to consider the development of new trials in 2008 and beyond. The only satisfactory teacher workload measurement tool identified by CIT management would be "outcomes based".

Promotions Positions Review Working Party

As a result of the Restructure Dispute, the AEU and CIT management have agreed to instigate this Working Party to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of Band 1-4 teachers. This was an agreed position by the parties in the UCA 2006-9. However, except to redefine the selection criteria for the AST positions, CIT refused to meet to discuss these matters through out the life of the agreement until the dispute from mid 2008,

Professional Development Fund Committee [PDFC]

The CIT allocation of Fellowships, CIT Strategic and Initiative funds, for access by teaching staff, was significantly reduced in 2008 from previous years. The AEU sought 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 in May 2008. The event was well attended and well very well organised. Many thanks to Sally Holdsworth and her team in the Events Management crew at Reid.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS [VETiS]

VET in Schools offerings across the sector continue to grow in accordance with ACT Government drives to integrate VET within the schools and college curriculum. Many students attest to positive experiences in VETiS and this is in no small part due to the energy, motivation and expertise of the teachers in this sector.

The AEU has sought to address the necessity for dual assessment of VET competencies through engaging with DET and BSSS to develop an assessment process offering choice of mode of assessment to VET teachers. At the time of writing the relevant BSSS recommendation is yet to be considered in its final draft by BSSS.

The AEU is negotiating with DET and CIT to identify appropriate teacher relief mechanisms to permit teachers to move between colleges and CIT to offer relief VET training. The duty of care and complex industrial matters under consideration to permit transfer between the sectors will require consultation with VETiS teachers who will potentially interface in such relief situations. Teachers can expect to be consulted on these issues and may choose to phone the Union office if they have any queries regarding the process.

The loss of 25 teachers from ACT colleges in 2007 has impacted heavily on teacher workloads in colleges during 2008, resulting in the departure of experienced teachers from the VETiS sector due to the issues around sustainability of workloads. No increases in VET teacher numbers was approved by the ACT government in 2007-2008 despite repeated requests by the AEU for more teacher positions, presentation of a paper on VETiS needs to the Chief Minister in August 2007, presentation of a Budget submission in late 2007 and a submission to the council of the Legislative Assembly on VET issues and staffing concerns.

The AEU is developing current policies on VETiS in relation to teacher relief provision from CIT staff and cooperative association between teachers from the sectors, single RTO status/cluster RTO status of colleges, and sustainable, equitable VETiS teacher workloads

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 2008.

The AEU was entitled to 12 Delegates to UnionsACT for 2008 and we filled all Delegate positions, as well as maintaining 12 Alternate Delegates. Attendance at the meetings has been regular, with our Delegates and 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 AEU – 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. The AEU General Executive member position has been filled this year by Clive Haggard and by Cathy Smith. Penny Gilmour continues in the role of Honorary Assistant Secretary for the period 2007-2010.

Over the last year, UnionsACT continues to be well-positioned for the future. The purchase of new premises at Mitchell took place this year, and the facilities were officially opened by ACTU President Sharan Burrow on 17 September 2008. The capacity to fit out a newly-constructed building has provided opportunities for UnionsACT to establish a comfortable and modern environment for both the operations of the Trades and Labor Council and for WorkWatch, the UnionsACT OH&S Training provider. There is still capacity to rent out part of the floor owned by UnionsACT, so the possibility of another income stream for the future is available.

UnionsACT had been considering investment in a commercial development in Civic, but further analysis has led the developers to abandon the project at this time and so no further steps have been taken in that regard. Funds previously targeted for that investment are still with UnionsACT, and the interest being earned is providing a small additional source of revenue.

UnionsACT has continued to undertake the broader work of the Union movement during 2008, but from the AEU delegates' perspective it has been a noticeable quieter year than 2007 with the *Your Rights At Work* campaign winding down post-Federal election. Events over the year in regard to IR laws demonstrate the need to keep the pressure on the Federal Government to deliver legislative changes that restore the balance and provide a fair basis for employment arrangements. That campaign is not yet won, and UnionsACT together with its affiliates has been maintaining lobbying pressure on Federal politicians.

The AEU – ACT Branch is proud to continue to play its part in supporting the ongoing activities of the ACT's peak union body and looks forward to working with UnionsACT as we move forward.

PENNY GILMOUR
Branch Secretary