

A. Secretary's Overview of 2010

Every year seems to be busier than the last in the AEU – ACT Branch, and 2010 has been no different. In common with our members, the Union has been pursuing many different matters simultaneously! The capacity and preparedness of our members to contribute to the AEU's areas of focus as well as their own professional and personal pursuits is testimony to their commitment to ensuring that we continue to be a robust and representative body.

The major campaign focus was NAPLAN at the beginning of the year, and appears to be resources at its end. The Branch has also contributed submissions to – and appeared before – a range of ACT Legislative Assembly Enquiries, and in response to a number of DET activities and proposals this year. AEU officers have also continued to deal with a wide range of issues raised by members, involving both support and assistance for individuals, and advice and support for groups of members. All of the Branch's activities have taken place in an environment where the job of teaching continues to be complex and difficult, with consequent increased pressure on the workforce.

Despite all of the pressures, the public education system continues to deliver high quality outcomes for students, thanks to the commitment and capacity of its teaching workforce. The maintenance of our quality system is a matter of serious concern in the face of the implementation of a 1% [\$4m] budget cut, euphemistically called an "efficiency dividend"; but more of that later.

NAPLAN Dispute – "No to League Tables"

The AEU's concerns about the publication of narrow, simplistic League Tables in the wake of the launch of the MySchool website were realised when, in January, *The Canberra Times* was quick to produce one of the most egregious examples in the nation. A rank order of all schools in the ACT was produced, based solely on their NAPLAN scores, with no consideration for any other factors that contribute towards the creation of a successful school. There were few surprises in the rank order of schools, but those at the bottom of the list reported that there were a number of examples of parental concern, and unfair labelling of the students – or the school.

In the face of enormous pressure from the ACT Government and DET, and despite the significant threat of legal ramifications through Orders made under the Fair Work Act, AEU members stood firm in their resolve not to co-operate with the test. Industrial and/or professional disruption are always measures of last resort for teachers, and there was clearly collective relief when the Federal Government averted serious disruption by agreeing to some common-sense proposals about consultation that the AEU had been espousing for some months.

As the year draws to a close, the expert Working Party established by then Federal Education Minister Gillard has delivered its report to 15 October MCEECDYA meetings. Following a report that some matters at the meeting proved to be contentious, the ACT Branch emailed our own Minister Barr in these terms:

The AEU – ACT Branch congratulates you and your Ministerial colleagues on the position you took in support of the recommendations of the MySchool Working Party as they relate to the need to establish school context prior to the unfolding of NAPLAN data which is only one aspect of the life of a school – and only a small snapshot at that.

Noting that consideration of this matter appears not yet finalised, I encourage you to maintain this position and argue strongly for a speedy conclusion to this debate.

The AEU – ACT Branch welcomes the advent of some common ground on this matter; I hope that we may find more aspects of the MySchool/NAPLAN debate on which we can agree in the future!

As the Annual Report goes to press we await final decisions on revisions to the MySchool website. It is to be hoped that there are no attempts to undermine the successful and collaborative outcomes achieved by the Working Party.

Enterprise Agreements

This Enterprise Bargaining round for the ACTPS has been in train this year. With a small [but growing] contingent of members in non-teaching classifications, the AEU has been actively engaged in negotiations. After the usual protracted processes, it is anticipated that the ballot will be finalised shortly.

In DET and in CIT, preparations are underway for the commencement of a new bargaining round in 2011. With Agreements across most of the ACTPS – including the teaching workforce – having a common expiry date of 30 June 2011, it promises to be a lively year on the bargaining front. Claims are currently being prepared with a view to serving in both sectors prior to the end of 2010 so that bargaining can commence as early as possible in 2011.

Member involvement in the Branch

This year has been a testing one in terms of maintaining member involvement in the Branch. Executive vacancies were filled without contest, and many positions on the Branch Council are not filled at maximum entitlement with some Sub-Branches entirely unrepresented.

Membership numbers hover around 3100, and it is good that these figures remain consistent. Despite this situation, there is no room for complacency. AEU members need to work with the office in maintaining the recruitment effort. Every teacher or support staff member new to your workplace should be invited to join the AEU. It is only by maximising our membership numbers that the AEU can strong and effective representation of members, and truly be “the voice of the profession”.

AEU Awards

This year the AEU entered into sponsorship arrangements with Teachers Credit Union and Teachers Health, two of our long-time associates. Teachers Credit Union has taken up sponsorship of the AEU Public Education Award, which is now recognised with an impressive “trophy” and a monetary prize for the Award winner to use in support of their professional responsibilities.

In 2010, the Public Education Award recipient was Sue Billington, the AEU office Manager. Sue’s support of public education and her contribution to it is evident in 30 years of service to the AEU, its members and public education.

Teachers Health has taken up sponsorship of the AEU Reconciliation Award, now also recognised with a stunning glass “trophy”. This year’s AEU Reconciliation Award was presented to Birrigai @ Tidbinbilla.

Another “first” for 2010 were the joint functions conducted by the AEU and DET at which various awards were presented. The Public Education Awards function at the Hyatt Hotel was an enjoyable opportunity to recognise the work of colleagues and to relax and socialise a little. DET presented a number of awards in addition to the AEU’s presentation of the Public Education Award. A joint function at Majura Primary School was the setting for the presentation of the DET ATSI Collaboration Award and the AEU Reconciliation Award. In addition to these functions, an AEU Certificate of Appreciation recognising her long-term activism and commitment to the AEU was presented to retiree Robyn Craig as part of the DET Recognition of Service function.

It has been a positive experience to have a shared platform while making presentations that recognise the contribution and achievements of so many colleagues, and it has highlighted the AEU’s involvement in education as a participating partner and stakeholder.

Federal Funding Review

As the Annual Report goes to press, the final national campaign of this year is underway with the launch of the AEU’s national Federal Funding Review campaign. Prior to its election in

2007, the Labor Opposition [now the Federal Government] committed itself to review the current unfair and flawed model through which Federal education dollars are distributed to government and non government schools, and despite a disappointing decision to extend the current arrangements for an extra year, the Review is now underway. This is the best opportunity in many years for public education to and its supporters to argue for a fairer, more transparent model of funding, and the AEU has embarked on a nationwide campaign to encourage every public school to make a submission to the Review. Apart from school submissions, there will also be AEU submissions at national and Territory level, as well as appearances before the Review panel.

Coming so close to the end of the year, it will be a challenge for schools to make the time to create and lodge a submission, but the ACT Branch will work with all of our schools to provide support and assistance to ensure that as many submissions as possible are put before the Review Committee.

Teacher Quality Institute

The ACT Teacher Quality Institute is expected to be officially launched in March 2011. The advent of the TQI will provide the ACT with its own teacher registration body, a provision long-contemplated in the only Australian jurisdiction without this function. The preparatory work has been years long, with substantial community consultation having occurred some time ago to ascertain the community view about an ACT teacher registration process. Arising from the ACT Government's decision to pursue this course, a Reference Group was drawn together with representatives from the 3 employers, 2 universities and 2 unions that work in the ACT school sector. The Reference Group has recently morphed into an Interim Board, with an Interim Chair now presiding as drafting of the legislation to create the Institute nears completion prior to consideration by the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Assuming the passage of the Legislation in this sitting session, the TQI is expected to begin registering new teachers from the commencement of 2011. Eventually all persons working as school-sector teachers in the ACT will be required to be registered, whether they work for public or private schools. At this stage there are no plans to extend registration to TAFE teachers, a situation that the AEU will continue to seek opportunities to address in the future.

Subject to satisfactory compliance with qualification and employment provisions, currently-employed teachers at the time the TQI is established are expected to be deemed registered, and to be exempted from fees for a minimum of 12 months.

Communications, Relationships and Politics

Constant changes in the educational landscape present some challenges to the maintenance of constructive communication between the AEU and other stakeholders, and this is clearly evidenced in the current poor relationship with the ACT Government. The reduction in opportunities to meet with the Minister, the Government's apparent decision to cease briefing the AEU ahead of policy announcements, and its apparent determination to ignore obligations around consultation and negotiation under the Enterprise Agreement all contribute to a difficult environment in which to conduct a sensible and constructive dialogue.

The fact that – in recent times - there have been few ACT Government actions in regard to education policy or changes that the AEU has believed are positive for the system has only exacerbated this difficulty.

The many changes of personnel occupying senior leadership positions in DET have presented their own challenges as both parties seek to understand each other's position and passion. DET implementation of policy positions and/or actions with which the AEU disagrees creates an interesting dynamic in the pursuit of strong and positive relationships.

There have been changes in CIT leadership as well; it is pleasing to note that while we may not always agree with each other, there is a new and more positive tone in the union's dealings with CIT.

Apart from managing the political and professional relationships with politicians and the employers, the AEU has also worked to maintain cordial, effective and constructive relationships with parent groups, colleague unions, and other stakeholder or interest groups engaged in the public education space. We will continue to meet the challenges encountered, believing that in the end there are generally more matters on which we can find some common ground than there are areas of implacable opposition.

Efficiency Dividend

The ACT Government's imposition of a 1% "efficiency dividend" on all agencies is a disaster for the education budget. Regardless of attempts to dress up the situation as something less dire, the fact is that the "efficiency" is actually a budget cut of \$4m, despite the fact that the overall budget has increased due to rising enrolments and a range of measures/policy commitments implemented by Government. The AEU supports the review of services and support to ensure the most efficient and effective delivery, but the system is now able to purchase \$4m less in resources than it could if there was no cut imposed. At a time when teacher workloads are at an all-time peak, and when the system already identified gaps in provision, cutting the central office support seems a strange logic.

Worse still is the knowledge that this is only the first round of cuts; unless Government revises its position, a further 1% cut will be imposed in 2011, with a final 0.5% cut in 2012. Based on 2010 figures where 1% = \$4m, this represents the removal of at least \$10m of resource capacity from the system in a 3-year period. The implications of this situation for future maintenance of quality public education are very serious. At the time of writing there is scant information about the practical reality of how the changes to service and support recently announced will actually play out on the ground; the likelihood is that schools will yet again be expected to maintain effort with fewer resources, or to take on additional responsibilities with no or insufficient additional resources.

It is interesting to contemplate what the 2011 Annual Report will be able to record in regard to the state of the system a year after the cuts have been implemented, and on the eve of the next tranche of budget reductions.

The AEU Office

There have been few personnel changes in the AEU office during 2010, and this stability has been a great benefit in another busy year. Despite the faces being familiar, there have been some changes to work arrangements. Our longest-serving administrative staff members, Sue Billington and Janet Anderson, have elected to take on part-time work arrangements. The AEU is very fortunate to have staff of their calibre and commitment, and it is to be hoped that a change of work pattern encourages both to remain actively working with the AEU for some time yet!!

Late in the year Peter Malone also elected to change to a part-time work pattern. This decision means that Peter's expertise is still available to the AEU, but the change has presented a valuable opportunity for Schools' Organiser Glenn Fowler to gain experience in Peter's role, and for Sue Amundsen to join the officer team as a part-time Organiser working Mondays and Fridays.

AEU officers continue their excellent service to the membership, both in terms of dealing directly with members, the employers, Government and other parties, and in representing the AEU on committees and through written submissions on a range of matters. The Branch administrative staff continue to keep the Branch's affairs running smoothly, a feat that provides a vital support to the officers and members.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the staff and officers of the AEU, to the Executive, the Council and the membership in general. Your support and feedback are integral to the work of the AEU and its capacity to be the voice of public education in the ACT.

PENNY GILMOUR
Branch Secretary

B. Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] Report

New Enterprise Agreement For Education Support Staff

A primary focus of the Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] position in 2010 was the negotiation of the new Enterprise Agreement for education support members in the DET.

A key part of the negotiation was attendance at the Single Bargaining Unit [SBU] meetings which commenced in September 2009 and did not conclude until August 2010. The SBU consists of representatives from all the different unions involved in the ACT public sector and it met regularly to negotiate the agreement with the Government Negotiating Team from CMD. The first task was to finalise an updated Common Core Template, which contains all the industrial conditions common to all ACT public sector workers. The second part was to negotiate with the DET conditions specific to our members.

The proposed new Enterprise Agreement went to vote in October 2010. A summary of its key conditions is as follows:

1. A one-off sign on bonus of \$650 for all staff:
 - except staff on short term temporary employment contracts [ie less than 12 months] and casual staff, *unless they have been engaged on a regular and systematic basis or there is a reasonable expectation of continuing employment within the ACTPS on a regular and systematic basis.*
 - and staff who have been on any form of unpaid leave for a period greater than six months at the date of commencement of the Agreement, *other than employees on unpaid maternity leave.*
2. A 2.5% salary increase back-dated to 1 July 2010 and an expiry date of 30 June 2011.
3. Maintenance of the clauses dealing with “types of employment”, “notice of termination”, probation, “joint selection committees”, “employees with caring responsibilities”, “commitment to a performance culture [maintain prohibition on performance pay]”, “performance management scheme”, “management of excessive hours” and “medically unfit staff”.
4. Removal of only the clauses dealing with “notice of engagement”, “promotion after acting” and “lifespan of merit process”.
5. Updating of current clauses to reflect any agreed improved conditions [eg maternity leave to 18 weeks etc].
6. A new detailed clause to review all ACTPS classifications in a three-staged process.
7. The Department to pay costs associated with gaining a qualification when the employee is required to get that qualification.
8. Agreement that managers and employees have a responsibility to minimise the extent to which excessive hours are worked. Any member who believes that their workload is unreasonable was urged to contact the AEU for assistance in addressing the problem as provided for in Clause E4 of the new Agreement.
9. The DET and the Unions will, during the life of this Agreement, consider:
 - creation of a Schools Assistant 4 classification for implementation in the next Agreement;
 - an ongoing method for conversion of temporary and casual employees to permanency.
10. A DET Human Resource Advice was sent to all schools that makes it clear that all Preschool Assistants must be provided time within their ordinary hours of work to perform programming duties with their teacher.

NAPLAN Dispute

The Union was involved in a national dispute over the misuse of data from the NAPLAN tests. The Branch Secretary and Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] undertook major carriage of the ACT Branch’s participation in that conflict with the Federal ALP Government. There is no doubt that the fall-out from this dispute weighed heavily on the minds of members when they voted in the Federal election on 20 August 2010.

Committees/Meetings

During 2010 the Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] attended meetings/committees as follows:

- [a]
 1. DET CEO Consultation [quarterly].
 2. CIT Director Deputation [quarterly].
 3. DET Staffing Meetings [as needed].
 4. Meetings with ACT Minister for Education, Opposition Education Spokesperson and Greens Education Spokesperson [quarterly/as needed].
 5. Joint Working Party [fortnightly/as needed].
 6. Taskgroup B and I [monthly].
 7. School Autonomy Reference Group [fortnightly].

- [b] Very frequent meetings with CMD and later with the DET to negotiate the new education support staff Enterprise Agreement.

Office Matters

Assistance to the Organisers to provide effective service to our members was provided through day-by-day direct support and the development of individual annual work plans.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Industrial] also assisted in the negotiation of a new Office Workings Conditions Agreement.

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 2010:

1. 2011-2012 Budget Submission to the ACT Government.
2. Submission in response to the *Creating a Connected ACT Tertiary Education Environment Discussion Paper*.
3. Submission in response to the *Improving ACT Public High Schools and Colleges Discussion Paper*.
4. Submission in response to the *DET Efficiency Dividend Review Consultation Paper*.

The ACT Branch made contributions to the following Federal AEU submissions:

- Submission to the K-10 National Curriculum Consultation, May 2010
- Submission on the Draft Terms of Reference for the Review of Funding for Schools, May 2010
- AEU Submission to the Senate Education Employment and Workplace Relations Committee into the Administration and Reporting of NAPLAN Testing, June 2010
- AEU Submission to the National Professional Standards for Teachers Consultation, June 2010
- Submission to the Joint Selection Committee on Cyber-Safety, June 2010

Committees and Boards in relation to professional issues affecting AEU members

In 2010, the AEU has been represented on various Department of Education and Training committees by nominated members and AEU officers:

- ACT Australian Early Development Index Implementation Committee [Cathy Smith]
- Board of Senior Secondary Studies [Jan Bentley]
- Board of Senior Secondary Studies – VETisS Sub-Committee [Mike Fitzgerald]
- Careers and Transitions Advisory Committee [Bill Book]
- Curriculum Taskforce [Penny Gilmour]
- Disability Access Action Committee [Cathy Smith]
- Disability Education Reference Group – formerly the Special Education Reference Group [Cathy Smith]
- Equity and Diversity Consultative Committee [Cathy Smith]
- Government Schools Education Council [Wendy Cave, Roger Amey]
- Literacy and Numeracy Reference Group – combining the former Literacy and Numeracy Fund Reference Group, the LA Reference Group and the ESL Consultative Committee [Cathy Smith]
- Principals Consultative Committee [Penny Gilmour]
- Qualifications Committee [Fiona Arthur, Gavin Scales]
- Quality Teaching Model Implementation Committee [Cathy Smith]
- Reconciliation Action Plan Committee [Cathy Smith]
- Safe Schools Taskforce [Penny Gilmour, Cathy Smith]
- Teacher Scholarships Committee [Phil Rasmus]
- Teacher Education Committee [Penny Gilmour] and its sub-committee, Preservice Education Committee [Cathy Smith]
- Teacher Quality Institute Interim Board [Penny Gilmour]
- Tertiary Education Taskforce [Penny Gilmour, Mike Fitzgerald – alternate]
- Vocational Learning in Schools Advisory Group [Roger Amey]
- VET in Schools Coordinators' Working Group [Mike Fitzgerald]

The Teaching and Learning Support Committee was disbanded in 2010.

There was no AEU representative on the ACT School Sports Council for 2010.

The AEU has been represented on various CIT committees during 2010 by nominated members and AEU officers:

- CIT Professional Development Funding Committee [Mike Fitzgerald, Andrew Blanckensee]
- CIT Resources Board [Moir Holmes]
- CIT Qualifications Committee [Andrew Shiells]
- CIT Academic Board [Tony Fuller, Belinda Wallis – alternate]
- CIT AST Selection Panel [Andrew Blanckensee, Moir Holmes]

Mike Fitzgerald, TAFE Organiser, is a representative on Accreditation and Registration Council as a nominee of UnionsACT.

Thanks to all those dedicated AEU members listed above who have taken on formal representational roles for the Union on these committees and boards.

National Perspective

The Federal Government's Schools Funding Review [SFR] commenced this year and will continue into 2012. This review is a major opportunity for the AEU, all public schools and parent groups to provide submissions on the current unfair Commonwealth schools funding model [details at www.aeuact.asn.au]. AEU – ACT Branch officers met with some members of the SFR panel in August to explain why the model needs to change, stating: *The only guarantee every child has to an education is enrolment at their local public school. Public schools are the only schools with a legal and moral responsibility to be open to all students. It follows that the primary obligation of governments is to properly and adequately fund public schools.*

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] met with AEU Women's Officers during the year to plan and implement the annual AEU Federal Women's Conference held in Melbourne in October.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] also attended the Research Officers' meeting in May to plan research priorities for the AEU for the next 12 months and beyond. She also attended consultation meetings and liaised with Federal AEU Research Officers to assist in the development of Federal AEU submissions, for example, the *Submission to the K-10 National Curriculum Consultation*; *Submission to the National Professional Standards for Teachers Consultation*; and the *Submission to the Joint Selection Committee on Cyber-Safety*.

The ACT Branch journal, *Public Education Voice*, continues to act as a forum for discussion of national professional issues, particularly through its Pedagogy Page as well as the Secretary's and President's columns.

2. Training Program

The AEU – ACT Branch continues to offer a free Training Program to all AEU members under the categories of *Your Workplace*, *Your Profession and Career*, and *Your Other Life*.

Most advertised sessions proceeded with good attendance by members. In particular, various financial planning and retirement planning seminars were popular which reflects the aging profile of the profession. *Retirement Planning Seminars* were presented by Jenn Murray of State Super Financial Services. A *Financial Seminar for Women, Making the Most of Your Money* and *Growing Your Money by Investing* were presented by Julie French of Industry Fund Financial Planning. Both these providers offer this training free of charge to AEU members.

There was a good roll up of Sub-Branch representatives, other members and parent representatives to the *AEU's Community Campaign* workshop which provided information about how members and the community can get engaged in the campaign for the ACT government to invest more in public education.

Members also welcomed the opportunity to attend *Know Your Rights and Entitlements*. AEU officers presented a 2-hour session which included information on leave entitlements, work-

life balance provisions, casual/temporary/permanent employee rights, allowances and grievance procedures.

As workload is a significant issue for members AEU officers facilitated a *Workload Forum* which involved members in finding ways to reduce workload and inform the DET Joint Working Party's work on implementing Enterprise Agreement requirements. The OHS Forum's theme this year was *Workload is an OHS Issue*. Participants explored how the new ACT Work Safety Act can support employees to have a safe work environment, including addressing workload issues.

The sessions on *Writing an Application for Transfer or Promotion* and *Preparing for a Job Interview*, presented by Steve Provins, have been presented for the last 6 years and remain of interest to members.

The AEU offered several new sessions. These were *Practical Strategies to Address Diversity in Your Classroom* presented by Rita Van Haren, Lanyon High School; *Classroom Management and Quality Teaching* presented by Victoria Margrain, Northside Quality Teaching Consultant; and *Doing the Right Thing: Giving Difficult Feedback - For all School Leader As, Bs and Cs* presented by Cheryl O'Connor, consultant [formerly of Australian College of Educators and DET Senior Executive].

AEU members successfully lobbied the ACT Government and DET to provide similar training to the very popular *Classroom Management and Instructional Strategies* [CMIS] course presented by Meegan Stuart on behalf of the AEU.

Essential Skills for Classroom Teachers is being offered by DET to new educators as part of the New Educator Support Program. There will be further courses along similar lines for more experienced teachers.

Some training sessions had to be cancelled due lack of registrations. Anecdotally, members cite the lack of casual relief as a significant barrier to being able to attend training during the day. As a result, proposed conferences for women members and new educators did not proceed. Increased workload and lack of time are given as reasons why members are not able to attend some sessions, particularly those held 4:00-6:00pm.

Course evaluations consistently show that members appreciate the professional development provided and that the course content and presentation is of a high standard. The AEU continues to refine its member training program to ensure your needs are met.

3. Women and Carers

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

This year a delegation of three members were selected by Executive to attend the AEU Federal Women's Conference with the Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] Cathy Smith. These members were Trish Keller [Giralang Primary School], Jennifer Hurley [CIT] and Sharon Skinner [Lanyon High School]. The theme for this year's Conference was *Making a World of Difference*. All delegates provided a written report on highlights of the Conference for the November edition of *Public Education Voice*. Jennifer Hurley also participated in the AEU National TAFE Women's Committee as the ACT Branch representative.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] Cathy Smith attended the inaugural joint Association of Women Educators – Women in Adult and Vocational Education Conference in Sydney in July. Participants engaged in the theme, *Reclaiming the Agenda for Women and Girls in Education: Progressive Partnerships for C21*, through workshops, speakers, plenary sessions and a dinner.

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] and all AEU officers continue to pursue matters of interest to women members through a wide range of DET committees including the DET's Equity and Diversity Committee and the national AEU Women's Officers' meetings and teleconferences.

Paid Parental Leave

The Government-funded Paid Parental Leave [PPL] legislation was finally passed through Parliament in June this year after 30 years of campaigning by union women. The scheme offers 18 weeks' paid leave at the National Minimum Wage [currently \$570 per week] for eligible parents of children born or adopted on or after 1 January 2011. Those eligible may choose either the PPL or baby bonus depending on their needs. The Federal Government's scheme is to be provided in addition to existing employer-funded paid parental leave schemes.

Equal Pay/Pay Equity

There were a number of events in this year's calendar which highlighted the need for pay equity for women.

Thursday 11 March – Equal Pay Alliance Breakfast, Canberra – the day that Unions lodged the very first test case for Equal Pay under the Fair Work Laws.

Thursday 10 June – ACT Branch promoted ways to mark this Equal Pay Day, organised by the Australian Services Union, a national day of action and the biggest since the 1970s.

September 4 – the ACT Branch promoted the usual Equal Pay Day amongst members, particularly suggesting ideas for marking the day on Friday 3 Sept. The AEU jointly organised a morning tea with UnionsACT for all affiliates [20% discount on cover charge for women!].

ACT Public Service Pay Equity Audit

Commissioner for Public Administration Catherine Hudson's ACT Public Service Pay Equity Audit was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday 23 September. It showed that in June 2010 the gender pay gap in the ACT public service was 5.5 per cent despite women outnumbering men by almost two to one.

Revised Branch Childcare Policy

On 19 June Branch Council approved a revised AEU – ACT Branch Branch Childcare Policy. This policy aims to support the full participation of all members within union forums such as Executive, Council and AEU training, for those with parenting responsibilities. It is vital that our union forums reflect the diversity of our members and that barriers that may prevent members' involvement be addressed where possible. Members can find the AEU – ACT Branch childcare policy, guidelines and reimbursement claim form at:

www.aeuact.asn.au/info-centre/working-conditions/documents/ChildcarePolicy.pdf

4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Issues

The AEU – ACT Branch Annual Reconciliation Awards were presented at a Reconciliation Week event in May held at Majura Primary School [the recipients of the 2010 Award]. The 2010 recipient of the Reconciliation Award was awarded to Birrigai @ Tidbinbilla and a Certificate of Commendation was awarded to Daniel Greene, Forrest Primary and Julie Wrigley, Workforce Management, Human Resources, Department of Education and Training. The DET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Collaboration Award was presented to Sharon Roberts, Learning Support Assistant, Jervis Bay School as this joint AEU-DET ceremony.

Beth Craddy represented Indigenous members at a national level at Federal Conference and on the AEU's Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee. The TAFE ATSIEC Representative position has not been filled in 2010. Beth has recently won the position of Federal AEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer. She will be based in the federal office in Melbourne but will occasionally be working from the ACT Branch office. Vicki Lucas represented Indigenous members as the ACT Branch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegate to Federal Conference. With Vicki and Beth engaged in the issues, the ACT Branch has a strong and positive record of participation.

The ACT Branch members provided feedback on the AEU Federal submission on the *Draft National Indigenous Education Action Plan*.

The AEU welcomed the launch of the Department of Education and Training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters Strategic Plan 2010-2013 on 1 September 2010. This plan highlights priorities and actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in ACT public schools. This expands upon the *ACT DET Strategic Plan 2010-2013 "Everyone Matters"* priority to "close the learning achievement gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students".

The AEU was actively involved in the development of the *ACT DET Reconciliation Action Plan [RAP]* which was launched on 6 July 2010 during NAIDOC Week. The RAP focuses on DET Central Office staff at this stage. A number of ACT public schools have developed their own RAPs.

The AEU continues to have representation on the ACT DET Equity and Diversity Consultative Committee whose work in 2010 included the development of the DET Equity and Diversity Plan 2010–2013 which focuses on Planning Diversity, Maintaining Diversity and Building Diversity. The plan has a key focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Branch is also represented on many other committees and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues are raised regularly in these meetings.

The Branch journal *Public Education Voice* includes a double page Indigenous News in each edition which promotes events, programs in schools, local and national issues and the branch website has an *Indigenous News* page.

5. AEU Federal GLBTI Working Party

The AEU Federal Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Working Party was established this year to support the implementation of the AEU Federal GLBTI Policy which states:

The Australian Education Union is committed to protecting the industrial, professional and civil rights of its members and the rights of all Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex [GLBTI] people throughout the world. Discriminatory practices such as homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and monosexism are infringements of members' rights and as such are to be challenged and eliminated.

Luke Williams is the ACT Branch representative on this working group.

6. Disability Education

The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] has been a member of the Disability Education Reference Group [formerly the Special Education Reference Group] this year. This group is made up of advocates for students with disabilities and those who work with these students. The group has been examining the options proposed in the *2009 Special Education [Shaddock] Review* and has been involved in the development of the DET Disability Education Strategy. In April AEU officers gave evidence to the *ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the Needs of Students with a Disability*. The Inquiry Report was released on 21 October and is available at www.parliament.act.gov.au/committees/index1.asp?committee=117&inquiry=821

7. English as a Second Language

The Literacy and Numeracy Reference Group has a standing item to discuss English as a Second Language programs and issues. The Assistant to the Secretary [Professional] is the AEU representative on this committee. In addition, the AEU continues to advocate for increased funding and support for ESL students and their families through budget submissions and lobbying the ACT Government, Liberals, Greens and both universities. The

AEU gave evidence to the 2009 Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the Educational Achievement Gap. The report, which included recommendations about ESL, was released in May 2010. It is available at www.parliament.act.gov.au/committees/index1.asp?committee=117&inquiry=822&category=19

8. Communication

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, New Educator Contact Officers, OHS Representatives and Principals. This is a valuable tool in keeping members up-to-date on relevant professional and industrial issues. It is possible to also email every single member in extraordinary circumstances. The Union office changed to a new database provider, Memforce, at the beginning of 2010.

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

The Branch journal, *Public Education Voice*, continues to provide valuable information to members about professional and industrial matters. Four editions per year are distributed to Sub-Branch Secretaries who are asked to pass on the journal to financial members. *E-bulletins*, which contain information on union campaigns and activities, are sent out as a web link to members via email.

The Union mail drop provides a range of material for members in hardcopy such as the journal, Executive and Council minutes and recommendations, and flyers to promote Union training and campaign activities.

CATHY SMITH
Assistant to the Secretary [Professional]

D. Schools Organisers' Report

Bill Book and Glenn Fowler have managed a diverse range of responsibilities in 2010 on behalf of AEU members.

The Organisers were also pleased to welcome Sue Amundsen for a 2-week period as Relief Organiser in Bill's leave of absence during Term 3 and we look forward to her return as part-time [40%] Schools' Organiser from Term 4 in a position that will continue through 2011. The part-time position will build the capacity of the Union to staff its office and assist with succession planning.

The Organisers have continued to spend 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. Retirement options and resignation procedures continue to be prominent among member enquiries, balanced somewhat by recruitment enquiries. Concerns associated with the move to 15 hours per week of preschool education by 2013 and the contingent Federal requirement that all preschool teachers possess a 4-year Early Childhood qualification have largely died down in 2010 and we believe that preschools are adjusting to the changed landscape. Enquiries regarding the 2009-2011 Enterprise Agreement [EA] featured heavily among member concerns, as they sought advice and clarification around transfer entitlement, workload, new initiatives and the requirement for consultation, and leave entitlements. We continue to hear from members about a wide range of issues relating to communication with colleagues, Occupational Health and Safety including allegations of workplace bullying, school leadership/management, probation and contract reports, Pathways to Improvement, part-time working conditions, the desirability for permanent employment, conditions for casual relief teachers, legal assistance and applying for the Teacher Welfare Fund. A common frustration of members in 2010 has continued to be the lengthy delays experienced in dealing with DET Central Office, caused mainly by the staffing freeze [lifted mid-year] and, in recent times, the "efficiency dividend". The Organisers' involvement in member issues ranges from providing advice in a one-off telephone conversation through to accompanying the member to a number of meetings with DET and/or Shared Services officers to assist with the resolution of an issue as support or advocate and to monitor the process [and the associated work that goes along with such meetings]. Organisers met with the Classroom Teacher Transfer Round panels to advocate for those members who sought special consideration.

Members are sometimes referred onto other services for further support and specialised assistance. These services include:

- Legal advice – Maurice Blackburn Lawyers
- Financial advice – Hillross Financial
- Free, confidential counselling – Davidson Trahaire, provided by DET's Employee Assistance Program

Organisers usually attend initial legal appointments and police interviews with the member.

AEU Organisers have again been visible in the Sub-Branches, apprising members of the details of the AEU's Community Campaign to support the 2011 EA claim, as well as guiding them through the dispute arising with the Federal Government relating to the misuse of NAPLAN data. In Term 4 each Sub-Branch will be visited by AEU officers to ensure that a submission is made as part of the Schools Funding Review. Members will also need to be engaged with regard to our next EA claim.

Members are able to make use of the ACT AEU website [www.aeuact.asn.au] for information on current campaigns, working conditions [via the EA], AEU policies, New Educators' page, OH&S page, AEU Training program and other services. The website is 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 2010. A smaller but significant number were inducted at the mid-year DET Induction in July 2010 and again at the October DET Induction. More than 60 teachers joined the AEU at these events, meeting the Organisers and discussing working conditions and expectations for their future career. The AEU recognises the importance of maintaining a high membership density; current density is sustained through a focus on recruitment as a significant part of our role. This 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. At the time of writing, the number of new members for the year is 329, which is up on last year. We expect this to climb markedly in 2011, as it is an EA year.

The recruitment focus has often been on younger teachers, many of whom do not seem to regard the decision to join the Union as an automatic one. The Organisers have made special efforts to make multiple visits to schools where young members are in abundance and density is lower. Glenn delivered a PowerPoint presentation to University of Canberra pre-service teachers and both Bill and Glenn recruited new members at the education showcase known as "Keys to Canberra". The recruitment banner has been in attendance at numerous recruitment sessions, highlighting as it does the myriad benefits of AEU Membership and the victories of the teacher-unionist movement over decades. Bill and Glenn attended Sub-Branches to meet with Sub-Branch Executive Members to map areas of the school where Union membership is lacking so that these areas can be targeted. General recruitment strategies were discussed. Glenn and Bill have attended whole staff meetings to advertise the benefits of union membership, and new members have been signed up on the spot. Glenn also met with and recruited a number of CIT teachers at an orientation session in September. He attended college classes upon invitation to talk about the important role played by unions in our society.

2011 was the first year of the New Educator Contact Officer [NECO] network, coordinated by Glenn. Numerous email updates were sent and opportunities advertised for NECOs to encourage activism among New Educators. One of the main purposes of this network is to encourage NECOs to have conversations with New Educators about the importance of union membership and engagement. There is still work to do in order to raise the profile of this sub-section of our membership, the main challenge being the workload with which all teachers are currently grappling. An informal social event is being planned for later in the year.

In 2007, 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 have crept up slowly but steadily, and will continue to increase as awareness of this relatively new coverage and of our various services increases. The AEU's profile increased when, for the first time, we negotiated the terms of the DET Staff Union Enterprise Agreement in 2010, involving our SSO members directly in that process. SSOs are always invited to attend Sub-Branch meetings in schools and this is made clear in all school visits. Whilst the AEU can get the message out to every Sub-Branch in a variety of media, once the information is in the Sub-Branch everyone is responsible for ensuring that the messages are heard and absorbed by the potential members. It is great having the SSOs on board and hearing their slightly different perspective of their workplaces and the system and we certainly anticipate their numbers increasing in 2011. This year we will celebrate the inaugural Educator Support Workers Appreciation Day with an afternoon tea and refreshments for all Assistants, Youth Workers and Indigenous Education Support Workers. Next year the plan is to hold a month long celebration as part of a Federal AEU initiative. Moves are afoot to employ a specialist SSO Organiser on a part-time basis who can blitz the schools with a recruitment focus. Servicing and support would logically follow on from that.

Members Equity Bank again sponsored a series of AEU recruitment competitions throughout 2010, mainly on Induction days.

Organisers 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. Research shows that the majority of non-union-members have not joined a union because they have not been asked. 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 are made aware that only union membership truly gives them a voice in their profession. The provision of "journey cover insurance" has continued to be 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.

Branch Council has seen a number of new representatives participating in the decision-making processes of our Union – through Sub-Branches, Executive and Council. This year, an excellent opportunity was presented for members to involve themselves through the joint AEU-DET working party created by the EA, and our members did this with diligence.

Sub-Branch Visits

Organisers attended all Sub-Branches [we think!] in 2010, 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. Federal initiatives such as the MySchool website, "Teach for Australia" and "Teach Next" have been the subject of much discussion and debate, as have local issues such as the staffing freeze, the "efficiency dividend", the High School and College Review and the VETis Workload report. Members have also been reminded of the opportunity for SSOs to join the union, and benefits of union membership such as journey cover insurance have been explained in some detail. Specific sub-sets of our membership have been targeted such as those in the Achievement Centre and Connect 10 programs with whom Glenn met at the end of Term 3.

Preschool members made the decision in 2009 to restructure into an Early Years Learning Sub-Branch and this Sub-Branch appeared to function well in 2010.

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 one's car or speaking proudly of public education at every opportunity. The message of *Public Education Works* is an important one and not simply a mantra espoused by a few ideologues. Public school enrolments appear to be on the rise, but of the eight jurisdictions the ACT continues to have 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. In addition, we 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 members interested in enhancing their wardrobes.

National Public Education Day – 27 May 2010

The annual celebration of the public education system and the contribution of students, teachers and parents to their community drew media coverage and praise from. Again there were numerous public performances, venues [Civic and regional shopping centres] and art displays this year, thanks to the co-operation and hard work of teachers in various schools. DET shared costs with the AEU to showcase the high quality of public education music programs at City Walk outside the entrance to the Canberra Centre. Every participating school brought joy and enthusiasm to the venue and all of the technical equipment worked flawlessly. The art exhibitions were all launched from the Civic Library Ground Floor Gallery by Branch Secretary Penny Gilmour with teachers, interested onlookers and MLAs in attendance. Downstairs in the library is an excellent venue for the exhibition and the library staff members were supportive and appreciative. The exhibition attracted a great deal of interest from the outset and the month of May saw many hundreds of visitors casting an admiring eye over the wide range of works. Other public libraries and hospitals again provided

display space for student art works for periods of at least two weeks and up to a month. The talent exhibited drew favourable attention and comment from employees and visitors alike. The libraries are already booked for May next year and we look forward to viewing the installations again at that time. 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.

This year AEU officers worked with DET officers on a combined Public Education celebration from 5:00-7:00pm on the Friday evening of Public Education Week. Much work was involved in ensuring that the aims of both parties were met and, after a few teething problems, the night was a big success with increased attendance on last year.

The AEU looks forward to the events of 2011 which will fall in the 4th week of May and urge members all to ensure your school community isn't left out of the program – put **Thursday 26 May 2011** 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 Trades Training Centres consultation meeting, the ANU Secondary College Operational Committee, the Quality Teaching Model [QTm] Implementation meeting and the Literacy and Numeracy Reference Group, each on one occasion. He also attended two DET Consultations and represented the union on Task Group D, looking at resource allocation models for schools. Bill and Glenn spent many Tuesday afternoons in the EA Implementation Committee with DET officials, negotiating for implementation arrangements that meet the needs of members.

Glenn has increased his Federal focus this year by becoming the ACT Branch campaign coordinator for the all-important Commonwealth Schools Funding Review. This has seen him working with officers from the AEU's various Branches and Associated Bodies to develop campaign strategy and materials, and to create submission guidelines for public schools across the country. Term 4 will see a massive member blitz in this area. As an extension of that role, Glenn attended the DEEWR Schools Funding Consultation where he joined Penny Gilmour and Cathy Smith in putting to the panel the need for increased funding for public schools. Glenn also presented a model for member and community engagement on the matter of schools funding to the National Public Education Forum at Parliament House. He participated in a forum on the problems associated with the MySchool website, run by Save Our Schools Convenor Trevor Cobbold at the CTL in September. And in the same month he attended the AITSL consultation regarding pre-service graduate, program and accreditation standards.

Bill represented the AEU and UnionsACT on a number of OHS committees throughout the year:

- The ACT Work Safety Council, comprising representatives from the unions, Master Builders' Association, Business Council, Chamber of Commerce, the ACT OHS Commissioner and the Government, is a legislative review body that informs and advises the ACT Government on Work Safety issues ranging from workplace accidents through to discussions of the new Work Safety legislation.
- The Occupational Health, Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Committee [OHSRAC] is comprised of representatives from each of the government departments and some statutory authorities. It reviews policy, discusses incidents and hears reports on the OHS successes and misfortunes that have occurred each quarter. It is a body that identifies the need to develop specific policies to address perceived gaps in the safety net. It was through this body that the initiative to provide a physiotherapist free to all ACT Government employees grew and ran successfully for over 12 months. However, it could only continue if every government department agreed to fund it and

unfortunately one department failed to recognise the value of the program causing it to be discarded.

- The DET Work Safety Policy Committee comprises a representative from the Northside and Southside OHS Networks, the unions, Shared Services, Facilities, the principals, and the DET HR section. There are a wide range of issues discussed and debated and concerns raised have included Workplace Bullying and Harassment. That discussion has been ongoing since the 2008 OHS Forum organised by Bill that resulted in the development of a [Draft] Bullying Prevention Commitment [BPC]. Bill had been trying to engineer the launch of the BPC since that forum with little success. However, the launch of the training program by the Office of Regulatory Services [*Stand up to Workplace Bullying*] by the ACT Work Safety Commissioner proved to be a more effective way of achieving the sought-after result. DET subsequently introduced their own training program [*Respectful Workplaces: Reducing the risk of Workplace Bullying and Harassment*] and much of the goal the AEU has been pursuing has now been achieved. However the BPC remains as a draft.
- The Agency Consultative Committee meets quarterly to discuss concerns and issues effecting the SSOs, and non teaching staff. The committee comprises representatives from all relevant unions [LHMU, CPSU, AEU], DET and Shared Services. This year a primary focus has been on initiatives to provide an effective training program for Lab Assistants and Learning Support Assistants [LSAs]. The AEU represents the interests and advocates on behalf of the SSOs [members] brought to the attention of the office by the members. Bill has pursued issues such as permanency, access to training and workplace safety through this forum.

Organisers met regularly with Workforce Management's Staffing and Injury Management teams to discuss individual member cases. We also collaborated with Shared Services/Injury Prevention and other agencies to assist some sites to develop Risk Assessments and Management Plans following incidents. Both Organisers have continued to work with Sub-Branched at both primary and secondary sites to resolve Work Safety 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 work place 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.

Organisers have also continued their role as UnionsACT delegates, attending numerous meetings.

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.

A focus for Glenn was his OHS Certificate IV which saw him in Melbourne for six days of training to supplement his online learning. At the time of writing he is five-sixths of the way through assessment and is looking forward to receiving the OHS Authorised Representative status that this qualification will provide.

The AEU – ACT Branch hosted the Annual Conference for Welfare Officers in March with delegates from all other public jurisdictions. Bill organised the event; with the assistance of speakers from Comcare and presentations by the delegates from the other jurisdictions, it proved to be a highly successful and valuable gathering of ideas and information. Comparing the programs and services offered to members interstate is always interesting as the other jurisdictions all have servicing officers, and other specialist officers that they are able to afford because of their size whereas in the ACT the six officers carry all the services, advocacy, professional and recruiting responsibilities. That is why it is important that the Sub-Branch Executive Officers to take on a more active role in recruiting and some servicing. It is

particularly so as we move toward the next few months through our campaign leading to the next period of negotiations and our next EA.

Glenn and Bill, along with TAFE and VETis Organiser Mike Fitzgerald, attended the three-day ACTU Organising Conference in Sydney in April, picking up a number of organising ideas which have been implemented on return.

The AEU – ACT Branch represented by Bill and Glenn briefly hosted a delegation of Chinese union officials in September, unearthing some fascinating similarities and differences about the nature of our respective tasks and challenges.

Member Training

Organisers were directly involved in a number of the AEU's member training courses in 2010.

Important elements of this year's training program were the well-attended Community Campaign information session and the Workload Forum for Teachers, where teachers were primed with strategies to address the challenging political and industrial landscape of 2011.

There were numerous other training courses organised for members, though not all of them ran. Organisers suspect that this is largely due to the increased workload demands being placed upon our members and their desperate attempts to achieve work-life balance. Nevertheless, through a combination of AEU officers and external presenters, members [teachers and SSOs] were provided with some revelations about their conditions and entitlements; they learned strategies to assist in classroom management strategies; and they participated in workshops to determine the most effective ways to manage students presenting violent behaviours. The latter program was presented by the Organisers and Maurice Blackburn solicitor Robert Coen. The completion and lodgement of relevant forms from Accident & Incident Reports through to Hazard Reports, Risk Assessments and Management plans was all unveiled for the participants. Most recently OHS representatives were walked through the changes of the new Work Safety Bill 2008 and Work Safety Regulations 2009 to identify the changes that have occurred and their implications for the Health and Safety Representatives.

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

BILL BOOK AND GLENN FOWLER
Schools Organisers

E. TAFE/VET Organiser's Report

TAFE/VET Organiser's Report

The AEU has become aware that DET is considering utilising non teaching staff, with Certificate IV TAA training, to monitor work placements of students on Structured Workplace Learning [SWL] situations and potentially to assess them in these workplaces. The justification for this approach is that DET cannot provide the necessary funding support to assist VETiS teachers to gain sustainable and equitable workloads. The Union has long asserted that the Certificate IV TAA is an inappropriate teaching qualification for those engaged in training and assessing VET students. The decision for DET to consider such a solution simply institutes an inappropriate solution to solve a simple problem of the ACT Government's making: the establishment of a VETiS program which they have never adequately funded. The AEU calls on the ACT government to address these inequities and adequately fund the VETiS programs in ACT government schools.

In another long-running issue, the recommendations of the VETiS Workload Workforce Report [November 2009] were to be addressed and, if possible, agreed and implemented during the life of the current Agreement which expires June 2011. These recommendations included requests for a cost benefit analysis of the entire publicly provided VETiS system, consideration of a single RTO status for the VETiS offerings in schools and colleges, an assessment of VETiS teacher roles and responsibilities, clarification of VETiS teacher responsibilities in relation to SWL and RPL, enhanced collaboration between VETiS coordinators to minimise duplication of workload and more. Sadly, DET have not agreed to implement any of the recommendations other than encouraging the coordinators to cooperate further, if possible. The justification for current inactivity is that in DET's view the issues are now subsumed in the Schools/College Review and the Tertiary Taskforce recommendations.

The AEU will continue to ensure that the Minister and the Department are held accountable for the provision of adequate funding and support to ensure that VETiS teaching workloads are both equitable and sustainable.

TAFE

CIT/TAFE Sub Branch changes

The AEU welcomes Tracey Dodimead to the position of TAFE Vice President. Tracey has taken over the role from Chris Dennis who contributed many years of valuable and wise activity within the Union. The AEU acknowledges Chris' work for the Union and wishes him a happy retirement.

In addition, the AEU welcomes Adrian Marron as the incoming CEO of CIT. Adrian has a long history in the TAFE sector and brings this experience and wisdom to bear in this difficult period of economic and funding turmoil within the sector.

Enterprise Agreement Matters

The current Enterprise Agreement [EA] is due to expire in June 2011 and negotiations for the next Agreement are due to commence in December 2010. The AEU has developed a Log of Claims for consultation with the membership; the Claim will be debated at the November Branch Council meeting. Once again the Union will negotiate an Agreement in a turbulent political environment. We encourage members to have their voices heard and to assert the needs of their colleagues and students throughout this campaign. National concerns about galloping casualisation within the TAFE sector are concerns for the AEU and the ACTU alike; the AEU has chosen to focus on this issue to re-establish a healthy, secure workplace and provide for economic stability for families and workers.

The Advanced Skills Teacher [AST] classification review was completed this year. The selection criteria and processes were reviewed and streamlined in keeping with member

advice to their nominees on the review panel. The preliminary response to the reviewed processes has been positive and addressed the concerns of members.

Several members have successfully lodged Comcare claims in relation to unhealthy workplace environments over the past few years. Allegations of workplace bullying and harassment underpinned some claims and some members have also referred their concerns to ACT Work Safety. The AEU recognises that the current turmoil within the sector, the reduction of funding, and unrealistic expectations of teachers to maintain quality in the face of unreasonable increases in output continues to foster unhealthy, stressful workplaces which may result in deterioration of working relationships. The Union has consistently encouraged all members to undertake training in programs aimed at establishing and maintaining respectful workplaces and to raise issues of concern about unreasonable work expectations with the Union. In addition, the Union assists and supports aggrieved members to raise their concerns within CIT – and outside the Institute – in their efforts to ensure the application of appropriate procedures for themselves and their colleagues. Every member stands to benefit from these efforts.

Tertiary Taskforce

The AEU has provided input into a number of community consultations throughout 2010. The Tertiary Taskforce developed recommendations to the Minister to contribute to responsible and positive changes to the ACT tertiary education sectors including VET in Schools, TAFE, VET and higher education. At the time of writing this report the recommendations are being streamlined and should be provided to the Minister in December. The recommendations should include the collective wisdom of stakeholders in the ACT and will address concepts of funding, closer cooperation between RTOs and Universities, enhanced assistance for students, and rationalisation of offerings across the ACT. Implementation of the recommendations will no doubt impact on TAFE and VETiS teachers and students within the ACT.

The AEU wishes to thank to those TAFE members who have represented the Union in various fora such as TAFE Council, JSCs, Boards and other bodies.

MIKE FITZGERALD
CIT/VETiS Organiser

F. Working with UnionsACT

The AEU – ACT Branch has continued to maintain a strong presence within UnionsACT during 2010.

The AEU was entitled to 12 delegates to UnionsACT for 2010 and we filled all delegate positions, as well as maintaining 8 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 on-going 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 Bill Book. Penny Gilmour's 4-year term as Honorary Assistant Secretary expires with the AGM on 3 November 2010.

UnionsACT continues to be well-positioned for the future, and there has been an increase in the use of UnionsACT facilities by other bodies over the last year.

UnionsACT's OH&S training arm – *WorkWatch* – continues to go from strength to strength. Training courses are well-subscribed, and demand is growing as WorkWatch's reputation for training excellence spreads.

UnionsACT continues to seek out opportunities to engage in more broadly-based activities in support of workers and the community. As part of this emphasis a project Youth Officer position has been maintained during 2010; part of this position's role has been to visit high schools and colleges and speak with young people about their rights at work and the union movement. It has been a successful venture and one that the AEU is pleased to support and promote.

In all, the AEU – ACT Branch proudly continues to support, promote and participate in the on-going activities of UnionsACT in its role as the ACT's peak union body.

PENNY GILMOUR
Branch Secretary