

In this Edition

- **President's Reports of the Dinner with ACARA's CEO**
- **USA Award for ISEA Executive Officer**
- **Review of Curriculum K-12 and Centre for Learning Innovation.**
- **Performance Management Scheme for CEOs**
- **Executive Officer's 2010 Annual Report**

President's Report of the ISEA Dinner with ACARA Chief

On Friday 7 May 2010, Dr Peter Hill, CEO of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), addressed a dinner meeting of the ISEA. Despite a hectic schedule, especially with the events leading up to the NAPLAN testing, Peter graciously delayed his flight to Melbourne so that he could address the many members and guests at the dinner and answer their questions.

Peter began his talk by acknowledging the prominent and unique position that the ISEA holds in the national education community: being the largest and most representative body of senior government school administrators in Australia.

Peter was able to provide a succinct description of the role and functions of ACARA, focusing on three main areas: curriculum; assessment and reporting; and NAPLAN.



He described ACARA as an enabler of national curriculum, where curriculum and assessment and reporting are unified in approach, if not as yet in precise detail, where instruction and the quality of the teacher-student learning relationship is critical, and where resources are evenly available across the country. He emphasized that it is necessary for all parties to have a common educational language and described some of the variations that currently exist between states, even to the names applied to stages of learning and curriculum areas. Within the curriculum, he explained themes such as Aboriginal Education would be intertwined. By presenting the curriculum online, drafts could be continually updated and feedback became inbuilt.

Peter then spoke about the assessment and reporting function of ACARA, explaining that agreement had been reached by all states to a national scale of reporting, using a Grade A to E scale. On this scale satisfactory performance would be a 'C'. This he added would require quite a mind shift, and there would be a lot of work ahead to 'decouple' the Grades from years of schooling in teachers' and parents' minds.

Finally Peter turned his attention and that of the audience to the question of NAPLAN and the debate that had been occurring over the past few months. He stressed that the tests would not change much in the next two years, although the Writing genre would be subject to revision. He believed, however, that in the long term there was a

need to test a broader range of outcomes, such as talking and listening and that there was also a need for ACARA to trial adaptive online testing.

Peter took time to stress that ACARA would not be following the UK and USA in their high-stakes testing regime. Australia will not have high-stakes funding consequences linked to the testing program, as has been the case in those jurisdictions. On the use of the data in the public website, he outlined how ACARA would introduce an 'Agree' button so that the limitations on use of data could be legally enforced.

In response to a question about the validity of the ICSEA measure Peter stated that ICSEA explains 68% of performance to a correlation coefficient of 0.84, suggesting that it could even be a sign of progress in future, to have a lower correlation. While acknowledging that this measure had been controversial, he stated that there had been only 41 complaints from schools across Australia about their ICSEA data. He said revisions of the ICSEA groupings would be considered and that finance data would be included in the next iteration of the My School website. This would be more likely to be problematic than the ICSEA data had been.

One questioner noted that there was often a greater difference between classrooms than between schools in student performance and therefore the question arose as to why ACARA was using Year 7 NAPLAN data to highlight differences between schools? Further of what relevance was the Year 7 data collected in NSW secondary schools when the students had come from multiple primary schools just a few months previously? Dr Hill acknowledged the comment and question but pointed out that the current ACARA testing and reporting programs had been legislated by the Commonwealth.

Given Peter's acknowledgement of the level of seniority and representation that the ISEA brought to the table, a question was raised about its representation on ACARA working parties. Peter described the ACARA's Board as complex with 13 core members each having associates and advisers so that functionally it could be up to 36 people involved in board decisions already. Nevertheless he was open to the idea of consultation with the ISEA and possible inclusion on working parties as they arose.

As Peter was leaving to catch his flight to Melbourne, he offered to address another gathering of ISEA members. The ISEA looks forward to such a meeting and also to continuing consultation with ACARA.

Barry Laing ISEA President

USA Award for ISEA Executive Officer

At the ISEA Dinner Barry Laing congratulated our Executive Officer, Ron Ikin, on winning the USA's Universities Council for Educational Administration's (UCEA) *Award for Excellence in Educational Leadership*. The award recognises Ron's work in promoting international relationships between several US universities (Chicago, Michigan State, Western Michigan, Marietta, Washington State, Boston and Niagara) and the Australian school system. This is an outcome of Ron's work in providing a home-stay and practicum program in Australian schools as part of teacher-trainees' degrees from those universities, as well as his organisation of ISEA study tours to several of the universities.

Curriculum-CLI Merger

The review of the Curriculum K-12 Directorate and the Centre for Learning Innovation and the proposed merger of the two units have occupied the ISEA during the year because of the implications for the delivery of educational support to schools and the threat to the careers and standard-of-living for the several long-term temporary CEOs employed in the Units.

Despite written undertakings by the DET that the staff of the two units, the ISEA and the Teachers Federation would be consulted in the course of the review and kept informed of progress and decisions very little of this has occurred until very

recently when a broad outline of the structure, functions and responsibilities of the new Unit, to be known as the NSW Curriculum and Learning Innovation Centre (NSW CLIC), was distributed to staff. The statement provides no information about the staffing roles and levels for the Unit, stating that still had to be determined.

It is a shameful and disrespectful situation that highly skilled, loyal, and hard working staff should be left in the dark for so long as their work and futures are decided without acceptable consultation. The ISEA State Council in consultation with the affected members will consider the available options to resolve the matter.

Performance Management Scheme for CEOs

In the course of the 2009–2011 CEO Award negotiations the ISEA agreed in principle to the adoption of the DET's generic Performance Management Scheme subject to modifications to better reflect the qualifications, responsibilities, and status of CEOs. Discussions with the DET around acceptable modifications have been long and arduous and as of this date have not been concluded to the satisfaction of the ISEA. The ISEA is considering its options in the face of what appears to be an intractable stance by the DET over reasonably simple modifications.

ISEA 2010 Annual General Meeting

The ISEA conducted its AGM on the 20 May 2010 at the DET's Bridge Street State Office. Members at the well attended meeting received the financial, President's and Executive Officer's annual reports and considered a range of issues, most of which are covered in the Executive Officer's report below.

One Notice of Motion was received and discussed. It related to the definition of Associate Membership of the ISEA. The meeting was told that given the nature of employment practices in the DET there has been a growing trend in recent years for temporary senior officers to return to schools or to seek positions in other government departments or universities. As such several ISEA full-time members have continued as 'Associate' members thus maintaining their association with the Institute.

Whereas 'Associate' membership has been defined as being available to those current or former DET staff who have held CEO or higher positions in the past this definition has resulted in the exclusion of others who have regularly taken part in ISEA activities (e.g. professional dinners, workshops and study-tours) and who demonstrate an interest in educational leadership in general and the activities of the ISEA in particular. Educators such as principals, deputy principals, principal education officers, senior education officers, and academics fall into this category.

The inclusion of such educators in the affairs of the ISEA has been beneficial in that they are representative of the many groups who share with ISEA members the responsibility for school education in NSW. It has encouraged partnerships across and beyond the DET in the interests of the students.

In order to recognise the interest shown by such educators it was moved and passed unanimously that:

- 1. The definition of 'Associate' membership be broadened to include those educators who in the opinion of the ISEA State Council hold or have held leadership positions in school education at the primary, secondary, or tertiary levels as well as those already eligible.*
- 2. Associate members be entitled to access the activities and services of the ISEA other than personnel, industrial and legal support.*
- 3. Associate members shall not be eligible to be appointed to positions on the State Council or to vote at Annual General Meetings or Special Meetings.*
- 4. The fee for 'Associate' membership shall be \$50 per annum.*

Executive Officer's Annual Report submitted to the ISEA 2010 AGM

The ISEA has completed a demanding year with a wide range of activities on the professional, personnel, and industrial fronts. Membership levels have been under pressure, given the large numbers of retirements and reclassifications, but the steady increase of Senior Officer and Associate members has been encouraging. Finances of the organisation have improved with our investments having recovered considerably since the economic downturn. The challenge is always to maintain a strong membership and financial base if the Institute is to continue to provide the level of service and activities currently provided to members.

1.0 Professional Activities

The ISEA granted its third *Award for Excellence in the Administration of Public Education* to Ms Cheryl Ballantyne, School Development Officer, in the Western Sydney Region. Cheryl was granted the Award because of her outstanding work in coordinating the *Bridges to Understanding: Western Sydney Region China Strategy*

The China Strategy, was initiated in 2006 with an agreement to pursue joint projects of cooperation between the Region, the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau in China and the University of Western Sydney.

The Award was presented by the Director-General at a well attended ceremony at the Bridge Street Office of the DET. State Council members Rob Asser and Brian Powyer played major roles in the continued success of the Award and the ceremony itself. Valued at \$5000 the Award will be used by Cheryl to enhance her winning project and to meet colleagues working with similar projects.

A study-tour is planned for the 2010 second term vacation to Hong Kong and Singapore with the touring party visiting educational institutions (schools, systems and universities) in both of these high performing jurisdictions.

A well attended professional dinner was conducted with Dr Peter Hill, CEO of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) as the guest speaker. Dr Hill discussed the progress made in developing national curriculum statements and the conduct of the much debated NAPLAN tests. Dr Hill offered to attend another ISEA dinner when the implementation of ACARA's programs were more advanced.

A professional dinner featuring Professor Andy Hargreaves of Boston College is planned for September this year. Professor Hargreaves has a worldwide reputation as a visionary educator and a brilliant presenter.

Plans are also in hand to conduct a series of workshops across the state around the topic of *Dispute Resolution*. These workshops will be conducted by Emeritus Professor Ed Davis and have arisen from several situations where members have been required to resolve disputes in their areas of responsibility.

The ISEA Website continued to provide news and information to members and colleagues. The inclusion of media reports, provided by the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL), has been welcomed by members. The contribution of Brian Powyer in the management of the Website is hereby acknowledged.

2.0 Industrial Activity

The 2009–2011 *Salaries and Conditions Award* for CEOs negotiated by the ISEA was subject to implementation during the past year. Although the pay rises of 4.4% (2009) 3.8% (2010) have flowed without incident and the 3.8% increase for 2011 will no doubt do likewise some other aspects of the Award have been problematic. For example the discrepancy in payments of leave-loadings paid to CEOs was rectified by the DET in most instances promptly but in the case of some members it was necessary for the ISEA to pursue the matter before due payments were made. None the less in time all back-payments were made much to the financial benefit of all eligible CEOs.

In the course of the Award negotiations the ISEA agreed in principle to the adoption of the DET's generic Performance Management Scheme subject to modifications to better reflect the qualifications, responsibilities, and status of CEOs.

Discussions with the DET around acceptable modifications have been long and arduous and as of this date have not been concluded to the satisfaction of the ISEA. The ISEA is considering its options in the face of what appears to be an intractable stance by the DET over reasonably simple modifications.

The review of the Curriculum K–12 Directorate and the Centre for Learning Innovation and the proposed merger of the two units have occupied the ISEA during the year because of the implications for the delivery of educational support to schools and the threat to the careers and standard-of-living for the several long-term temporary CEOs employed in the Units.

Despite written undertakings by the DET that the staff of the two units, the ISEA, and the Teachers Federation would be consulted in the course of the review and kept informed of progress and decisions very little of this has occurred. It is a shameful and disrespectful situation that that highly skilled, loyal and hard working staff should be left in the dark for so long as their work and futures are decided without acceptable consultation. The ISEA has made several approaches to the DET to rectify the situation but to no avail. Legal advice has now been sought and the ISEA and the members from the two units will consider the available options.

2.0 Services to Members

ISEA services have been brought to the support of many ISEA members and their families over the year. Without disclosing confidentiality it can be reported that ISEA support and services have been provided in the following circumstances:

- Appeals against non-appointment to advertised positions.
- Financial advice regarding retirement options and benefits.
- Representation over non-payment of anticipated salary increments.
- Identification of advertisement errors as they applied to the temporary/permanent status of positions.
- Representation for a member seeking recognition of service prior to returning to a school position.
- Clarification of the permanent/temporary status of a member's position.
- Representation for a member subject to a formally lodged grievance.

Members are invited to access the ISEA's legal, professional, industrial, financial, and personal support services at any time. ISEA members are also entitled to access to the Teachers Federation Health fund as the ISEA is recognised by TFH as an affiliate for that purpose.

Recently the ISEA has affiliated with *Union Shopper*, a purchasing service offered by the combined unions of NSW. Through this service members are able to deal direct with several suppliers as discount rates or to have *Union Shopper* staff track down the best prices for a wide range of goods including cars, travel, white-goods, and insurance.

The ISEA has also had occasion to send condolences and floral tributes in the case of bereavements in members' families. Retiring members have received recognition of their contribution to, and membership of, the ISEA.

4.0 Communication with Members

During the year there were 8 Newsletters, including progress reports, notices and current events, distributed to members. A survey was conducted to ascertain members' views on the conduct of the NAPLAN tests. The assistance of Kerrie Ikin in compiling the Newsletters is hereby acknowledged.

5.0 Membership and Finances

Membership has levelled-out due to several retirements and reclassifications. Membership is the key to the finances of the ISEA regardless of the Institute's investments. The growth in Senior Officer and Associate membership is encouraging and appears to be in response to the ISEA's growing reputation as an active and authentic voice in school education.

The finances of the ISEA have improved considerably over the last financial year due to the improved value of investments and because of careful budgeting. As a result the ISEA continues to be in a solid financial state.

6.0 Future Activities

The ISEA has several major items on its Agenda for 2010–2011. These include:

- The fourth year of the ISEA Award for Excellence in the Administration of Public Education.
- The sponsorship of members to overseas placements.
- A study-tour to Hong Kong and Singapore.
- A professional Dinner featuring Professor Andy Hargreaves of Boston College.
- Workshops in Dispute Resolution.
- Enhanced representation for SES and Senior Officer members on personnel issues.
- Improved status and right-of-return conditions for all long-term temporary senior officers.
- An improved professional development program for all senior officers.
- An improved induction program for newly appointed CEOs.
- Wider ISEA representation on DET committees and forums.
- Promulgation of the *Union Shopper* service to all members.

7.0 Appreciations

My appreciation to members, the President Barry Laing and the State Council of the ISEA for their cooperation and support during a demanding year. Gratitude is also expressed to the ACEL and to Macquarie University for their support of ISEA ventures during the year and to the NSW Teachers Federation for its ongoing cooperation on a range of matters of common interest.

A special tribute should go to our retiring Secretary, Brian Jarman, whose tireless work over many years has been of immense benefit to the members of the ISEA.

Dean Godbee of Chifley Financial Services has continued to provide regular and reliable advice to members.

Dr Ron Ikin
ISEA Executive Officer
20 May 2010