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PPTA NEWS

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A focus on wellbeing curbs bullying p5



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Not all the opinions expressed within *PPTA News* reflect those of the PPTA.

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Prurience and ping-pong

I know secondary school students love their teachers and hang on every word they say, but still I was a little surprised when a pregnant 17-year-old was reported to have said she lost her virginity at 14 because a teacher had told her it was okay to have sex providing she consented. It must be true because it was in the *New Zealand Herald*. Can we also assume that the girl did her homework regularly because her teachers told her to?

Media coverage of sex education is a classic example of the simplistic and sensationalist way education issues are dealt with. After a few days of salacious debate, the research showing that a comprehensive programme of sex education is associated with increased contraception use, reduced rates of pregnancy and STDs and delays in the first time people have sex surfaced, but only after the supply of sanctimonious, religiously-extreme and sometimes downright prurient comment had dried up. One father claimed he had withdrawn his son because the lessons were "grubby" – inadvertently giving the New Zealand public an insight into his own sex life that we might have been better off without.

The debate illustrates the capacity of human beings to hold views that are self-righteous and satisfying and just plain wrong. Intuitively, it seems that advocating abstinence should reduce sexual activity amongst teenagers but it doesn't; American states with mandated abstinence programmes have higher rates of teenage pregnancy than those that don't. It may seem, instinctively, that national standards ought to raise achievement but they don't and can be positively harmful to education. Random drug testing is supposed to reduce student drug use but it doesn't. On the other hand, programmes that advocate healthy eating at school do have positive effects but have been sacrificed on the altar of the powerful myth of "nanny state".

Depressingly, after more than a hundred years of compulsory education, the approach to the formation

and operation of social policies remains closer to a medieval witchcraft trial than to the reasoned and logical discourse we like to imagine we are engaging in. Polarising myths and stereotypes sustain media and political life in western countries. For a politician to declare he or she is not an expert on a particular subject or that the latest legislative band-aid is not a long-term solution is tantamount to political suicide. Simplistic certainty is always preferable to messy complexity.

This is where our "ping pong" paper which advocates that politicians form a long-term strategic consensus around education comes in. Although the idea has generally been well received, it has been intriguing to note that the few negative comments have come from groups and individuals who can't get away from a stereotyped view of PPTA as "the enemy". Consequently, rather than grappling with the question of why New Zealand politicians are incapable of emulating the Finnish who have been able to work together for more than 30 years on a shared strategic plan that has made their education system the best in the world, they take refuge in stereotyping and polarisation.

In the *Listener* Joanne Black fatuously declared any consensus in education would be stymied by the fact that PPTA would find itself at odds with parents. In doing so, she reveals a complacent assumption that her personal prejudices are widely held. In fact, our polling of parents indicates strong support for teachers and a deep understanding of the challenges of the job.

In the words of a politician, J F Kennedy, "the greatest enemy of the truth is very often not the lie deliberate, contrived and dishonest but the myth, persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

We are not looking for comfortable complacency and we don't expect that we would agree with everything in a nationally developed



by Robin Duff

strategic plan for secondary education. We are reasonably confident, however, that if the debate were shorn of self-interested politicking and the best ideas were allowed to come through, we would not find a lot to disagree with. If there are compromises to be made so be it – after all what is a collective agreement but the best compromise the parties can forge on the day.

So we can do compromise. Can the politicians and media hacks who manipulate public opinion in order to shore up their personal and pecuniary interests make a similar commitment to open-minded debate? •



END
the
PING-PONG
in
Education

Life in limbo-zone

Two teachers talk about life in east Christchurch.



Kate Grage and Marianne Daines have a lot in common – they both teach science at the same school and have been living on the same street for six years.

What they don't share is the zoning of the land on their street which now resembles a war zone in the Christchurch suburb of Avonside.

Marianne's house on one side of Retreat Road lies in the red zone, while Kate lives opposite but is in the orange zone.

Those living in areas classified red have been given two options – the crown either purchases the entire property at current rating value, less any property insurance payments made, or it makes an offer of purchase for the land and home owners continue to deal with their own insurer.

Those living in the orange zone live in limbo waiting for a classification.

Kate and Marianne agree their homes both sustained serious damage.

The rugged cracks, remnants of liquefaction and warped levelling of floors are testaments to the havoc the ongoing earthquakes have caused.

Neither house has a useable toilet because the sewerage pipes were destroyed but they get by with allowing grey water from showers and washing machines to drain under the house.

Kate and Chris were due to move on 16 September as their house had sold and become unconditional.

Their home sustained major damage to an extension at the back during the September earthquake.

"The people who bought the house

withdrew from legal proceedings. We reimbursed their deposit and got our money back from the real estate agents. We were lucky in hindsight, but it didn't feel like it at the time."

Kate and Chris's life is in limbo. Their house hasn't had any repairs since September, leaving them unable to open windows and their front door.

Marianne and husband Murray across the road had no desire to move. They lovingly renovated their home and planned to retire there.

They've been told their land and house are not liveable and they need to move on within 12 months.

"I was semi hoping we'd be green (zoned) and that everyone else past us would go and we'd have a river view, but logic caught up and I realised we can't live here," says Marianne.

"We've had neighbourhood meetings with CERA (the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority) and no one can explain to us why a road makes a difference," says Kate.

Kate says the ideal outcome would be for her home to be zoned red.

When Kate and Chris moved to New Zealand from the largely "quakeless" UK they'd had little experience with earthquakes.

"We knew New Zealand had earthquakes but when we woke up on 4 September I thought we'd been driven

into by a truck," says Kate.

"I understood earthquakes but I never imagined all the after-shocks and all of the repercussions – the knock on effect from one event.

"Never in a million years had I thought I'd be sitting here a year later and nothing has happened to my house," says Kate.

Both women say maintaining their composure as teachers at Avonside Girls' High School when one's home life is in disarray is hard.

"My teaching has been compromised because so much of my time and emotional energy is tied up with sorting out what's happening," says Marianne.

Marianne and Kate agree they have to perform over and above their normal teaching duties to help students cope.

"I've got good, hard-working intelligent girls who are traumatised and I've had to help them through that when I'm not feeling that much better myself," says Marianne.

"I told my students to take a step back and give themselves permission to be upset."

"They are showing resilience. Some of them will take a lot longer to get through it than others but I keep telling them that this will create character in you that you will appreciate in the future. In years to come you'll see you've developed things in you that will be of value." ■

Kate Grage & Marianne Daines

Lifting the cloak on bullying

Bullying was in the media spotlight again after incidents at Hutt Valley High were scrutinised in a report released in September by the Office of the Ombudsman.

PPTA president Robin Duff said the report illustrated a systemic failure by the Ministry of Education and government to support schools with bullying and said it was unfair for one school to be highlighted when bullying is a nationwide issue.

“Hutt Valley High School was left to reach a crisis point and was neglected by the ministry,” said Duff.

Statistics show that 34% of New Zealand secondary school students say they are bullied often or weekly – this is 5% higher than in other OECD countries.

PPTA News talked to one school actively working to improve student wellbeing at school.

Deputy principal at Wainuiomata High School Martin Henry said schools needed to be proactive about creating wellbeing at school and to use the tools provided by government. But he cautioned that “tools are just tools” and their success lay in hard work put

in by individual schools.

“We have bullies in our school and we have to be open about it. The more we shine a light on these issues the better it is for schools. If you’ve got a problem with a student you cannot pretend it’s not happening,” he said.

“If you’re not looking at yourself then how are you able to change anything. Education is a change process.”

Wainuiomata High School used the *Wellbeing At School* toolkit which is part of the Problem Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) programme. It included a staff and parent survey.

Henry said the wellbeing at school programme provided robust information and was great for schools that believed in self review.

“It’s a long survey and it throws up a lot of stuff to work on,” he said.

“It’s important to be open about bullying even though this is difficult under Tomorrow’s Schools,” he said.

“It’s easier for our school because we’re bounded by a valley. We don’t feel the pressure to protect our image and aren’t as vulnerable with our roll count.”

Henry said the school sent a clear message that bullying was not acceptable.

“We work restoratively with students and their families and we also work closely with the police in Wainuiomata.”

He said students who had been expelled from neighbouring schools came to Wainuiomata High School and did well.

Henry said there was often a breakdown in the system when a student was involved in bullying and that often related to self esteem.

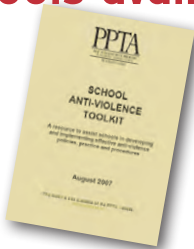
“We have posters and information around the school that tell students what to do if they are being bullied.”

Using the *Wellbeing At School* toolkit meant the school highlighted areas it wanted to work on and came up with three values that were most important to the school – respect, inclusion and doing the best you can.

“The next step for us is to put the survey in front of students,” he said.

“Four students from each year level had been selected to be surveyed and would form part of a group creating a behaviour plan.”

Tools available to secondary schools to address bullying



PPTA Anti-violence Toolkit
Violence in schools encompasses all incidents in which any member of the school community is subjected to intimidating behaviour or physical assault. Visit www.ppta.org.nz.



Skylight
Skylight offers practical new support booklets for those who bully and for their parents. A video DVD “Bullying - it’s just not cool” is also available. Visit www.skylight.org.nz.



Positive Behaviour For Learning (PB4L)
The MoE and the education sector introduced this school-wide system of support that helps define, teach and support appropriate student behaviours. Visit www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EducationInitiatives/PositiveBehaviourForLearning.aspx.



Wellbeing at School
This is an evidence based toolkit for schools to build a safe and caring school and deter bullying. It’s part of the PB4L programme.



Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb)
A RTLb works within schools giving support and providing assistance to teachers of students who are at risk of not achieving or achieving at a low level because of their learning or behaviour difficulties.



No Bully
Visit www.nobully.org.nz/guidelines.htm or call 0800 NO BULLY.

PPTA received two nominations for president and three nominations for junior vice-president (JVP). On pages 6, 7 and 8 each candidate explains why she or he should be elected. PPTA will send voting papers to all branches. Voting closes 5pm, Friday 4 November.

Doug Clark

Forest View High School

Presidential candidate

Every decade or so education faces a perfect storm of major political, industrial, workload and professional problems. We will face that storm should a hostile coalition be elected and the term of the PPTA president will be spent leading us through it. We have to start planning now for early consultation with members on the industrial round which will begin in October 2012, as well as dealing with the professional demands of standards alignment and its associated workload and issues around disruptive students. We have essential work to do on all fronts.

Presidential candidates need to be practising teachers who understand workload, commitment to students and professional concerns, committed PPTA members and keen to do their best.

I have dedication, strength of conviction, the energy and vitality to lead in the difficult time ahead. I have the



experience of professional, political and industrial matters to ensure we make progress in all these areas.

Presidents alone do not win campaigns. Our greatest successes come when we are united under the PPTA umbrella. The presidential team must listen to, and be a bridge between, all within the diverse population that make up the teaching profession. They must represent and unite those early in their careers and those with longer service. They must also work efficiently with all our networks, link our cultures and be an effective voice for members in all schools – rural, urban, area, high and low decile.

With involvement at branch, region and executive level going back over 20 years, representing members on a range of committees and inter-agency groups, I have broad experience and understanding of the workings of the political and education systems and a balance of industrial and professional knowledge.

I am not afraid to ask the hard questions or take on difficult issues and I commit, if elected, to bring to the presidency a fresh view, the focus, depth of experience, confidence, strength and energy that is needed to represent you in the challenging time ahead and to ensure that your voice is effective at the highest levels on all issues that affect our profession. ▪

Robin Duff

Burnside High School

Presidential candidate

As your president in 2007 and 2008, your junior vice-president in 2005 and 2006, your senior vice-president over 2007 and 2008, and president once again this year, I believe I have demonstrated clearly that I have the knowledge and experience to continue to lead this strong, principled and determined union.

I seek re-election for 2012 because my continued involvement in PPTA/Te Wehengarua has reinforced and extended my personal vision for the future of a strong and well resourced public education in Aotearoa New Zealand. We need to emphasise our clear, independent and professional vision of secondary education for the future – a future in which adequate time, manageable workload, good resources, and realistic class ratios are



vital components. And with this I will work to further extend our increasingly positive, professional media profile for the association.

Careful preparation for a fair and reasonable settlement of the STCA round starting later in 2012 must remain the primary focus for this coming year. It is essential to highlight that we are valued in our commitment and dedication as is frequently identified by parents and national research. Whilst industrial action is never the goal, we know that by using it to highlight crucial public issues we show that the “unseen” damages to students’ achievements are much greater if the conditions and salaries for our best specialists continue to decline.

Continuity is a key factor in ensuring that the union continues to remain staunch in the face of serious attempts to undermine its work. I have been proud to represent the association over many years and seek your endorsement to be allowed to continue in the role of president. Once again I offer my experience and determination to lead the association and to forcefully and publically articulate our needs and our vision.

Kia Kaha. ▪

Jacinta Grice

Hillmorton High School

JVP candidate

I am firmly committed to free quality public education for all. PPTA's continued stance is a value worth striving towards. Teachers' conviction to education and the new curriculum needs to be managed to ensure that workload issues do not become overwhelming and unmanageable. It is very important to plan for the future with succession planning and to support all our new and establishing teachers as they are PPTA and our future.

I believe that the empowerment of individuals and the promotion of an active involvement with the PPTA is where the real collective power of unionism develops the strength to fight off the challenges that face us today. I believe in fairness and equality in the work place and have always worked hard to promote PPTA's views throughout Canterbury. I believe that PPTA branches need to be



supported and empowered to not just manage their issues as they arise but to be effective with relevant solutions, always seeking improvement for teachers.

I believe I have proven that I have the experience and the skills to represent the Canterbury region on the national executive and would like the opportunity to prove myself as the junior vice-president. I have represented Canterbury enthusiastically for a number of years at a regional level and have been part of a team which has worked effectively to build a model that supports membership engagement and activism. As an executive member I am ideally placed to further that work and ensure that our structures continue to respond to the needs of all PPTA members.

I bring strong communication skills and a commitment to team work. Coming from a special needs background means I have a holistic and collaborative approach to team work and a highly developed sense of humour. It is important working in this voluntary position to have fun while working hard and maintaining integrity and high ethical standards.

I have worked for PPTA for many years at grass roots level through to representing you nationally and I now believe I am ready to take on the challenge and responsibility of junior vice-president. ▪

Hazel McIntosh

Kamo High School

JVP candidate

We are a voluntary union, answerable to our members. Pay, working conditions and being part of a collective are primary reasons why individuals join a union. Industrially we work to ensure improvements for members and at the time our collective is negotiated all our energies are focused on ensuring the best possible outcomes. When we collectively take industrial action it is a last resort, where no other options remain open to us.

The PPTA is also our only professional voice and the work we do here makes a huge difference not just to us as employees but to the students we work with and to the wider communities we live in. It is our expertise and deep understanding of the work we do that is vital in guiding decision making in the secondary sector. The industrial and the professional sides of our union cannot



be separated, each works to support the other.

PPTA strives to work constructively with all political parties. We support good educational policy where ever it originates. Unfortunately education suffers from being a political football. Kicked from one set of ideological ideas to another depending on the party elected to govern. The consequences for education have often been disastrous. Short term, quick fixes for very complex problems, unceremoniously ditched as political fashions change. There has to be a better way!

The time is well overdue for decisions about education in our country to become the result of consensus involving all the political parties. With long term strategies based on sound evidence to enable change to be managed, providing time and appropriate resourcing for appropriate changes to become embedded in practise.

There is an alternative: a more educationally focused and less adversarial bargaining framework. Hardly a new idea as this is exactly what was recommended by the ministerial task force chaired by Dame Margaret Beasley in 2003. It is time this report came off the shelf and became a working reality. We need to move to implement those recommendations. It is in all our interest to live in a more equitable society and education is a major player in achieving this. ▪

More ...



nominations for junior vice-president

Angela Roberts

Stratford High School

JVP candidate

“It all amounts to nothing if together we don't stand. There is power in a Union.” - Billy Bragg.

In an increasingly volatile time for public education as threats to resourcing, working conditions and our collective agreements grow, PPTA must challenge the continual pressure to roll out under-resourced and often incoherent changes to the secondary sector. To do this we need to have a firm grasp of the professional, political and industrial issues, a keen sense of where our members are, and the energy and commitment to ensure that their interests are met.

Over the next few years we will need strong, strategic and positive leadership, especially as we prepare for collective agreement negotiations next year. This round could truly test our ability to stand united as the industrial environment becomes increasingly hostile to collective



bargaining and the appropriate resourcing of the state sector. We will need to be steadfast about what is important: appropriate remuneration and good working conditions. Members can trust that I would not shy away from what could prove to be a significant and difficult battle to retain conditions such as guaranteed non-contact time and to win fair and robust settlements that are critical for the future of the profession.

A decade of experience on executive and a range of national committees and networks have given me a clear appreciation of the issues that are important to members and how the industrial, professional and political are interconnected. This knowledge is critical if we are to progress thoughtful, well-resourced and sustainable education policy. Curriculum and qualifications developments, student behaviour, teacher career and professional learning opportunities, safe workplaces, and workload are all matters that need urgent attention.

I passionately believe in our association and our ability to make a positive contribution to ensuring that teaching in a New Zealand public secondary school is a desirable and satisfying profession. It is essential that you have executive and presidential teams that have the knowledge, experience, energy and zeal to fight for all that is needed to support us as we strive to continue delivering a quality education to all our students. •

Catch your union live

Workload pressures mean that keeping up with your union's activities is always going to be a challenge.

We hope that by providing ready access to the dialogue, debate and decisions that make up PPTA's Annual Conference we can keep you better informed.

Between 18 - 20 October look for the live video streaming on the homepage of www.ppta.org.nz. Unable to see it live? That's ok. Clips of key speeches, debates and decisions will be available on the website. Give it a click. •



The truth about registered teacher criteria

The registered teacher criteria (RTC) became mandatory for all teachers renewing or reapplying for a practising certificate this year.

RTC are also mandatory for teachers who are beginning an induction programme in New Zealand (registered provisionally or subject to confirmation).

These are not an additional set of standards, they replace the satisfactory teacher dimensions and they do not replace the professional standards in the agreement against which annual appraisal and attestation take place.

With the introduction of the new criteria, many schools have taken another look at their appraisal documents, often with the goal of integrating evaluation against the new criteria with appraisal against the professional standards to avoid having dual processes.

PPTA is concerned this has led to new documents being written which conflict with the purposes of the new criteria.

There are also inflated and prescriptive to the point of being nearly incomprehensible and in some cases diminish the professional role of teachers by including elements like: mark the roll; acknowledge learner effort and turn off the light.

Strangely, in these documents extra-curricular involvement becomes one of the checklist items – it should not be as it's not in the RTC or the professional standards.

A good starting point for considering the new criteria and how to use them would be to look at the first page of the Teachers Council's *Registered Teacher Criteria Handbook 2010*, where it is stated that the RTC are designed to be both inspiring and achievable for teachers.

It is also useful to consider what the RTC are not designed to be.

According to the *Draft Evidence Guide* issued by the Teachers Council, the RTC and their key indicators should not be presented as a checklist for assessment of teachers, exemplars of benchmarks for assessment of

teachers or a one-size-fits-all model of an exemplary teacher.

Some of the appraisal models PPTA have seen are all of these things.

For example, one is 19 pages and breaks down the key indicators into phrases, with an extra "tick list" column to show what each of these phrases might look like in practice.

There are 212 items in this column and if you got ticked off on enough of them you would be a "super teacher".

PPTA wants to remind teachers that this is not what the RTC are supposed to be about, and it is not what a good appraisal system would be about.

Appraisal has always been based on self-evaluation, observation, discussion and documentation.

The advent of the RTC does nothing to change this. Extensive collections of evidence are not required. There is a requirement that teachers should reflect on their practice, but this does not mean that experienced teachers suddenly have to compile reflective journals.

The key principle is that whatever is required for appraisal purposes should arise naturally out of the teacher's work, not be something that is manufactured for the purposes of appraisal.

The *Registered Teacher Criteria Handbook 2010* says, "the degree

of formality and extent of documentation of evidence will clearly be different for experienced teachers renewing practising certificates in contrast to what is required by provisionally registered teachers working towards full registration, which may be more extensive and formal".

Job descriptions and/or appraisal documents containing checklists and exemplary models are likely to be unreadable, de-professionalising and make a teacher feel as if they cannot measure up to the "super teacher" model. That should not be their purpose.

It is good if schools are re-examining their appraisal systems but appraisal should not be perfunctory. It can be a powerful tool in the professional development of a teacher but the introduction of the RTC is not a reason for a small number of schools to start producing documents which make the teacher feel they are always struggling to achieve better, but never quite able to make the grade.

The Teachers Council website contains useful material on implementing the RTC at www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/rtc/index.stm.

PPTA will soon be producing guidelines on the RTC, to go with the *Professional Learning and Development Toolkit*, released earlier this year. ■



Out in the field

Arguing all the way to the top

Information and advice from PPTA's intrepid field officers.

Field officers are tasked with ensuring that all teachers receive what they are entitled to in terms of their collective agreement. This is usually a simple matter involving tasks such as advising a member what his or her entitlements are, making a phone call to a principal or contacting payroll.

Situations involving salary or allowances are more complex when the expectation is that the board or payroll should pay but the Ministry of Education will not approve the payment. In these situations advocacy to the ministry on behalf of the member usually follows. Most of these cases are resolved amicably, but the process may take weeks.

Where a case cannot be resolved there are occasions when a formal dispute may be filed.

In one case a teacher found that as a result of the settlement of the 2007 collective agreement the qualifications he held were raised from G2 to G3. The ministry argued that he was not entitled to a salary reassessment. PPTA argued that he must be paid under the terms of the current

collective agreement.

A second case involved a year two teacher whose first permanent appointment involved a claim for removal expenses. The words of both the STCA and ASTCA indicate an eligibility. The ministry argued that the long term relieving position he had held before his move counted as a "permanent" position and therefore made him ineligible for the claim. PPTA argued that the words of the entitlement were clear.

Another case involving removal expenses saw a teacher make a claim following an offer of a permanent position immediately after taking the retraining option from the surplus staffing provisions. But the ministry refused, arguing that during her retraining employment she was no longer employed by her former board.

What all these cases had in common was that the dispute was not with the school board but with the ministry.

Where a problem cannot be resolved a union may seek assistance from the Department of Labour. This can involve firstly a mediation



arranged by the department. If this fails the matter can be referred to the Employment Relations Authority for a binding decision.

All the cases above had a favourable outcome:

- A teacher whose qualifications have improved in status following an agreement between PPTA and the ministry is entitled to have the benefits of these improvements.
- A teacher with removal entitlements under 8.1.1(d) [STCA] or 7.2.1(d) [ASTCA] can be sure that the term "first permanent appointment" means just that.
- A teacher in a permanent position who has been made redundant retains an entitlement to removal expenses during the period of any ongoing employment as a supernumerary or while retraining.

Letters

Cuts unrelated to denial of PPTA member's claim — ACC

Dear editor,

Your one-sided article "The human cost of ACC cuts" (*PPTA News*, vol 32, no 6, August 2011) contains numerous errors and paints a very misleading picture for readers.

ACC categorically rejects your suggestion that our handling of Ms Katherine Radford-Simpson's claims was driven by funding cuts.

Our records show we accepted Ms Radford-Simpson's claim for fractures caused by a workplace fall one day after we received it. We have approved a wide range of help, including funding for surgery, home help, hand therapy and weekly compensation for lost earnings, related to this claim.

We weren't able to accept Ms

Radford-Simpson's claim for her neurological condition. This is not because of funding issues, but because despite extensive medical investigation, paid for by ACC, there's insufficient medical evidence that this condition is injury-related.

It must be remembered that ACC's role is to cover injuries – illness and underlying health conditions come under the public health system.

We acknowledge there were delays arranging some types of help for Ms Radford-Simpson. These weren't solely ACC's fault, but we've apologised for any lapses on our part. However, if Ms Radford-Simpson has any unresolved concerns about our service, we're more than willing to discuss these with her.



Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara

We'd appreciate being given the opportunity to provide our viewpoint if you propose writing future articles involving ACC. That way, we could help you present a balanced account of the situation, which this article clearly wasn't.

Mike Tully
national manager
ACC claims management network



Fiji: in solidarity

Please convey our acknowledgements and gratitude to your members for their support for the cause of restoring democracy in Fiji at the earliest, through their participation at the demonstration outside the Fiji Embassy in Wellington (*PPTA News*, vol 32, no 7, September 2011).

We thank you also for the articles in the above edition.

Yours in solidarity,

Tevita Koroi

Fijian Teachers Association

The Bourne unionist

Matt Damon is making a splash in news headlines for his supportive stance of public education. The actor even appeared in *The Western Teacher*, the magazine of the Western Australia state school teachers' union. Damon made an appearance at an education rally in Washington

and told the crowd he had a natural affinity with teachers as his mother is one. Damon spoke out about the increasing use of standardised teaching.

"So you think job insecurity is what makes teachers work hard? I want to be an actor, a teacher wants to teach. I mean, why else would you take a shitty salary and really long hours and do that job unless you really love to do it?" he said.

A new kind of strike

The National Union of Schoolchildren (NUS) has called a country-wide strike, causing thousands of schools across the UK to close. A lack of chaos is predicted as children and teachers stay at home.

The NUS has promised to continue the strike until their demands are met. These include a 10% increase in dinner money, five minutes extra play-time, and the option to skip PE. Union boss Henry, 7, said "We don't need no education."

He continued, "Well, obviously we do, but only on our terms. What kind of a world are we living in when teachers lecture pupils on how to behave?"

Free school doubts

The Guardian reports that in the Swedish port city of Malmö there were gaggles of students clutching brand-new laptops given to them on loan for the start of the school year. As schools fight over what, due to a demographic blip, is a declining number of students, the device you get has become a keen area of competition.

"I've just got a mini-HP, but you can pay a bit more and get a Mac or an iPad," says Mua Stanbery, 16, who has just started at ProCivitas, the most popular of the town's profit-making free schools.

What few of the students know is that the ultimate cause of their good fortune – the competitive system of free schools Sweden pioneered in the early 1990s – is under assault.

SNS, a prominent business-funded thinktank, issued a report that sharply reversed its normal pro-market stance. The entry of private operators into state-funded education, it argued, had increased segregation and may not have improved educational standards at all. ■

Focus on NCEA alignment

A series of updates casting a wary eye on the NCEA standards alignment process.

What's hot at the moment

- The minister of education's announcement in response to the recommendations of NZQA's Workload Advisory Group.
- Final (ie ready for registration) drafts of level 2 standards will have been published on www.tki.org.nz by the end of September. Once they've been registered, they will shift to NZQA's website.
- The Teaching and Learning Guidelines – lots of these are up now via <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/> and most will be complete by the end of November.

Clarification about Maths common assessment tasks (CAT)

Some Maths teachers have been expressing concerns about what they see as extra workload from the Maths CAT at level 1. PPTA consulted the New Zealand Association of Maths Teachers (NZAMT) when this was first mooted, and during its develop-

ment, to ensure that this CAT was what Maths teachers wanted.

NZAMT says that it was its response to the requirement that there be only three externally assessed standards in one three-hour exam. Essentially Maths, unlike any other subject, has managed to get an extra externally assessed standard, which is set and printed by NZQA but marked by teachers according to an assessment schedule provided. If this standard had been internal, teacher workload would have been greater.

NZQA has assured PPTA that they did not intend to use this as a precedent for getting teachers to mark other external assessments. NZQA had to be persuaded by NZAMT to provide a CAT, and are not keen to extend this to other subjects.

Because of this, PPTA supports the NZAMT position that the CAT provides a reduction in teacher workload for level 1 Maths teachers compared with other subjects. ■

South India: building economic independence, cooperatively

The new UnionAID project will enable Dalit and Tribal communities to build their economic independence (from landlords, middle men and moneylenders) through cooperative based businesses and micro-enterprises. On a recent visit to South India UnionAID Executive Chair Ross Wilson was able to talk to many of these groups about their aspirations.

Gypsy communities

Rajalakshmi and Rana are the leaders of a Tribal nomadic (Narikuravar) community who, as part of the UnionAID project, have settled on government land near Madurai. Organised as a union they are proud of their achievements in obtaining the land and a water supply. They now want to work with two other Narikuravar communities to extend their jewellery making business as a cooperative venture providing an important source of income for the community.



Rajalakshmi and Rana are the leaders of a Narikuravar community

Sandal makers

There are 189 units of Dalit sandalmakers in and around Madurai City working in poor conditions on piece rate work. The UnionAID project will enable them to develop these businesses together as a cooperative venture, and link them directly with the market.

Bamboo weavers

Angali is the president of the Bamboo Basketweavers' Union. Dalit women in several villages aim to develop their existing bamboo weaving skills and micro-enterprise activity into a cooperative based business. These women are working in the forecourt of the Dalit temple in Ambedkar Nagar which is the Dalit area of Perunkueli village.



Erammal is the leader of the Women Agricultural Workers' Union

Agricultural workers

Erammal is the leader of the Women Agricultural Workers' Union which has built the collective bargaining power and confidence of these workers over the past few years. Erammal says that the women want to build their economic independence by developing their agricultural activities as a collective based business.

Study tour to Mae Sot and Bangkok January 2012.

The programme has yet to be finalised and will depend on numbers. We will contact those who have expressed interest within the next month or two.



Mr Robin — Sandalmakers' Union leader in Madurai

Don't miss out on our 2011 fundraisers!

Tickets to our April fundraising dinner at Maranui sold out within five days. Due to the success of this dinner at which we raised over \$3000, UnionAID plans to hold a spring dinner in September. We will notify local members of the date closer to the time.



Become a Kiwi Solidarity member - Support real change

You can help vulnerable workers in developing countries in our region get a fairer deal by making a small monthly donation by direct debit by emailing unionaid@nzctu.org.nz with your contact details. We will then contact you and make the arrangements. Unions Aotearoa International Development Trust is a registered charity - Reg. No. CC42051

unionaid.org.nz

UnionAID iRaffle

For purposes of funding union building projects in Tamil Nadu, India

\$2
per ticket

PPTA members!
To buy tickets or sell booklets of 10 see your PPTA branch chairperson

Organiser:

Nanette
Cormack
PO Box 11 767,
Wgtn

Lottery:

10001 to
22500

Total number of tickets:

12500

Raffle closes:
28 November
2011

1
Two first prizes
of an iPad 2,
32GB, 3G/WiFi



2
One second prize
of an iPhone4,
16GB



3
One third prize
of an iPod
Touch, 32GB



Raffle will be drawn from a number barrel on 5 December 2011 at 2pm by a member of the Wellington Police Station. Winners will be announced on the UnionAID website and notified following the draw by phone call and/or email.



Phone 0900 UNAID (0900 862 43) to automatically donate \$30 from your phone bill