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ISEA

ISEA NEWS

REPRESENTING TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

THE CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKE

I write these words for our Newsletter having just watched the moving Earthquake Memorial Service in Hagley Park on 18 March, and also as I prepare for the funeral of a former student, a casualty of the CTV building.

We will all remember 22 February 2011 as we began to realise the enormity of the disaster unfolding before us on TV. As the hours turned into days we saw a physically broken and devastated city. But as the dust and smoke began to settle, we witnessed something quite special. It was that solid Canterbury spirit, that Kiwi spirit of responding to a need. The global response, together with the local rescue teams, the police, fire service, defence forces, the student volunteer army, the farmy army, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and stranger helping stranger, gave us all inspiration. The shattered cathedral tower became a symbol of hope.

Our independent schools in Christchurch were caught up in the midst of it. Miraculously there were no serious injuries as buildings rocked, floors buckled and parapets fell. Now, several weeks later those schools are resuming, some in temporary accommodation, and some in marquees. Some have buildings that have had to be demolished, some are waiting for repairs, but not enough to stop routines getting back to a degree of normality.

In the spirit of support many of our private schools have taken on Christchurch 'refugees' Some schools have even accepted them in the meantime on a no fee basis.

Our thoughts and our prayers are with our colleagues in Christchurch, together with the families of their students. The toll of the continuing after shocks, the damage and loss of homes and businesses will have its effect for months and perhaps years to come.

In the words that have become immortalized in recent weeks: Kia kaha Christchurch.

Bruce Owen
Past President

From the Membership Support officer's Casebook



*At its 5 March meeting the Executive approved of a name change for the position of Employment Officer. Mairi Ferguson's position will now be called **Membership Support**. Her role covers all aspects of employment advice, giving support to members. It is felt that the change in name better reflects the nature of the work that she is doing.*

Teachers Council Reporting

Once again we have been asked for support to members over a report to the Teachers Council. There are two reasons why such a report may have been made. Principals have a mandatory obligation to send a report to the Council under certain circumstances. The regulations state that a report must be made if the teacher resigns, and **'within the last twelve months the employer had advised the teacher that it was dissatisfied with, or intended to investigate, any aspect of the conduct of the teacher, or the teacher's competence.'** Note that a process does not need to have actually begun, provided there has been a formal letter from the principal to the teacher.

When the Teachers Council receives such a complaint they will contact the teacher directly, sending copies of all documentation provided by the school, and invite the teacher to make any corrections or responses before the committee considers the complaint. It is essential at this stage that every supporting documentation available be supplied to refute the school's allegations if possible. **This is where ISEA can help, as we have gained considerable experience in putting together appropriate responses.**

Occasionally the Council does receive complaints directly from parents. This can only happen where either the school is too small to work through the principal, or the parent is dissatisfied with how the school dealt with the complaint. We have also supported members several times in such circumstances,

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and invariably the parent will have sent a lengthy diatribe to the Council – sometimes up to 30 or 40 pages. Teachers must not be intimidated by receiving such papers from the Council, as it is usually fairly easy to refute most of what is said. However, it needs help from the Membership Support officer who is able to be more impartial in crafting a response.

Above all **don't panic** if you suddenly receive such material! Get in touch with us straight away for assistance.

Mairi Ferguson

GRANT GILLON OUR CEO MOVES ON

It was with considerable sadness that I received a phone call from Grant Gillon to say that he had been offered a full time position at the AUT University on the North Shore.



Grant Gillon

Grant has served ISEA well in his three and a half years as CEO. His contribution has been significant. His leadership has enabled ISEA to become a very effective small union. His contacts in Wellington have ensured that our profile has been maintained in the essential areas. Grant has worked hard to ensure that we have good membership benefits. He was instrumental in organising and designing the membership package that is distributed at the beginning of the year. He has kept a firm hand on the budget, ensuring that ISEA members get value for money. He prepared a forward planning document **Towards 800** giving a focus on the priorities for ISEA. As well he has provided strong support to Mairi as our Employment Officer and to Jill as our Administrator.

SUPPORT

On a personal basis I can say that Grant has been an outstanding support to me in my time as President. I always felt that the Association was in very capable hands and it meant that my role changed to more of a figurehead position leading the Executive, from the more administrative role that the president previously had.

BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CAREER

Grant came to us with an interesting and varied background. His years in the Fire Service union gave him ideal union experience. In 1996 he became a Member of Parliament as an Alliance List MP and was re-elected in 1999. He continued his political career leading the Democrat Party and later joining Jim Anderton's Coalition.

In more recent times Grant has been involved in local body politics as a North Shore City Councillor. Last year he stood for the Auckland City and also for one of the North Shore Local Boards. He was not successful in gaining a seat on the Auckland Council, but did get elected to the Kaipatiki Local Board.

In 2007 Grant completed his PhD in Public Policy through Massey University where he was for a time lecturing part time.

NEW POSITION AT AUT

His new position is that of Post Graduate Programme Leader at AUT University on the North Shore. He will be responsible for ensuring that post grad students in the Faculty of Health and

Environmental Sciences are provided appropriate advice and support. As well Grant will have teaching and research responsibilities

The Executive at its March meeting accepted Grant's resignation with regret. Executive members had the opportunity to pay tribute to his work for the association. I am sure all members of ISEA wish Grant well with his new position and thank him for his involvement with our Association.

Bruce Owen
Past President

FINDING A NEW CEO FOR ISEA

At our Staff Meeting in Auckland (on the day of the Earthquake) just after Grant's announcement of his resignation, we outlined the process to recruit our new CEO which was refined and confirmed by the National Executive on 5 March.

We decided that the new CEO will continue to be a half time position, should be resident in Auckland so we should advertise in the N Z Herald along with Trademe and Seek and through the CTU and to our members.

Applicants will receive a package with full details of the requirements of the position and of ISEA and the remuneration and benefits.

Applications close on 26th March and a subcommittee will draw up a short list who will be interviewed by the Executive on Saturday 2nd April so we hope we may have a new CEO by the end of term 1 or the start of term 2.

We are confident that, as in 2007, we will have a strong field of applicants to choose from.

A NEW EXECUTIVE MEMBER

At its October meeting last year the Executive called for nominations for a new member to replace Sandy Jackson, who had recently resigned. We are delighted to announce the appointment to the Executive of Rosalind Robinson of Diocesan School for Girls, Auckland.



Rosalind Robinson

Rosalind is the Music Specialist at the Junior School and will continue our practice of having a Primary School representative at the Executive table to make sure that the voice of the these schools is included in the decision making process. Welcome on board, Rosalind.

Have you visited our website yet?

www.isea.org.nz

You can now log in to view articles and information available only to current financial members.

FROM THE ACTING PRESIDENT



Concerns about such issues as National Standards, changes to NCEA and salary negotiations have been thrown into sharp perspective by the Canterbury Earthquake. It has affected not only the people, communities and infrastructure of Christchurch but also has had a traumatic impact on teachers and students and their families and schools. You will have seen the overall damage and that to schools is widespread and varied. Some are able as I write to reopen after big cleanups not least of the effects of all that silt on their grounds. Many cannot open in the foreseeable future and are making various arrangements to teach off site.

Rebuilding of Independent Schools

Independent Schools have seen huge efforts from maintenance, management and teaching staffs to restore their schools and as I write all will reopen but with some temporary classrooms, and unusable buildings which in some cases may be demolished. One has had its chapel demolished and another the chapel can't be used until repaired. One is already to start but cannot because the sewage system in the area has faults.

Relocation of Christchurch students

Christchurch students have been enrolling at schools all over the country and we have reports of our students in Auckland, Hamilton, Central Otago and elsewhere. We trust you will send them back to us but understand their return may not just depend on school facilities but also on the home and work circumstances of their families.

We have written to all Christchurch members expressing our concern and support.

Resignation of our Chief Executive Officer

The other issue for us as an association was the resignation of Dr Grant Gillon as our CEO to taken up a position at AUT on the North Shore. He had applied for the job when it was part time and the university decided a full time position was more appropriate and needed a decision for the start of the academic year. In his nearly 4 years Grant has worked effectively to put the running of ISEA on a more professional basis, has seen membership growth, initiatives in our website, in the wider use of IT and in membership benefits. He has worked in establishing relationships with a variety of groups that has seen us gaining wider recognition in the education community and as a union. His sage counsel to members who have needed help when Mairi Ferguson was not available was much appreciated. We wish Grant well in his new position. Your Executive has the process of advertising well underway and we are on track to interview early in April.

Malcolm Walker

STAFF ON INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

As you know, in the independent system, collective agreements never cover more than one school – there is no universal collective for staff in independent schools. Many of our members are in schools where to date there is no collective, and so all will be on individual agreements.

Of course this is no barrier to membership. Indeed we cannot emphasise strongly enough that staff on individual agreements are often particularly vulnerable. They are being dealt with separately, and have no way of knowing whether what is proposed is reasonable or not. If they have issues with their employment and with their employer, it is difficult for them to be supported by anyone from within the school. **This is where ISEA is of vital importance.** We can offer advice, we can come in support if required, and we can also look over an agreement which has been offered before it is signed and agreed.

We are aware that school management often makes it difficult for staff to join ISEA. Legally they may not do this, but it may be quite subtle! In these situations more than ever membership of ISEA is important.

If you are worried about letting the school know you have joined, it is easy for us to accept direct debit payments on an individual basis, and also to send any material and information to a home email address, and not through the school. Contact our administrator Jill Brookes if you want more information about this. (email: admin@isea.org.nz)

In schools where there is a collective agreement in place, it is assumed that all ISEA members will automatically be covered by it. However, occasionally a member in one of these schools accepts a promotion position within the school, which probably requires an individual agreement. **Such members do not need to resign from the union because of this.** We have members in various schools in this situation, who have wished to retain their union membership. We are happy to have members from all levels of staff with the one exception of the principal, who because of the governance relationship with the Board cannot also be a member of our union. However, currently we have a number of Deputy Principals and other management position holders as members. It is understood that such people will be excluded within the school from any process relating to the collective agreement, but otherwise have full membership and full access to our services and benefits.

Once again, such staff members may well be more isolated in their position, so that if anything goes wrong, or they have concerns, it is important to have access to our services.

Mairi Ferguson

Going on Parental or long term leave, or retiring this year?

Don't forget to change your membership category to that of Honorary Member to keep your EBS and other benefits alive.

Only \$30.00 per year.

Notify Jill Brookes, Administration Officer today to ensure continuation of access to all benefits.

admin@isea.org.nz

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Continuing our occasional series on news from the many international teachers organisations ISEA has links with.

NORTH AFRICA

Teachers have been to the fore in the protests that have swept through parts of North Africa recently. In Egypt, the newly formed Independent Federation of Workers and Teachers, played a pivotal role in the Cairo protests which helped to bring down the Mubarak government. In Tunisia, the relatively high level of education in the country has been cited as a major factor in causing the protests which started the region-wide movement. As one Tunisian teacher said, "Our struggle to preserve our gains in the education system and the status of women, to develop our opportunity for democracy, progress and social justice will go on."

USA

A major political struggle is taking place in the state of Wisconsin where the new Tea Party-supported Republican Governor, Scott Walker, is attempting to strip 175,000 state employees, including teachers, of their collective bargaining rights. His budget bill would mean unions could negotiate only over pay, not conditions, and pay increases would be limited to the rate of inflation unless a public referendum approved of more. It would also require unions to take a costly annual vote to maintain their status as a union, prohibit employers from collecting union fees by direct deduction from salaries and increase employee contributions to pensions and health care. Most observers believe the measures would largely cripple the state unions, which are a major contributor to the Democratic Party. The struggle is being keenly watched by several other states, which are likely to follow suit if the measures are seen as a victory for the Governor.

BULLYING

A major Australian report into bullying in schools states that bullying is more likely to occur in primary schools with boys more likely to be both bullies and victims. Around one in six students is bullied on a weekly basis and one in ten is an active bully. Whole school solutions are suggested with better classroom and playground supervision plus more teacher training at a school level; clear class



rules and meetings at a class level; and strategies at the individual level to help both bullies and their targets.

Some of these issues have been highlighted before in the International News articles in ISEA Newsletters and a lot more detail can be obtained on the EI website: www.ei-ie.org/en/. We believe it is important to keep links with such an important education body and to do our little bit to assist teachers in other countries who are having difficulties just doing their basic job of educating the adults of tomorrow.

Mark Cleaver

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Applications are invited from members for the Professional Development Grant. The grant allows for support in any area of professional development that is not fully funded by other sources. Criteria for the award of the grant are on the website - www.isea.org.nz and click on Publications and Forms. Applications can also be made through the administrator Jill Brookes at admin@isea.org.nz.

A GENEROUS GIFT FROM A RETIRING MEMBER OF ISEA

We were recently surprised and touched by the decision of one member not to take a parting gift from the staff social fund, but to ask them to forward the amount to ISEA, in appreciation of assistance given at various times during a long period of service at the school. This gift has been added to our legal aid fund at the member's request, where it may benefit other members in the future.

Thank you again for the most unexpected thought!

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