

Annual Report of the President August 2010

In presenting my annual report it is with pleasure that I report yet another successful year. Whilst we have no specific milestones to celebrate, we can, with some satisfaction, reflect on the continued high performance of our organisation.

Our membership has shown some growth, though the peak seems to have steadied to around the 700 mark. Our big challenge is to reach out to those who have yet to decide whether they will, or should, join. We have worked hard to ensure that information about ISEA is available at the beginning of the year and that staff representatives are briefed on passing this information to all staff members. It is with some concern and some frustration, that I was recently made aware of the plight of a provisionally registered teacher in one of our larger girls schools who was in quite serious trouble. His issues had been developing over a period of time, yet no one in the school had bothered to tell him about our organisation, nor had any information been passed on to him at the beginning of his time there. It was not until everything had come to a head that he had been told about us. We could have resolved that situation much sooner had we been involved at the outset.

South Island Representative

The decision to appoint Malcolm Walker as the South Island representative based in Christchurch has already paid dividends. Malcolm has been able to deal with a number of issues, meet with local members to provide support and give advice. Not only does it mean that we save on some airfares, but it means that members are given face to face support.

School Representatives

Our school representatives are an essential link in our chain of communication. We have sought to build up the effectiveness of the school rep in recent years. One of our goals has been to meet with school reps on a regular basis. We have trialled setting up a gathering or reps in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Though the turnout was more disappointing than we had hoped, it was a worth while exercise. As an organisation there is still the challenge of finding the most effective way to meet prospective members.

In-house Unions

Finding a way to connect with schools that have in-house unions has exercised the minds of the Executive at various times over the past ten years. Two schools have changed their status from in-house union collectives to ISEA collectives. A third in-house union school has a group of staff who are exploring an ISEA collective. We have had an approach from another school wanting to explore the possibility of changing their collective from in-house to ISEA. Some of these schools are looking for an interim process of affiliation which our constitution did not provide for. This has now been addressed by a rule change earlier this year. This means that the Executive has some flexibility in arranging a relationship with an in-house union school.

Employment Law Changes

The Government's move to change some aspects of employment law are of concern. Whilst most will not have direct impact on our schools we do not want to see an erosion of employee conditions in any work place. Our teachers tend to be protected by the equivalent of state teacher conditions, however our support staff are far more vulnerable. We need to ensure that they do not get disadvantaged.

The PPTA Collective Agreement

The PPTA collective bargaining has reached a state of impasse. PPTA is not going to give in so easily so I would anticipate some firm response from them.

National Standards

National Standards continue to make headlines. Personally, I do not have a problem with a system of national benchmarks or standards. However the process of introduction has been a public relations disaster for the Minister of Education. Surely if a such a significant plan is to be implemented it needs to be done in such a way that all parties, teachers, parents and trustees are on board with what is expected. I suspect that it will take a change of Minister in a Cabinet reshuffle to rectify this mess.

Employment Issues

Employment issues continue to be our main *raison d'être*. It is of concern that one school in particular continues to create more employment issues than the rest of the country put together. Far too often it is the process of dealing with the problems that is of concern. The protocols outlined in the employment agreement of the school concerned are frequently not followed. I believe that we provide an outstanding employment support service for the size of union that we are.

Teachers' Council

The Teachers Council is set up by statute. As an organisation we are not directly represented. We rely on communication from the Teachers Council to keep us informed of issues. At the beginning of this year there was a process of consultation that involved the teacher unions. We were not invited. We have made strong representation to ensure that we are kept informed and that this does not happen again. However, just as I am writing this report I discover that there is a discussion document entitled *A Vision for Teaching for the Future* which has been put out by the Minister of Education in April with a response document sent out in June. This document calls for a review of teacher education; recognition, reward and progression of teachers within the profession; professional leadership and issues of diversity in education. I find it yet again a concern that we, as a small union, get left out of the loop. It is not for want of reminding the Ministry that we exist.

Queen's Honours List

It is with pleasure that we acknowledge the award of Member of the New Zealand Order to Leonie Lawson, a former member, President and now Life Member of our organisation for her services to music. Leonie has had a long involvement in music, in particular schools music and it is fitting that she receive such an award.

Thanks

Once again it is time to acknowledge the commitment of our staff team lead by Grant. Grant, together with Jill and Mairi, and more recently Malcolm, provide the essential framework of operation of our organisation. I believe that we are an effective and efficient organisation that is always striving to find better ways to operate. We are well served by these four and they deserve thanks and congratulations for a job well done. We have a loyal and effective Executive who ensure that we keep a sharp focus on the issues appropriate to teaching and our members.

Bruce Owen
President
August 2010