

What's happening to TAFE?

The NSW Government has now signed up to the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform as part of the COAG process on 13 April 2012.

This commits the State to a range of changes in vocational education and training including the introduction of a national training entitlement for a government-subsidised training places to at least the first Certificate III qualification (student entitlements) and the offering of income contingent loans for government-subsidised Diploma and Advanced Diploma student (HECs style loans). The NSW Education Minister has also committed to a competitive training market in NSW.

In the lead-up to this process, State Training Services in the Education Department conducted a skills reform consultation process, entitled 'Smart and Skilled: Making NSW Number One'.

In order to gain funding from the Federal Government, worth \$2.88 billion to NSW over the next five years (National Agreement and National Partnership), NSW has to negotiate how it will meet the targets under the National Partnership Agreement. A NSW response to this process is still under consideration by the NSW Government, and will be based on the consultation process above. An implementation process will then follow, with the aim of 2014 as a commencement.

This will spell serious changes to TAFE NSW, as it adjusts itself to this competitive training market and to the decreased funding in this year's state budget. The consequences of such changes have been demonstrated clearly in Victoria, where a number of TAFE Institutes appear on the verge of bankruptcy and TAFE colleges and courses are closing. In Victoria a competitive training market has led to an undermining of quality in the VET sector, loss of jobs for TAFE teachers, and a lack of confidence from students and industry.

Hunting in National Parks FAQ

The Government has said that it will support legislation to allow volunteer shooters to participate in feral animal control programs in declared parts of the national parks estate. Shooting is likely to begin this summer, if the legislation goes ahead.

79 reserves have been proposed for consideration so far, making up 41% of the total area covered by NPWS reserves. There are serious concerns that this is only the beginning of a much broader expansion of hunting into our National Parks.

Although this is justified as a way of reducing feral animal populations, there is strong evidence that volunteer hunting is almost never an effective method of feral animal control, and may actually do more harm than good.

Unions representing NPWS have made public statements voicing their concern for the safety of staff members and the public. Outside of NSW, there have been a number of deaths due to hunting accidents recently reported in the media.

Although it will use 'volunteer hunters', this program is far from free. There are significant costs involved in design and management of the program by NPWS and administration of licensing by the Game Council. Volunteer hunting is not a cost-effective form of feral animal control, and this money would be far better spent on integrated, strategic, whole of government feral animal management strategies.

What the Government is proposing is very different to the ground shooting that currently occurs in National Parks. Currently, if ground shooting occurs, it is carried out by professional hunters as part of an integrated pest management strategy. This proposal will use non-professional hunters who have been granted a restricted licence through the Game Council.

<http://www.bluemountains.org.au/>

Less money for schools O'Farrell plan

NSW Teachers' Federation 27 June 2012

The changes are being made under a policy called Local Schools, Local Decisions. The Government wants you to believe that your child will be better off if more decisions are made locally.

That may seem OK on face value, but please don't be fooled. The Local Schools, Local Decisions policy is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

It's not about improving education; it's all about cutting education funding, and shifting blame away from the government. It's a failed strategy that's been imported from America and it truly spells disaster for our local schools.

Wherever these changes have been made overseas and interstate like in Victoria, governments spend less on public schools – which means fewer teachers, bigger class sizes and less individual support for students.

Students will lose

Currently the Education Department staffs schools with a guarantee that a school with a certain number of students will receive a certain number of class teachers, executive teachers, specialist teachers and administrative and support staff.

It's a government guarantee that all students will receive a fair go wherever they attend a public school – from the bush school out west to the school in the centre of Sydney. No guarantee with a local budget

By getting rid of a staffing guarantee and giving schools a local budget instead, what will determine the number of teachers at a school, will be the amount of money in the staffing budget, not the number of students. Once this change is in place, politicians then can cut the budget over time and blame the local principal for not



being able to make it stretch to meet student needs.

This is really why the O'Farrell government is pushing these changes – to spend less on your child's education. So please don't be fooled. Support your school's teachers when they take action to stop these changes. When governments do the wrong thing, teachers will stand up for students' rights to a well funded, good quality public school education.

O'Farrell rolled – firefighters Workers Comp saved

Fire Brigade Employees Union Report
22 June 2012

"If you think I am angry, you are right" thundered Premier Barry O'Farrell yesterday. Unfortunately for O'Farrell and his Government, the hundreds of striking firefighters with their appliances outside were proof that he was not alone.

Ordinarily, bills of this sort of complexity are tabled for several weeks to allow the Opposition and others the opportunity to properly review them but this rotten Government, knowing just how crook its reforms really were, rammed them through within two short days. The Government set the timetable, not us. If O'Farrell hadn't tried to ram through these reforms overnight, we would have been able to meet with them and work through the issues without the need to strike.

O'Farrell also slammed the strike as "one of the most irresponsible actions I have ever heard of by a public sector union in the history of this State" – a big call by any measure. What the Premier did not know was that it would soon become one of the more successful actions by a public sector union when, at 0230 hours in the morning, Parliament voted to exclude firefighters and paramedics from the reforms.

The Union welcomes Parliament's decision to exempt us from these savage new laws, but insists they must still be scrapped for all workers. The FBEU will continue to wholeheartedly back Unions NSW, other affiliates and the broader labour movement in the ongoing campaign to defend sick and injured workers in this state.

Congratulations again to all members, and particularly to the hundreds of members who stopped work yesterday. Make no mistake, the media attention that your action generated fueled the political pressure that followed. Every firefighter

who, from this day on, suffers a workplace injury (a regrettably inevitable fact of life in our profession) is now in your debt. The Union's Fighting Fund will again provide financial relief for striking members whose pays are docked. Further details to follow.

While we can be rightly proud as a Union that through strong action we have been able to successfully defend our existing workers compensation rights, members should remain mindful that further attacks are coming.

The O'Farrell Government is busy shifting the wealth of the State from those who work for a living to the top end of town. That's why they've attacked workers comp, why they've slashed our budget and why they're slashing wages. We've won this round only.

IndusriALL Goba Union



19 June 2012

More than 1,000 unionists from every corner of the globe are meeting in Copenhagen June 18 to 20, 2102 to form IndustriALL Global Union, representing 50 million workers in 140 countries in the mining, energy and manufacturing sectors.

"Among the delegates are heroes who have been on the front-line of the fight for democracy and workers' rights," said Jyrki Raina, the in-coming general secretary of IndustriALL Global Union.

"Bashed, imprisoned and their lives threatened they come to Copenhagen to adopt a new Action Plan to ensure globalization delivers for the 99 per cent not just the 1 per cent.

"Workers and their unions, members of IndustriALL, have been at the forefront of the Arab Spring fight for democracy, the struggle against despots.

"In Copenhagen we will form a new union family of heroes, with strong bonds, ready to stick together through thick and thin - a new force in global solidarity taking up the fight for better working conditions and trade union rights around the world.

"IndustriALL will challenge the power of multinational companies like Rio Tinto

and BHP," Jyrki Raina said. "We hope to negotiate on a global level with the global giants.

"IndustriALL will fight for a new model of globalization, a new economic and social model that puts people first, based on democracy and social justice."

Tax-free threshold changes 1 July 2012

Under the government's Household Assistance Package the tax-free threshold increased from \$6,000 to \$18,200.

This means if you earn less than \$18,200 per year you do not need to pay income tax, and if you earn more than \$18,200 per year you will only pay income tax on earnings over \$18,200.

Tax rates 2012-13

Taxable income || Tax on this income

0 - \$18,200 || Nil

\$18,201 - \$37,000 || 19c for each \$1 over \$18,200

\$37,001 - \$80,000 || \$3,572 plus 32.5c for each \$1 over \$37,000

\$80,001 - \$180,000 || \$17,547 plus 37c for each \$1 over \$80,000

\$180,001 and over || \$54,547 plus 45c for each \$1 over \$180,000

If you have already submitted a Tax file number declaration to claim the old tax-free threshold of \$6,000, you do not have to do anything as your employer automatically adjusts to the new tax-free threshold of \$18,200 from 1 July 2012.

If you have not submitted a TFN declaration, start work with a new employer or start to receive government benefits, you will be asked to complete a TFN declaration form.

Two-pronged employer attack

27 June, 2012 | ACTU: Media Release

An alarming number of full-time workers no longer receive penalty rates for working public holidays, including Christmas Day, or long weekends because they work non-standard shifts.

At the 2012 Modern Award Review, which begins hearings on public holidays today, unions will argue that the growing number of employees working non-standard hours

are still entitled to penalty rates for working public holidays.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said people whose standard working week was Sunday to Thursday, for example, should still receive the same number of public holidays as Monday to Friday workers.

“A lot of workers now work unusual shifts or regular weeks that aren’t Monday to Friday, which means they miss out on long weekends or penalty rates. For example, a worker who normally worked Sunday to Thursday could still have to work a five-day week when a public holiday falls on a Friday and everyone else gets an extra day off.

“The current system is weighted against employees who work a non-standard week,” Mr Oliver said.

“Every full-time worker should have the right to the full calendar of public holidays. It should not be a matter of luck depending on what days of the week you are rostered on, how many hours you work, or what industry you are in.

“All Australians deserve public holidays but employers are trying to make sure that workers with non-standard hours continue to miss out.

Employer submissions have argued for penalty rates to be paid only on substitute days where a public holiday falls on a weekend, or for some public holidays to be scrapped altogether.

Employers have also argued to reduce public holiday rights in submissions to the Federal Government’s review of the Fair Work Act, which has recently been completed.

The WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry submission has called for the number of public holidays to be reduced from 11 or 12 in most states, down to 10 across the country.

“Australians should not accept the number of public holidays or rights to penalty rates being reduced, and unions will fight to defend them”, said Mr Oliver.



Unions call for asbestos authority

SMH 27 June 2012

Unions will push for the establishment of a National Asbestos Authority to protect people and to remove asbestos from homes and public and commercial buildings.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) acting national secretary, Paul Bastian, will meet the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and the Workplace Relations Minister, Bill Shorten, to push the case. He is a lifelong campaigner against asbestos.

Mr Bastian says more Australians have died from exposure to asbestos than in World War II.

"Surely we've had enough people die now, enough heart-wrenching diseases and enough legal acknowledgment that this must stop," he said.

The union's solution is a federally funded authority to "find, educate, remove and protect people from the dangers of asbestos."

The authority would educate and raise awareness within the community of the existence of asbestos in private homes, businesses and public buildings.

"As part of the authority, an urgent audit and plan for the removal of asbestos from all government premises is required.

"State governments regularly report low levels of compliance with asbestos regulations and we call on the federal government to treat its removal as a national issue of critical importance - including asbestos in schools."

Mr Shorten's spokesman said it was a critical issue for the government.

"Which is why we commissioned the asbestos management review - the minister and the government look forward to receiving the report's recommendations" he said.

ACTU: Fairfax Jobs

21 June 2012

Fairfax Media has breached its legal obligation to consult its workers, and failed to explain why it plans to sack thousands of workers, unions will tell a hearing in Fair Work Australia today.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said workers represented by the MEAA, AMWU, ASU, CEPU and USU did not accept Fairfax’s

announcement this week it would cut about 1900 positions across all areas of its operations, including all metropolitan printing jobs.

“The company has not met its obligation to discuss the planned job cuts with staff before they went in and wielded their axe, which is in breach of their responsibilities,” Mr Oliver said.

“We are extremely concerned that Fairfax failed to consult about the changes and the redundancies, and showed no respect for its workers,” he said.

“The workers at Fairfax have many outstanding questions which we will seek to get answers to through the process in FWA today. The way Fairfax has gone about this is wrong.”

Mr Oliver said he would also seek an urgent meeting between Fairfax CEO Greg Hywood and unions representing the workers.

“Fairfax must commit to consult with their staff from now on, and stop breaching their agreements,” he said.

Mr Oliver said management must accept responsibility for the crisis Fairfax now finds itself in.

“Management is hoping everyone will believe that technology has changed and there’s nothing they could have done to stop their planned redundancies, but we don’t buy that for a minute.

“We don’t accept unilateral decisions to slash jobs when they have an obligation to consult staff. The process of informing staff through the media is a disgrace.”

“There is little doubt strong competition in the media marketplace presents challenges but slashing jobs is not a panacea.”

JOIN BMUC Blue Mountains residents can become BMUC members if they support our Aims and Objects. Membership is open to union members, to retired unionists and to those who are unemployed or unwaged.

Membership Fees
Waged \$15.00 pa
Unwaged \$5.00 pa

BMUC Secretary
52 Great Western Highway
Mount Victoria
NSW 2786
Phone 02 4787 1401

G U L G O N G L A B O R P A R T Y

Louisa Lawson

ADDRESS 2012



Louisa Lawson was the driving force behind the suffragette movement in Australia.

Louisa established *The Dawn*, a journal to 'wind out audibly the whispers, pleadings and demands of the sisterhood'.

It advised on women's issues, including divorce, the age of consent, and women's right to vote. Louisa was also Henry Lawson's mother.

Saturday 28 July 2012
6pm for 6.30 start

**GULGONG OPERA HOUSE
MAYNE STREET, GULGONG**

GUEST SPEAKER

Ged Kearney, President ACTU

LOUISA LAWSON INTRODUCTION

Chris Cooke
Henry Lawson Society, Gulgong

TICKETS

\$65 waged. \$60 concession
Includes 3 course meal (BYO)

*Tickets are limited to 100
Book early to avoid disappointment*

RSVP: No later than 15 June 2012 to Margaret on (02) 6374 1615 or Alex on 0428 330 338 or by email to countrylaborgulgong@gmail.com

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Please make out cheques to 'Gulgong Labor Party' and send to Gulgong Labor Party, PO Box 240, Gulgong NSW 2852. To pay direct via Net Banking phone above numbers to request Bank details.

ACCOMMODATION

Visit www.gulgong.net.au or www.visitmudgeeregion.com.au



Louisa Lawson in front of her bark hut, Gulgong.



Ged Kearney

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