

Community Day of Action for Education

**Sun 18 November 11am
Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour**

There has been an enormous backlash over the O'Farrell Coalition government's cut of \$1.7 billion over 4 years to education funding, announced on September 11, 2012. This will cut 1,800 teaching and non-teaching positions from public education.

It is time to rally to demonstrate the huge demand for real improvement in the public education system which is a bedrock for a fair, democratic and prosperous Australia.

Seventy per cent of people polled by Auspoll said the planned cuts would hurt kids in public schools; 82 per cent said it was important or very important to increase funding for public schools, and only 28 per cent said they would have voted for the O'Farrell Coalition if he had disclosed his plans to slash education funding.

The public education cuts in NSW are part of the \$10 billion in cuts from the whole public sector announced by Treasurer Baird in the September 2011 Budget and the 1.2 per cent Labour Expense Cap imposed in the June 2012 Budget. These two measures mean a cut of 15,000 public sector jobs, including School Administrative and Support Staff positions in schools, as well as teaching and non-teaching positions in head office, regional offices and TAFE.

Bernie Banton mini-series "Devil's Dust" on ABC TV 11 and 12 November

Matt Peacock had spent decades at the ABC doggedly investigating the health risks posed by asbestos and whether the James Hardie company had allowed its workers to be exposed to asbestos fibres knowing they were deadly. By then Peacock was pessimistic after decades of reporting on James Hardie.

The company's spin machine was simply too clever, too powerful, to ever be defeated.

When Peacock was researching a 7.30 Report story he met Bernie Banton and recognised immediately that here was the man who would take the story to the masses.

"He was critical, really," says Peacock.

"James Hardie had always won the spin war, but when Bernie entered the scene they started losing it.

"I'm pretty certain that if it weren't for the propaganda war, if it weren't for the publicity that Bernie generated, legally Hardies was almost home free... But what brought them unstuck was that sheer weight of public pressure and that was really the result of the campaign and the impact that Bernie had on people's hearts and minds."

Antony Hayes who is cast as Banton says he talked to the widows of seven men who had died of asbestos-related diseases. "The women explained how capable these guys had been, how physically fit they were, how they worked with their hands and were real men's men. And then to have had that taken away from them, and the humiliation that came with that - not being able to walk to the shop, or walk down the stairs - was horrific."

Blue Mountains TAFE

Blue Mountains Gazette 10 October

NSW Opposition Leader John Robertson and Greens MP John Kaye have joined the chorus of opposition to the threats to close the Blue Mountains TAFE guides course.

Dr Kaye said the outdoor education course provided "critical skills for the region's economy". Without the TAFE course, which trains up instructors for abseiling, canyoning and rock climbing, the industry's future was "grim" he said.

"Taking the knife to the outdoor recreation courses will undermine the future of the region's economy. This

course, like many others set to go under the O'Farrell Government's budget cuts, offers much more than just employment opportunities. It is a high quality education resource, valued by the local community," he said.

Mr Robertson said "staff and students have been informed from next year the popular outdoor recreation course will cease to operate in its current format," adding if cut the course may only be offered 'commercially' - an expensive option not available to most people.

Mr Robertson met with TAFE teachers and industry representatives including the director of the Blue Mountains Adventure Company, Dylan Jones, and other former students running adventure businesses in the area - people concerned about "the impact the loss of this vital course would have on the local tourism industry".

Dr Kaye said the government's grab for cash was short sighted and heartless.

"The Blue Mountains community is being ripped off by a government that cannot see beyond the next election . . . TAFE is about to lose five per cent of its workforce. That means five per cent less public sector vocational education and training and five percent less long-term economic benefits to NSW," Dr Kaye said.

Students were being asked to "pay more in order to receive less".

"Class sizes will rise, the ranges of courses will be reduced and time to help individual students will all but disappear," he said.

Blue Mountains Liberal MP Roza Sage "must stand up for her community" and tell the Education Minister Adrian Piccoli to reverse the devastating cuts to TAFE, he said.

Hundreds of jobs relied on the



adventure tourists attracted to the thrill of climbing in the Mountains, he added.

Dr Kaye said Labor had also made significant cuts to TAFE “slashing its funding by 48 per cent over 16 years in office” adding “Ms Sage cannot just stand by and do nothing while her government finishes the job and destroys TAFE to the detriment of her own constituents”.

Labor’s spokesperson for the Blue Mountains, Trish Doyle said “the proposed budget cuts to the Blue Mountains TAFE Outdoor Recreation diploma would see current students unable to complete their education, highly skilled teachers sacked and the local tourism industry suffer”.

TAFE Fine Arts Cuts

The NSW Government’s recent decision to cut support of Fine Arts education throughout TAFE colleges will abandon many people with disability and their current access to art education statewide, writes Accessible Arts NSW.

The planned cuts also contradict the NSW Government’s own goals set down in the State Plan 2021.

The NSW peak body for arts and disability, Accessible Arts, condemns the move as one which risks the growth of a robust arts and cultural sector in NSW.

“TAFE Fine Arts courses currently provide access to a quality arts education for people with disability to move into the creative industries”, says CEO, Sancha Donald.

The NSW Government’s abandonment of support to TAFE Fine Art courses will mean commercial fees will be charged from January 2013. “The withdrawal of support for TAFE Fine Arts education in NSW will affect many of our stakeholders who are on limited incomes due to ongoing disability support needs,” said Ms Donald. “People with disability often experience interrupted education and face barriers to employment within the arts and cultural sectors.”

Ms Donald highlights the recent announcement is also at odds with the NSW Government’s own State Plan Goal 27 which recognises the role played by the arts in community development: ‘Enhanced participation in arts, sporting and recreation activities contributes to economic, social and cultural

development across the State and delivers benefits to the community and the economy.” (NSW Government 2021 State Plan, Goal 27)

Accessible Arts calls on Premier O’Farrell and the Minister for Education, Mr Adrian Piccoli to reverse the decision given the long-term costs to a vibrant artistic community promoting the inclusion of all people with and without disability.

Liberal Economics Plan: More Unemployment

The O’Farrell Government is cutting \$1.7 billion from education funding

\$201 million will be cut from public schools and \$116 million will be cut from private schools

Under these cuts, up to 1,800 TAFE teachers and education support staff will be sacked

The O’Farrell Government abolished a number of TAFE courses and increased fees by 9.5%. The State Government has shown it has lost the ability add up with any precision. Since it somehow “lost” one billion dollars, a popular view is abroad that its cuts to TAFE and other courses are actually a way of ensuring Ministers can not be encouraged to enrol in any courses that teach basic arithmetic! Their austerity policies just don’t add up.

Health Cuts

More than \$2 billion in cuts to services and hospital budgets.

\$775 million in staffing cuts. 3,600 health workers set to lose their jobs.

Who’ll defend Education?

NSWTF President Maurie Mulheron

It is legislated in NSW that the state government gives funding to private schools at a rate set at 25 per cent of what is spent in the public sector.

For years this has meant that any betterment the public education community achieves through campaigns is automatically passed onto the private sector, without it having to lift a finger.

The Government has imposed a Labour Expense Cap (1.2 per cent per year) to achieve savings across the public sector. This expense cap does not apply to

private schools and the September 11 announcement confirms a freeze on private school funding but not a cut.

The lessons from this are clear and simple:

1. This is further confirmation that the public sector is being attacked and that hundreds of millions of dollars in recurrent funding is being ripped out of the public school system, through the loss of staffing entitlements, the loss of support positions as well as cuts to special education, head office directorates and equity programs.

2. Devolution is exposed, not as a reform but linked to deliberate cuts and permanent structural changes, delivered over four budget cycles.

3. It would appear that the NSW Government is positioning itself to lower the funding base to education just as they enter the Gonski negotiations with the Federal Government on the shared funding responsibilities.

4. Public education has nobody in the bureaucracy prepared to publicly defend it from poor government policy, no matter how severe the cuts.

Corporate Culture Undermined School Building Projects

Were the Building the Education Revolution projects run badly?

Only in states where governments chose not to run them, according to new research published recently that targets NSW and Victoria for special criticism.

The analysis by the Centre for Policy Development finds the Labor governments in NSW and Victoria performed the worst on just about every measure when it came to handling the funds doled out during the 2008 financial crisis to build new school halls.

Only 1 per cent of the projects in the smaller states received complaints compared to 8 per cent in NSW and 4 per cent in Victoria. The costs in the big states were \$500 to \$1500 per square metre higher.

The study says the big difference is that NSW and Victoria contracted out most of the management to big firms.

South Australia and Western Australia

used public works departments to manage the projects themselves.

"Victoria really had no choice," the lead researcher, Tim Roxburgh, said. "The cutbacks in the Kennett era had stripped the place of engineers and architects. NSW did have the capacity to manage its program itself but didn't bother.

"Governments need enough expertise to interact skilfully with the private sector in order to achieve value for money."

"We only know the Building the Education projects because records were made public. We don't know about other projects in which NSW and Victoria are getting bad value for money because they have lost their expertise," Mr Roxburgh said.

Again the Disadvantaged will be the most affected

John Pratt from the New South Wales Teachers' Federation says the cutbacks will be felt across the state.

"We're going to lose 400 assistants across schools, the people in the front officers, the people that pick up the phones, deal with the administration, 400 of those are going across New South Wales, along with 1800 staff, so there must be a massive impact at schools because of this," he said.

The union says the region's most disadvantaged students will be hardest hit by the cuts.

Mr Pratt says the changes will see 1800 jobs lost, including some support worker positions.

"These are critical positions, they are there to deal with disadvantaged student programs, the most disadvantaged of our students, the Aboriginal students, the isolated students, the learning difficulty students, there were people in charge of programs dealing with those people - gone, all gone."

The NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli says the measures are tough but necessary.



When will Piccoli have the courage to defend Education?

NO to Coal Seam Gas

13 October, 2012

Up to 3,000 people have donned yellow clothing in the New South Wales north coast town of Murwillumbah as they march in protest to coal seam gas mining.

They were joined by about 1,000 protesters in Sydney's inner-west, who formed a human sign spelling out "Stop CSG".

Murwillumbah rally spokeswoman Amanda Shoebridge says comments by the New South Wales Government this week that coal seam gas mining is inevitable failed to dampen the community's resolve.

"People will really, after news like that, dig their heels in and say well 'actually mate, no, no we're not going to allow CSG in here and you don't have social licence to do it, you don't have the approval of the community and it's not going to happen'," she said.

Stop CSG Sydney spokeswoman Jacinta Green says there is nothing to prevent miners exploring the Sydney basin, water catchments and agricultural land.

"Not one inch of New South Wales has been left off limits to the coal seam gas industry," she said.

Solar take up hits the roof

13 October 2012

Australian roofs now have a solar power generating capacity equivalent to half the Snowy Hydro scheme as consumers react to soaring power prices and sinking prices for photovoltaic (PV) panels.

Some 858,000 homes have solar PV panels with an installed capacity of just under 2 gigawatts, according to the latest data from the Australian Clean Energy Regulator

At the current rate of take-up, the millionth home will tap into solar power before the end of June next year, said Professor Ray Wills, chief adviser to the Sustainable Energy Association.

Intense international competition among suppliers, particularly from China, now means households can expect payback periods of as short as four years, with a typical 1500-kilowatt unit selling for \$1500-\$2000, Professor Wills said.



Unions Defend Conditions and Save our Weekend

The ACTU lodged its reply submission to the Fair Work Australia review of the Modern Awards system, which employers are using to seek the reduction or removal of penalty rates to workers in the fast food, retail and hospitality industries.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said workers in those industries were among the lowest paid and most Award-dependent.

"For some workers in these industries, their wage equates to less than half the average weekly Australian wage, so a cut to penalty rates would send many into poverty," she said.

"Businesses in these industries are at their busiest after hours and on weekend, when other Australians are enjoying their leisure time.

"This is time that these workers give up to go to work, so that others can go shopping, or enjoy a meal with friends and family.

"Weekends are still weekends when it comes to sporting events, weddings, parties and long weekends away and evenings are still evenings when children have homework to do, or there is a family birthday to celebrate."

"Workers in industries like food, retail and hospitality miss out on many such events and occasions, working unsociable hours because it is often all that is available, or because they need the penalty rates just to make ends meet.

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

Gonski Five Key Findings

The Gonski Review was the most comprehensive review of schools funding in almost 40 years. Its recommendations give us a way to ensure real equality of opportunity for our children in education.

1. There is an urgent need for change.

The Gonski Review found that Australia is investing far too little in schools and the way the money is distributed is not efficient, effective or fair. The system is failing too many students who are missing out on the resources they need.

2. There are growing gaps in student achievement.

While Australia remains a high achieving nation in education, our overall performance has fallen in the last decade. Students in disadvantaged areas are up to three years behind those of the same age who live in wealthy areas. One in seven 15 year old students does not have basic reading skills.

3. We must invest for success.

The review recommends a major increase in funding to schools. The way it is distributed would also change to better meet the needs of students. It says public schools should get the greatest increases in funding for additional staff, learning programs and upgraded facilities. Funding would vary according to the needs of students, but the average increase would be almost \$1,500 a student per year. That is enough for seven extra teachers in a public school with 500 students.

4. The Federal Government needs to lead the way.

Gonski recommends a much greater funding commitment to public schools from the Federal Government. Currently it is only providing 15 per cent of the money that public schools receive, despite having access to greater revenue sources than state and territory governments

5. Our children's future is at stake.

The report's recommendations are aimed at ensuring every child has the same chance to receive a high quality education. But Gonski warns a failure to act will cost not only our children but our country: "Australia will only slip further behind unless, as a nation, we act and act now."

Anne Summers : Gillard speech

10 October 2012

Julia Gillard's extraordinary speech on misogyny saw her return to her former debating finesse, writes Anne Summers. Only in Canberra, it seems, did her words fall on tone-deaf ears.

"After his performance last week, supporters of President Obama, watching Gillard cut through the disingenuousness and feigned moral outrage of her opponent to call him out for his own personal prejudice, hypocrisy, and aversion to facts, might be wishing their man would take a lesson from Australia."

This was the judgement of The New Yorker magazine overnight in a blog post written by its managing editor, the Australian-born Amelia Lester.

Her summation, and the opinions which informed it, were in stark contrast to the consensus of most Canberra journalists, who stood virtually shoulder to shoulder to condemn the Prime Minister for the same speech.

Gillard's words were condemned as "desperate" (Michelle Grattan), "completely over the top" (Jennifer Hewett), "flawed" (Peter Hartcher), and "defending the indefensible" (Dennis Shanahan). You can see other, but essentially similar views, reported here.

If you checked into social media yesterday while the Prime Minister was delivering her speech, you might have noted Mia Freedman tweeting that her entire office of young women were clustered around the television watching with enthusiasm:

The whole Mamamia office is gathered around the TV watching Julia Gillard in full flight during. Extraordinary performance.

There were many, many other expressions of delight at Gillard's words on Facebook and Twitter while she spoke and as the day progressed.

In the 24 hours since the speech was delivered, a clear polarisation has emerged between the mainstream media, particularly print, and a very large body of online opinion that has applauded the anti-misogyny contents of the speech and welcomed Gillard's return to her former debating finesse.

What we saw in that speech was an angry and offended Gillard finally

unleashed. Gone was the forbearance, and the turned cheek. Finally she was telling us how upset she was at being called "a witch" and "a bitch".

She was seething as she told the House of Representatives, "I was very personally offended when the Leader of the Opposition, as minister for health, said, and I quote, 'Abortion is the easy way out'." And she was practically in orbit when she responded to Mr Abbott's taunt that she led "a government which should already have died of shame".

Watching her, you saw her eyes narrow and her shoulders almost shiver. It seemed, to someone watching on television as I was, that she was almost convulsing as she alternated between rage and disbelief. Here was the Leader of her Majesty's Opposition using the very same words that a shock jock had just a week earlier used against her father, who had died exactly a month earlier.

Campaigns Roundup

Putting Students First

www.puttingstudentsfirst.org.au

Save Our Schools - Stop the Cuts

www.stopthecuts.com.au

TAFE Campaign Scoop.it

www.scoop.it/t/tafe-campaign

Save Our TAFE - Petition

www.change.org/en-AU/petitions/save-our-tafe

Roza Sage - Member for Blue Mountains
bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au

November 10 Politics in the Pub
Education Debate come to Katoomba

Find out more online at
www.bmuc.blogspot.com

