

Your Workplace Contacts

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Glenwood Public School's Federation Representative Tom Gough took on the position to fight for a claw-back of lost working conditions for teachers.

During his career he has watched their prime role — teaching and learning — depreciated by non-core work demands. Mr Gough calls it “a sense of lost territory”.

“There was a time — quite a long time — at the front end of my career and into the middle that there seemed to be enough time to be a really good teacher, and also have enough time to build on that with creative extra-curricular or lunchtime activities,” he said.

“I have an interest in drama and film, so one of the things I started at our school was the Glenwood Shakespeare Company. This was a yearly production of Shakespeare for interested students with a view to an hour or more performance or movie at the end of the year.

“An example of a very productive year in this era was 1995. In that year, I created my much commended English unit on Anne Frank at the same time as building armour and costumes for our full-length movie of Macbeth.

“It was manageable because I seemed to be able to fit it all into the 10 hours that I feel I can work a day. As the years have passed, the time needed for work requirements has expanded close to that frontier, leaving an ever-shrinking space to undertake the drama and film.

“They still happen, but where we could once do yearly productions and long movies, we now take a couple of years to do the one!”

On the subject of workload, Mr Gough said he was “getting to the point where there’s just no more to give, but the demands seem to be increasing”.

“I am very conscious of the fact that I often sit in front of the computer on a task and I’m not really sure, let alone convinced, that the work being done is really taking me towards quality teaching and better outcomes for my students,” he said.

“I’ve been able to give a lot of time to the profession because I don’t have dependents. How do teachers with families to feed cope? I have always wondered.

“As Federation members and Fed Reps we need to be mindful and vigilant. Let’s monitor and thoughtfully consider each demand placed on us.

“Let’s evaluate what is expected, what the usefulness is and the way our time is being managed by school



leaders to accomplish these demands.”

A priority is informing the school community of the value of needs-based funding for public schools.

“During the Gonski/fair funding campaigns I like to talk to parents about finding issues and what the situation is regarding equity and how our school and therefore community will/would have benefitted from the original recommendations,” he said. “All done outside the school grounds, of course.”

As an aside to his duties to members and Federation, Mr Gough does volunteer work for a non-government organisation.

“I also work with See Beyond Borders in Cambodia on a regular basis doing teacher mentoring in literacy and numeracy strategies,” he said.

— Scott Coomber