

## On principle: Old guard forms rear guard

August 20, 2020

A group of retired principals who have seen previous NSW governments' attempts to introduce contracts for principals have rallied to prevent the same agenda in the modern era.

When credible evidence became apparent that principals' employment conditions were at risk, a cohort of 55 former principals and proud union members were compelled to act.

The introduction of precarious employment through contracts for principals and the employment of non-educators into the role of principal is something Federation President Angelo Gavrielatos says would constitute the most serious attack on our public education system in almost a decade.

"There is no doubt that, if successful at targeting one section of the teaching service, individual contracts would be extended to all teachers," he said.

Should the NSW Government pursue such an ideological attack on the profession, Federation's Executive will be immediately convened to plan a comprehensive political, media and, if necessary, industrial campaign in response.



Life Member Judy King led the initial charge against the latest attack on the fabric of the teaching profession. A proud union member since her first days of teaching, the former principal of Beacon Hill and Riverside Girls high schools represented NSW principals in many state and national contexts throughout her career. She also represented the union in Industrial Relations Commission hearings on many occasions.

"Concerned for the teaching conditions of current and future colleagues, the culture of schools and the learning conditions of students, my fellow former principals and I could not stand idly by and decided to act," Ms King said.

"Over 30 years, successive NSW governments have attempted to silence advocacy and compromise permanency by placing principals and teachers on short-term employment contracts. Principals and teachers campaigned side-by-side to thwart the imposition of limited-term contracts in 1990, 2004 and 2011."

Mr Gavrielatos said any imposition of contracts would be based on an ideological agenda not an educational one. He said there was no reputable research linking the imposition of corporate-style contracts to improved learning outcomes for students and warned principals on limited-term contracts would ultimately be held responsible for resourcing and staffing schools, shifting the focus from the government.

### THEY HAVE TRIED BEFORE

The Scott Report, introduced by the Greiner/Metherell Liberal government in 1990, was awash with corporate

language regarding “schools renewal”. Principals were to be placed on fiveyear, limited-term contracts with the “possibility of renewal”, like the newly created Cluster Director positions.

The Carr/Refshauge Labor government resurrected the contracts- for-principals agenda in 2004. The contracts were to start in term 4, 2004 for a “renewable fixed term for a period of mostly three years but up to five years”. Contracts were then to be extended to all teachers.

The O’Farrell/Piccoli Liberal government rekindled the contracts agenda again in 2011. The Local School, Local Decisions policy aimed to overturn the staffing agreement by introducing “limited- term contracts”. Local School, Local Decisions introduced a savage deregulation, cost-cutting “efficiency” agenda.