

Education Week 2018 - Reflecting on the past to shape the future

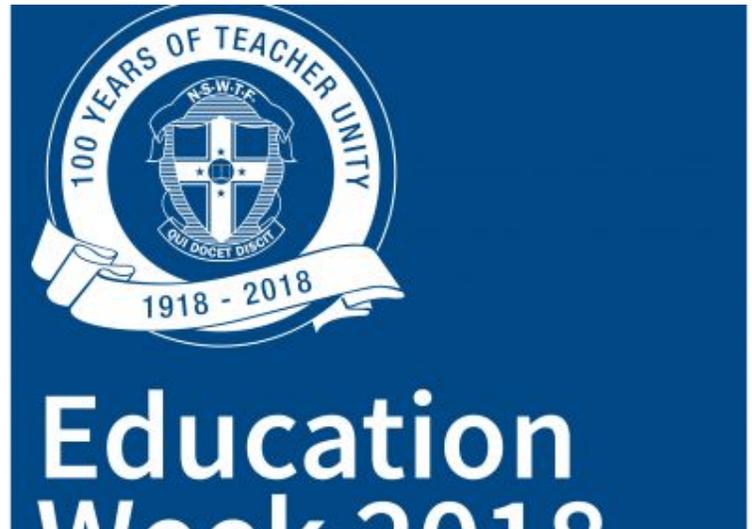
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by Maurie Mulheron, President

August 6-10 2018 is Education Week, a time to reflect on the achievements and impact of public education in our society – and, as Federation celebrates its centenary this year, to also consider the history of this great institution.

Recently, the Public Education Foundation released a [series of videos](#) featuring prominent Australians – Michael Kirby, Larissa Behrendt, and Craig Reucassel – whose public education played a role in their personal success. Their stories are indicative of the millions of lives improved by public education over the years.

At the heart of the success of public education is the fact that it is an education system that accepts all children from all families from all walks of life, and strives to provide them with the same high quality education, no matter their circumstances.



Public school teachers do more than educate an individual child; we accept children from a range of diverse backgrounds and create community. But we do more than even this. Our teachers strengthen the social, economic and cultural fabric of our nation - every day, in every public school.

Indeed, public education represents a deep and fundamental value that guides what we should want for all our children. The founder of public education in NSW, Sir Henry Parkes, summed it up in a simple yet profound phrase when he said that a public school allows all children, regardless of faith, to sit side by side.

For Education Week in 1957, Federation produced a poster which claimed that every school 'should be a beautiful place, surrounded by spacious grounds, equipped with every facility and with adequate staffing'. The poster also called on everyone to 'do all in your power' to help realise this dream.

That this poster, 61 years later, still resonates with the issues facing public education today highlights the ongoing nature of the struggle to ensure that all children, from every walk of life, have their needs met by the quality of the public education made available to them.

However, for example, while 83% of students with disability attend a public school, the Federal Government has cut targeted funding to support their education. Where the original Gonski review found that a minimum schooling resource standard (SRS) was needed to life achievement of all students, with additional funding targeted to areas of need, the Federal Government has instead committed to providing 80% of the SRS to

already-advantaged private schools, while only providing 20% for the education of public school students.

The campaigns in support of public education will continue, to ensure all students have access to the highest quality education regardless of their needs or background. As in 1957, the solution remains the same; we need you to 'do all in your power' and speak up on behalf of public education and the important role it plays in the lives of millions of children across Australia.

You can help by joining the campaign at fairfundingnow.org.au