

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 845**

PUBLIC EDUCATION DAY

28 MAY 2020

DOGS believe in a public Education system which is public in purpose and outcome; public in access; public in ownership and control; and above all, public in accountability. So we joined with other supporters of Public Education in celebrations for Public Education Day on May 28 2020.

According to the Australian Education Union, Public Education Day is a time to recognise the central role that public schools, preschools and TAFEs play in strengthening the social, economic and cultural fabric of our society.

Our public education system is a cohesive community which works as one to create equity, hope, and opportunity for every child. Free, public and secular education is the key to a vibrant, socially cohesive, multicultural and democratic Australia.

The reaction of the Australian people to the extraordinary requirements placed upon them in times of bushfire and plague and their ability to work together in these crises is a tribute to the values espoused by our public education systems.

In the lead up to Public Education Day, 28th May, the AEU asked a number of prominent Australians to share their support for public education and to celebrate and acknowledge the people who make it so special - principals, teachers and education support staff.

The author Maralyn Parker and Cool Australia CEO Jason Kimberley shared their appreciation of the professionalism, resilience and creativity which makes our public schools, preschools and TAFEs so strong and so vibrant.

Author Maralyn Parker

The professionalism, resilience and creativity of our public school teachers have never been more obvious to us, the majority of Australian families who send our children to public schools. You lift us up as a nation. You make us proud of who we are and what we can become. It is wonderful to get this opportunity to tell you how much we value your high expectations and your unstinting, often unacknowledged, and seemingly inexhaustible, labour. We thrive because of you.

I want to say thank you. Thank you for it all. Thank you for all of those late working nights, the constant worry about how to deliver in such fraught times and that endless striving to do better.

I hope you hear all the voices on this day thanking you because they are just a small part of those who want to let you know how much you and your work are appreciated. We are deeply grateful. We want you to hear all of this praise. You deserved it all and more. We say loudly and proudly that we honour and respect you for who you are, our public school teachers.

And lastly (because I can't resist this chance to stir the pot) please be political. Everything you do from what you teach to where and how you teach, has been politicised. So be political. Go to meetings, join your professional organisations, join your union. Be part of the political discussion not just the fodder. For all that you are, and all that you do, your voices so very much deserve to be heard, now more than ever. Shout and don't stop. We are with you.

Jason Kimberley CEO Cool Australia

During the current COVID-19 crisis my organisation Cool Australia worked closely with public education teachers to ascertain our 200 most useful classroom lessons to convert into at home learning activities for parents and caregivers. We thank all of the public education teachers, who despite almost crashing our website, gathered all the resources they required to forward to parents for the weeks ahead. We thank you.

We mainly work with public education teachers with a desire to partner to create engaging resources that enable the democratisation of high-quality education resources for all schools regardless of postcode. This partnership brings new thinking, support and clarity of vision. It is purposeful every time something is discussed and taught.

Public education is important to me because we all love solving problems. We love challenging ourselves to know more, to understand more and work on turning the dial to provide greater and more meaningful opportunities for our young people.

Some schools are unable to offer extensive deep dive curriculum lessons plans that address the important issues of our times for a variety of reasons. Poverty, mental health, racism, economic, environmental and economic sustainability, being future job ready and having the right skills to achieve are all subject areas that our audience has asked for. It is these partnerships and relationships, with more than 100,000 public education teachers, that gets me out of bed every day to work together to improve educational outcomes for young Australians.

Kids are now back at school, after being remotely educated by parents and caregivers at home for more than two months. Parents now have an entirely new understanding of what it takes to educate a child, and an even greater respect for the brilliant job that public education teachers do.

I love public education teachers!

Julia Gillard: 27th Prime Minister of Australia

I first became a supporter of public education in 1967. That was the year when, as a terrified five-year old migrant girl with continuing traces of a Welsh accent, I started at Mitcham Infants School. I can easily recall how big the play area seemed and the unfamiliar routine of filing in and out of classrooms. But I also remember the kindness and professionalism of the teachers, who wanted their young pupils to both learn and find joy in doing so.

My public education continued at Mitcham Primary School and Unley High, all in suburban Adelaide. Like every child, I liked some teachers more than others, had my share of playground spats and varied in the degree of interest I had in different subjects.

As a result, not every day of school was fun, but every day mattered. It would have been impossible for me to have lived the life I have without my great public education.

However, my schooling was about more than getting out the best in each individual. It focussed on creating a sense of togetherness, of community.

With its welcome all comers attitude, public education is, and has always been, dedicated to creating the best kind of society. It teaches us to accept, respect and share, to be an open-hearted and inclusive Australia. For that, on this day, we say thank you, loudly and proudly.

Julia Gillard, 27th Prime Minister of Australia

The Hon. Michael Kirby: Retired High Court Judge

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF COVID19 AND AT ALL TIMES

I am proud that my entire school education was in public schools. It began at North Strathfield Infants and Primary School. It continued at Summer Hill OC class. It concluded at Fort Street High School. Wonderful teachers. Excellent values. Appropriate discipline and focus. Lifelong friendships. A continuing indebtedness.

Recent advent of COVID19 has imposed added pressures on public schools, their staff and students. However, the shining values of public education have continued and even strengthened. Our public school teachers and staff have adapted brilliantly to the new technology of safe distance teaching where required. This has demanded new talents and fresh insights. But the principles of free, compulsory and secular education have remained the bedrock, together with the values of equality and democracy.

Public education was one of the grand experiments adopted throughout Australia in colonial times. It remains one of our nation's most precious features. We must guard it, support it and fund it properly.

David Gonski : Chairman of Gonski Reports, Man for all Seasons

Even though I was only seven when we emigrated to Australia, I still remember it. Times were tough for my parents who had four children under eight living in a very small rented flat. Within a week of arriving in Sydney I was sent to the local public school which was incredibly welcoming of this shy boy who spoke with a peculiar accent.

The school had students from rich and poor families; some were Australian-born others were not; some were bright some were not; many had great sporting abilities but some, like me, did not. Our teacher, Miss Watson, was attentive to us all. She encouraged those who were slow to catch on and complimented the quick. She helped those whose first language was not English. To my relief and surprise, she even told me that not being good at sport in Australia was ok.

Almost 60 years on, I still remember that welcome and the subsequent nurturing which made me feel happy and safe in the new country my parents had chosen as our home. Undoubtedly

it also instilled in me an appreciation of the work and importance of the public school system in Australia and above all how important in each of our lives is the work of a great teacher. There are many Miss Watsons in the teaching profession and in our public schools and I salute her and each of them with enormous thanks and gratitude.

Dr David Zyngier” Associate Professor, School of Education, Southern Cross University

As the founder of the Public Education Network (PEN) I wish to acknowledge the positive contributions that public school teachers make to the lives of children and young people, their families and communities need to be widely recognised. Any weakening of our public education system can only be a weakening of our democracy. Our public schools deserve to be adequately resourced and funded.

The pandemic shows the essential work that our teachers undertake every day. During this period many parents have publicly acknowledged a better understanding of the expertise required to ensure children's learning. A legacy of this period for many is a new-found appreciation for what teachers do to guide and support student learning, together with an increased capacity for families to support their children's education. For many parents and carers attempting home-based teacher-directed learning has provided a firsthand view just how rapidly education has changed and the incredible skills required by teachers.

The positive contributions that our public-schools make to the lives of children and young people, their families and especially in disadvantaged communities need to be recognised, especially by politicians and the media. It cannot be acceptable to blame our teachers for the perceived lowering of achievement outcomes caused the structural inequities in our schooling system due to so-called “school choice” policies of governments from both sides. It is beyond time to remove public funding from private schools and direct the \$13.6B each year to our public education system.

Our teachers need to be trusted by policymakers, employers and the community as professionals, and as the decision-makers best equipped to make the best judgement about education in contrast to the view of some self-identified “expert” commentators who suggest that anyone who has been to school can be an expert on teaching and learning.

Jane Caro: Author, Coloumnist, Broadcaster, Documentary Maker and Social Commentator

The riskiest thing any of us ever do is be born. None of us have any control over the circumstances of our birth, including who our parents are. That is why a strong, well resourced, excellent public education system available to every child regardless of their luck or otherwise in the lottery of birth is so fundamental to a civil society and democracy itself.

Happy Public Education Day. Love your work.

DOGS CONGRATULATE ALL THOSE WHO ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT THE INEQUALITIES CAUSED BY THE CONTINUITIES OF HISTORY THROUGH OUR PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

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<http://www.3cr.org.au/dogs>