

**English Matters**

Newsletter No 2/14 April 2014

# http://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wh1.thewebconsole.com/wh/4306/images/Fiona-Laing.jpgIn this issue

Fiona Laing

ETAQ President

1. Renewal of membership
2. Annual General Meeting
3. Paul Sherman appointed a Life Member
4. Research survey re English teacher knowledge about language
5. New website
6. Review of the Australian Curriculum
7. 2014 AATE/ALEA national conference in Darwin
8. Assistance to attend the national conference
9. AATE 50th jubilee
10. English (& related educational matters) in the media
11. Brisbane PD dates for 2014

**Renewal of membership**

**Have you renewed your membership?**

If you have not paid your dues for 2014 this will probably be the last mailing you receive.

According to our Rules, annual membership fees are due on 1 January and those who have not paid their dues by 31 March are deemed unfinancial and cease to be members.

If there has been an oversight, please attend to the matter now. Problems can be sorted out with our Admin Officer Trish Purcell at [trish.purcell@bigpond.com](mailto:trish.purcell@bigpond.com)

**We really don’t want to lose you!**

**Annual General Meeting**

This year’s Annual General Meeting was held in conjunction with the seminar at Corinda SHS on 15 March. The only nominations that had been received prior to the meeting were from the members listed in the table below. Consequently, there was no need for a contested election and, in accordance with the Rules, the following members were declared duly elected. The shading indicates newcomers to the committee.

**Management Committee for 2014-15**

| **Position** | **Name** |
| --- | --- |
| President | Fiona Laing, Forest Lake SHS |
| Vice President | Dr Kelli McGraw, QUT |
| Secretary | Bronwyn Darben, Runcorn SHS |
| Treasurer | Trish Purcell |
| Membership Secretary | Diana Briscoe, The Gap SHS |
| 1. Member | Julie Arnold, Corinda SHS |
| 1. Member | Garry Collins, UQ (sessional) |
| 1. Member | Sophie Johnson, Stuartholme |
| 1. Member | Helen Johnston, Brisbane Grammar |
| 1. Member | Debbie Peden, various schools |
| 1. Member | Michelle Ragen, Brisbane Grammar |
| 1. Member | Dr Stew Riddle, USQ |
| 1. Member | Matthew Rigby, Go Grammar Consulting |
| 1. Member | Leah Wells, Brisbane State High |
| 1. Member | Melanie Wild, Corinda SHS |
| 1. Member | Rebecca Hewitt, St Patrick’s College, Shorncliffe |
| 1. Member | Laura Macleod, Faith Lutheran College - Redlands |

**Professor Catherine Beavis** from Griffith University’s Gold Coast campus was elected to another term as **ETAQ Patron**.

The following members of the 2013/14 committee did not re-nominate. Their contributions to the association during their time on the committee are much appreciated.

* Jenny Ivett-Hawes, Centenary SHS
* Shauna O’Connor, Brigidine College

**Paul Sherman appointed a Life Member**

An important item of business at the Annual General Meeting was the unanimous decision to confer Life Membership of ETAQ on Paul Sherman. The Management Committee decided towards the end of last year that Paul should be thus honoured in recognition of his long and valuable contribution to English teaching in Queensland. A formal presentation of the award will be made at this year’s State Conference.

Paul is one of ETAQ’s foundation members. He was an inspiring classroom teacher and, for many years since his retirement from full-time work, has continued to make a sterling contribution to English education via his one-man performances in schools bringing to life scenes from Shakespeare’s plays or selected poems.

Besides his teaching endeavours, Paul is also an accomplished poet, playwright and actor. In this year’s Australia Day Honours List he was awarded an OAM (Medal of the Order of Australia) for his services to the arts and to education.

**Awards for top English teacher graduates**

ETAQ has followed the example of ALEA – imitation is ever the sincerest form of flattery – and instituted a practice of awarding a year’s free membership to the top graduates from universities in the state which provide pre-service education to prospective secondary English teachers. Complimentary registration for the March seminar was also included.

The inaugural recipients of these awards are:

* Queensland University of Technology: Kirstin Woodward
* Griffith University: Mallory Lowe
* Central Queensland University: Courtney Stewart
* University of Southern Queensland: Robin Mounsey
* Christian Heritage College: Michelle Kuhlmann
* University of Queensland: Stuart Campbell
* James Cook University: Hannah Romano

The recipients are congratulated on their achievement and it is hoped that they will derive value from the membership of the association.

On this occasion no nominations were received from the Australian Catholic University or the University of the Sunshine Coast but it is hoped that arrangements can be made for them to participate in the future.

**Research survey re English teacher knowledge about language**

* The message below is from the organizers of an important research project relevant to contemporary English teaching.
* ETAQ members are strongly urged to participate in the survey.
* The information and the link can also be found in a post on the Discussions Page of the ETAQ website
* Members are asked to draw this to the attention of colleagues who may not currently be members of ETAQ.

**A national survey for English teachers of their knowledge about language**

“No one doubts that teachers of English need to know how language works and to teach this to their students. Benchmarking teacher knowledge and know-how is crucial if we are to provide build a strong knowledge base in the profession, including English, literacy and EAL/D teachers. The problem is that we don’t know enough yet about what teachers know about language; nor do we know what kinds of professional support teachers need if they are to build students’ language knowledge in coherent and cumulative ways through the years of school English.

Mary Macken-Horarik of the University of New England, in collaboration with Kristina Love, Len Unsworth and Carmel Sandiford of the Australian Catholic University, have developed a short online survey designed to help appreciate what understandings teachers have about language (including grammar). It is part of a large-scale project investigating grammar and praxis in 21st century school English and has been funded by the Australian Research Council from 2011-2014 (DP110104309).

The online **survey is open from Monday March 17 until Friday 16 May 2014**. It is covered by ethical clearance at UNE (HE11/062) and should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. All responses will remain anonymous but our findings will be shared with colleagues through professional associations like PETAA, ALEA and AATE (and state affiliates). If you have any questions about it, please feel free to contact Mary Macken-Horarik (02 6773-3562), Len Unsworth and Kristina Love (03 9953 3507) or Carmel Sandiford (03 9953 3573).

Click on this link to find out more about the larger grammar and praxis project and then to do the survey:

<http://www.une.edu.au/about-une/academic-schools/school-of-education/research/arc-funded-projects#item0> “

**New website**

ETAQ’s smart new website has been up and running since the start of the year. If you haven’t yet had a look at it, I recommend that you do so. The URL is the same as previously: [www.etaq.org.au](http://www.etaq.org.au). It allows you to join, pay your membership and register and pay on-line for PD activities.

As part of the seminar at Corinda High School on Saturday 15 March, the new site was formally launched with a virtual ribbon cutting performed by new ETAQ President, Fiona Laing.

**Review of the Australian Curriculum**

* ETAQ made the following brief submission to the current review of the Australian Curriculum.

The English Teachers Association of Queensland (ETAQ) endorses the detailed submission made by our affiliated national body, the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE). The following points are emphasised:

1. Queensland schools started planning for the introduction of the F-10 Australian Curriculum: English (AC:E) in 2011 and most schools started teaching it in 2012. This means that, for over two years, significant amounts of teacher time and effort have been invested in amending teaching programs to accommodate the document in the best interests of student learning. Major changes to the curriculum at this still relatively early stage in its implementation would risk squandering the work already done. In addition, the disruption in schools must be expected to adversely affect both student learning and teacher morale.
2. Like any curriculum document, the AC:E is not perfect but it contains much of value. The detailed content descriptions in the Language strand constitute one particular aspect of the strength of the document. In due course, changes to the curriculum will be warranted, but, at this point, more time needs to be allowed for the strengths of the AC:E to be fully translated into productive student learning in the classroom.
3. The three strands of the AC:E (Language, Literature and Literacy) give it the necessary balance.
4. Provided a sensible approach is adopted at school level, both the Cross Curriculum Priorities and the General Capabilities can be readily incorporated into teaching and learning programs in English without any adverse effect on the essence of the subject.
5. Since the four English subject options for Years 11 and 12 have yet to be put into full implementation anywhere in the country, it is premature to be contemplating any significant changes.
6. Like other stakeholders, ETAQ participated in ACARA’s extensive consultation exercises that contributed to the production of both the F-10 and Years 11 & 12 components of the curriculum. While the ACARA document does not represent everything that we would have wished, we believe that the AC:E and the associated Cross Curriculum Priorities and the General Capabilities have much of value and more time needs to be allowed for that potential to be translated into productive student learning before any substantial changes are made.

**2014 AATE/ALEA Joint National Conference**

The big item on the PD calendar for English teachers this year is the AATE/ALEA joint national conference to be held in Darwin in the second week of the winter vacation for EQ schools.

The **theme** is “**aNTicipating new territories: building strong minds, places and futures**”.

The conference will be held at the harbour-front **Darwin Convention Centre** over the period **9-12 July 2014**.

There will be a program of **pre-conference workshops** on Wednesday 9 July and then the conference begins with a welcome reception on the evening of Wednesday 9 July with the formal program commencing on the morning of Thursday 10th.

A **key date**:

* Early Bird Registration closes **30 April 2014**

**Need for early bookings**

When the NT organizers formally launched their conference in the closing session of our own recent “Brave New World” event, they were at pains to remind people of the need to book both flights and accommodation as soon as possible. July is peak tourism season in the Northern Territory and both travel and accommodation will be hard, perhaps impossible, to arrange if people leave it till the last moment.

The conference website can be found at: [www.englishliteracyconference.com.au](http://www.englishliteracyconference.com.au) and can be readily accessed via the AATE website.

If you’ve not yet been to the Top End, this could be an ideal opportunity to combine discovering more of the country with quality professional development.

**Assistance to attend the national conference**

ETAQ will provide **financial assistance** to selected members to attend the national conference.

The award will cover the cost of **earlybird registration.**

What will be required in return is:

* An article on some aspect of the conference experience for publication in *Words’Worth*
* Participation in the Future Leaders Forum session at the conference

If you would like to be considered for one of these awards, email Immediate Past President Garry Collins at [gazco48@bigpond.net.au](mailto:gazco48@bigpond.net.au) explaining why you think you would be a suitable recipient. So that the earlybird registration can be utilized, applications are required **NLT Friday 28 March**.

Other things being equal, preference will be given to individual members but those covered by school corporate membership may still apply.

**Annual Literary Competition**

Members are reminded that the usual Literary Competition will be conducted again this year. Entry materials have been printed by the Independent Education Union and are in the process of being distributed to schools.

Teachers are urged to encourage talented student writers to enter one of their poems and/or short stories. For years 11 and 12 there is an additional non-fiction prose section and teachers can also enter short stories.

**AATE 50th jubilee**

The Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE), the national English teacher body of which ETAQ is a member, is celebrating its 50th birthday in 2014. When it was formed in 1964, the first national president was poet and English academic, Professor A.D. Hope.

ETAQ was not formed until 1967 and so we will have to wait until 2017 for our own 50th jubilee.

**English in the Media**

**(& related educational matters)**

**Note**: the letters below were submitted to the paper indicated by Garry Collins. Many were composed in his capacity as a private citizen and the signature block indicates when he was writing as ETAQ President.

**Student plagiarism and the internet**

Melbourne teacher Christopher Bantick writes that “it is simply not possible for a teacher to search the dark corners of the internet for answers one suspects are not the student’s own” (“Lessons for life lost on kids when facts are just a click away”, 9-10/11).

Surely he has a colleague who could explain to him how Turnitin works. This plagiarism checker technology is now widely used in schools and universities. Perhaps the place where he works should get with the times.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Mon 11 November 13.)

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(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Mon 11 November 13.)

**Informed advice on external exams**

Paul Thomson and Rob Forsyth (Letters, 25/11) are to be congratulated on providing a sensible and informed counter to those calling for a return to the external school examinations that Queensland abandoned in the early 1970s. Unlike many with a view on this topic, these correspondents actually work in the school system and have first hand understanding.

Some of the QSA’s procedures may need to be improved but we should be wary of seeking to return to the past.

Are undergraduates in Professor Peter Ridd’s physics department assessed via examinations set outside his university? If not, perhaps he should explain why.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Courier-Mail*, Tue 26 November 13.)

**Teacher unions’ quest for fairness**

How is it being “highly politicised” for teacher unions to want implementation of what your editorial (26/11) concedes to be fair, the school funding principle proposed in the Gonski Report?

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Wed 27 November 13.)

**Federal say in how schools are run**

Your editorial asserts that the federal education minister (Christopher Pyne) has a right to put his own stamp on how schools will be funded and have a say in how they will be run (“Coalition must honour deals for school reform”, 27/11). The second part of this needs to be challenged.

Australia is currently plagued by a dysfunctional system which has the states responsible for the big ticket items of education and health while the Commonwealth collects the bulk of tax revenues. Things would not be set up like this if we were designing the federation today.

Certainly the Federal Government must provide the funds to ensure that the nation’s schools are adequately resourced. After all, the funds they command come from taxes paid by citizens who live in states and territories.

Perhaps it would be a good idea to amend the Constitution to make education a solely federal responsibility.

But, until that is done, it is just an unhelpful complication for a federal education minister, be it Christopher Pyne or anyone else, to seek to have a say in how schools are run. Too many cooks invariably spoil the broth.

(**✓** **published** in *The Courier-Mail*, Thu 28 November 13 with the underlined words deleted and the bracketed ones inserted. The paper’s heading for a collection of three letters, of which mine was the third, was “**Pyne’s funding backflip for schools lacks class**”.)

**Seizing the education agenda**

Your editorial makes the sound point that there is more to improving school education than the provision and equitable distribution of adequate funding, important though that is (“Seize the education agenda”, 28/11).

However, it is highly debatable whether the PM (Prime Minister) and the federal (his) Education Minister should be seeking to take the lead in debate about how education funding should be spent.

Education remains a state responsibility and, until such time as the Constitution is changed in that regard, the Federal Government’s best contribution is probably to ensure that the funds are available and then get out of the way.

Christopher Pyne might be well-meaning but there is nothing in his background that would confer any particular expertise on education.

(**✓** **published** in *The Australian*, Fri 29 November 13 with the underlined words deleted and the bracketed ones inserted. The paper’s heading for the five letters in the “Talking Point” section was “**Budgetary factors should be a priority over Gonski**”.)

**Responsibility for the national curriculum**

I was intrigued to read that an education commentator regularly published in this paper claims that responsibility for developing the national curriculum has been given to “subject associations, professional and curriculum bodies” (“Quality teaching will fashion far better outcomes”, Nov 30 – Dec 1).

This is just plain wrong. The body responsible for developing the national curriculum is the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), a federal government instrumentality.

Kevin Donnelly’s observation of the education system must be sufficient for him to know this and it has to be wondered why this paper continues to provide space for such deliberate untruths.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Mon 2 December 13.)

**Deploying teachers where they’re needed**

State Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek says that he wants to deploy the best teachers to the schools where they are needed most (“Class mark”, 2/12). That’s a fine idea. But for Education Queensland to deploy teachers according to system-wide priorities aimed to benefit all students, there will need to be a measure of central office control.

At the same time, Independent Public Schools are being established with the freedom to choose their own staff. Under this arrangement in which individual schools are encouraged to act in their own selfish best interests with no concern for the system as a whole, the best teachers are most likely to end up concentrated in the schools where they are least needed.

I wonder does the Minister appreciate this potential conflict.

(**✓** **published** in *The Courier-Mail*, Tue 3 December 13 with the underlined words deleted. The paper’s heading for a collection of four letters was “**Discriminatory pay kills good teacher practices**”.)

**Certainty about the value of school autonomy**

The ACER’s Dr Sue Thomson points out that the top performers in the recent PISA tests are typically centralized education systems and she is, at best, ambivalent about the value of school autonomy (“Making school system work”, 4/12).

How is it then that media commentators and politicians of both major parties are so certain that this needs to be a key part of educational reform in Australia? What is it that these people can see that professional researchers in education cannot? Or is it just a matter of ideology and wishful thinking trumping real evidence?

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Thu 5 December 13.)

**Private school fees**

The choice of the verb “soar” in the headline of a story about increases in fees charged by the most expensive private schools suggests that these fees are inappropriately high (“School costs soar”, 6/12).

On the contrary, these fee levels are just as they should be. After all, such schools can hardly be “elite” if they are within the financial reach of most people. Indeed, some would suggest that one of the things parents are doing when they enrol their offspring in such schools is buying a well-heeled peer group.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Courier-Mail*, Sat 6 December 13.)

**School choice and the national good**

John Black makes some interesting points about how changing demographics are affecting patterns of enrolment in the nation’s schools (“Demographics change the schools game”, 7-8/12).

According to his analysis, many parents are using NAPLAN score averages as a measure of school effectiveness, something that the tests were never designed to do.

Unfortunately, he fails to mention that greater parental choice may be good for segments of the population but bad for the nation as a whole if the result is to produce a two-tiered school system in which the better motivated and supported students are increasingly concentrated together thus depriving residual schools of the influence necessary to create cultures conducive to learning.

Education policies need to serve the overall national good rather than just promoting the interests of some members of society.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Mon 9 December 13.)

**Unintended consequences of school choice**

Henry Ergas advocates a greater embrace of school choice as being in the best interests of the nation’s children (“Schools need to lift their game”, 9/12).

This would be fine if the end result was to have all children attending high performing schools but that is unlikely to be the case. Only in the mythical Lake Wobegon are all the children above average.

Much more likely is that the more difficult to educate, because of behavioural or learning problems, would be progressively concentrated in residual schools. In a competitive market, no school with the ability to choose really wants students with the potential to drag down NAPLAN scores published on My School.

Perhaps experts like Ergas could qualify as teachers via the Teach for Australia scheme and then help these residual schools to lift their game. And since class sizes don’t matter to people like Ergas, they could do it really economically by teaching groups of a hundred or so.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Tue 10 December 13.)

**Gonski and teacher salaries**

Judith Sloan writes that debate over school funding has been a win for The Australian Education Union which will result in higher teacher salaries (“Power principle in tatters as education union gets Gonski all sewn up”, 10/12).

Well, wouldn’t that be a dreadful outcome! Just imagine the dire consequences for the nation if teaching were as attractive a career prospect for high achieving school leavers as law, business or medicine. This must be prevented.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Wed 11 December 13.)

**Reviewing the national curriculum**

The report that conservative education critic Kevin Donnelly is a frontrunner to lead the Government’s review of the national curriculum next month gives cause for concern (“Abbott to expel Labor’s lessons”, 21/12).

Dr Donnelly is identified as director of the Education Standards Institute and a former chief-of-staff to Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews.

The first part of this description sounds impressive but an inspection of the institute’s website shows that this organization is really just Kevin Donnelly who appointed himself as its director.

The second part suggests that any review headed by Donnelly would probably be more about politics than education.

A review headed by Donnelly is unlikely to achieve any credibility with education professionals.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Courier-Mail*, Mon 23 December 13.)

**Attracting good people to teaching**

In describing Victorian government plans for the improvement of school education, Ben Jensen writes approvingly that one group of proposals is intended “to attract great people into teaching by improving initial teacher education” (“To flourish, teachers need strong leaders”, 1/1).

The use of the adjective (word) “great” rather than the more modest and realistic “good” is typical of the inflated rhetoric that frequently mars such policy documents. Of more concern is the flawed logic.

Quality pre-service teacher education is certainly necessary, but this is not what will attract the good people needed. Occupations are attractive to people because of their perceptions of the nature of the work, its social status, and the associated remuneration and conditions. Surely few people choose careers - and we need people to make teaching a career - on the basis of what they think the preliminary training will be like.

(**✓** **published** in *The Australian*, Fri 3 January 14 with the underlined word deleted and the bracketed one inserted. I wonder why they thought it necessary to change “adjective” to “word”. The paper’s heading was “**Teaching as a career**”. I was pleased to have a letter published in the first week of the new year.)

**Demanding literary fiction**

Christopher Bantick suggests that the Australian English Curriculum should mandate “demanding literary fiction” at least in the junior secondary levels prior to Year 10 (“Open book: how reading better literature makes us better readers of people”, 11-12/1). By “demanding” I presume he means books that quite a few students would merely pretend to read and that some would just not be able to.

He mentions this in proudly pointing out (saying) that this year he “will teach a course on the Western canon to clever Year 10 students” at the Melbourne private school where he works.

If demanding texts should be compulsory for all, why is he teaching this course only to clever students? To employ some of Bantick’s own language, it does seem that he and his school have cravenly abrogated their clear responsibility to provide an appropriate literary education for all students.

(**✓** **published** in *The Australian*, Tue 14 January 14 with the underlined words deleted and the bracketed ones inserted. The paper’s heading for a collection of six letters in its “Talking Point” section was “**Cultural literacy essential for an educated society**”.)

**Teachers' political tendencies**

In discussing the national curriculum, Professor Greg Craven suggests that there is a tendency for many teachers to be, as he colourfully puts it, “a little more pink than powder blue” (“National curriculum a victim of crimes of omission” 22/1).

While he doesn’t cite any actual evidence, he is probably correct. After all, teaching involves helping others and being concerned with the good of society as a whole rather than just one’s self. And, of course, teachers are never going to make significant amounts of money.

Those with strong right wing views, which include a focus on the individual, are much more likely to be found pursuing personal gain in better paid occupations.

(**✓** **published** in *The Australian*, Thu 23 January 14 with the underlined words deleted. The paper’s heading for a collection of four letters in its “Talking Point” section was “**There’s more to a good teacher than teaching skills**”.)

**Too many private schools bad for the country**

With Australia Day approaching, we will proudly assure ourselves that ours is an egalitarian country with the same fair go for all. However, as Jane Fynes-Clinton points out, that’s not quite how our school system works (“School fees are in own class”, 23/1).

One of our (the) cherished national myths is that social class is much less evident here than in Britain. It is ironic then, that, as Fynes-Clinton relates (says in her column (C-M, Jan 23), the private school sector is much larger here than there.

Private schools have always been part of the Australian educational landscape and the existence of a private school sector *per se* is not the problem. The problem is that the proportion of students attending private schools has now risen to a level that is having a negative impact on the state schools designed to educate all children.

A two-tier school system with a second best experience for the majority of (most) students is not what is needed in a vibrant democracy. And it is not the arrangement that will arrest recent relative declines in international (student achievement) measures like PISA. Indeed, the drift to private schools is likely to accelerate that decline.

Part of the problem is that parents have been encouraged to choose “good” schools based on NAPLAN score averages (scores) published on the My School website, and, as Kevin Rudd once put it, to vote with their feet. I have no doubt that there were good intentions when this system was established, but negative unintended consequences often result when people in power only half understand what they are doing. And things are made worse when politicians are too arrogant to genuinely listen to advice that differs from their pet schemes.

(**✓** **published** in *The Courier-Mail*, Fri 24 January 14 with the underlined words deleted and the bracketed ones inserted. The paper’s heading for two letters in response to Fynes-Clinton’s piece was “Growth of private schools hits state”.)

**Specialisation in teaching**

In responding to a recent statement by Sydney University’s vice-chancellor, Christopher Bantick argues that “the last thing contemporary schooling needs is generalist thinkers” (“Generalists not the answer to teaching woes”, 25-26/1). Disappointingly, he makes no distinction between primary and secondary schooling and seems overly influenced by his personal perspective as a secondary English teacher.

Most teachers work in primary and pre-school settings (8 years compared to 5 years). Surely what the primary and pre-school phases of schooling need are well trained generalist teachers. Or is Bantick seriously suggesting that students in the early primary years should have to interact with half a dozen or so subject specialist teachers?

High schools are of course another matter but, even there, it can be difficult to make school timetables work if all teachers have only a single subject string to their bows.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Mon 27 January 14.)

**The importance of poetry**

I heartily endorse Kevin Donnelly’s central point that poetry is important (“Rhymes of the times: poetry’s still important”, 1-2/2).

Poetry was always a feature of the high school English programs that I taught over 35 years and, in recent times, at professional learning conferences for English teachers at state and national level, I have presented workshops on Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Tennyson’s *The Lady of Shalott*, Kipling’s *Gunga Din* and W.H. Auden’s *Musee des Beaux Arts*.

Early in his piece, Donnelly suggests that there are some who consider text messaging to be as important as poetry. I have yet to meet a classroom English teacher who thinks so.

However, this does not mean that contemporary forms of literacy – such as the sort of language used in text messaging – should merit no classroom consideration at all, even if only briefly and in passing.

Balance is one of the criteria specified in the Terms of Reference for the current review of the national curriculum. Could school English programs be said to be balanced if they focused solely on classic literature to the exclusion of all other forms of language?

Garry Collins, President, Australian Association for the Teaching of English

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Mon 3 February 14.)

**Review of teacher education**

If a review of teacher education is to be headed by a law academic turned university administrator (“Craven in line to head teacher training review”, 15-16/2), could we then have a review of law degree programs headed by a school principal?

(**✓** **published** in *The Australian*, Mon 17 February 14. Professor Greg Craven is the Vice Chancellor of the Australian Catholic University. The letter appeared at the bottom of the sidebar “In Brief” section of the letters page.)

**Teacher training review panel**

The details of some members of the panel appointed by federal Education Minister Christopher Pyne to review teacher training make interesting reading.

The chair is a former law academic, now a university vice chancellor. There’s no doubt that Professor Craven is a smart bloke, but he has never been a school teacher. The same goes for Ben Jensen, an economist with an impressive CV. He’s never worked as a teacher in a school either. Indeed, he’s not even qualified for initial teacher registration.

Even Professor Field Rickards, who heads up a teacher pre-service education course at Melbourne University, has never himself been a school teacher. Is there anywhere in the country where pre-entry professional training programs for doctors, lawyers or engineers are led by people who have never themselves been practising members of those professions?

Irrespective of whatever their other qualifications and experience might be, the appointment of such people to review teacher training is inherently disrespectful of the teaching profession. In this sense, staffed as it is, the review can reasonably be seen as part of a problem, rather than part of any solution.

(**🗶 not published** in *The Australian*, Mon 24 February 14.)

**Brisbane PD dates for 2014**

ETAQ’s further schedule of PD events in Brisbane for 2014 is as follows. If you’re in the south-east corner, please note them in your diary.

* Saturday 10 May – Beginning Teachers’ Day
* Saturday 31 May – Seminar 2
* Saturday 16 August – State Conference
* Sunday 19 October – Literary Breakfast

**Conclusion**

It is with trepidation that I attempt to fill the shoes of Garry Collins as president. Garry has donated so much to ETAQ, leading us with commitment, energy and passion. His zeal for all things English (and poetry and grammar etc) has been legendary. I feel privileged to have worked with him over the past 8 years of his presidency.

I very much look forward to working to support you, those very important people in our society – the teachers of English.  
Fiona Laing

ETAQ President