



The last word

Ugly shorts with deep pockets

IT'S NEARLY TIME FOR US ALL TO HANG UP OUR PROFESSIONAL WARDROBE AND TAKE ONE OF THE MANY AND REGULAR HOLIDAY BREAKS WE TEACHERS ENJOY, SAYS **MICK WILKINSON**.

TEACHERS ARE APPARENTLY OVER-represented in the ranks of millionaires in the United States. I read this little snippet in an investment book during one of my many and regular holiday breaks while I was staying at a beachside holiday unit. I was contemplating making an offer on it, but couldn't decide: was this a place I'd want to spend the many and regular holiday breaks we teachers enjoy?

So we teachers are over-represented in the ranks of millionaires. Over-represented? Ranks? Millionaires? I didn't think so, but then I realised why teachers might be more likely than those in other occupations to become millionaires: we're predominantly a profession of scrooges.

Have you ever looked at a staff carpark at school and seen the state of the vehicles that teachers will gladly pass off as appropriate

transportation? Over time, even the enthusiastic younger teachers with their brand-new hatchbacks will trade them in for barely roadworthy Ford Escorts – remember them? – when they realise it's only a matter of time before a disgruntled student lets the tyres down and scratches the panels with a key.

Consider, also, how pedantic we are about equity when it comes to any monetary contribution in the tearooms of our schools. More than one time, I've witnessed the brutal and inhuman shut down of a staff member – reminiscent of a scene from *A Few Good Men* – for the heinous crime of falling behind with money for the coffee kitty! The sheer delight I felt at a new school when I saw a gleaming, staff-purchased industrial coffee machine evaporated in an instant when I pored over the laminated 14-point 'charter' beside it for members of the club.

I wasn't quite ready for that level of commitment.

If you leave a school, rest assured that your parting gift, if you're fortunate, will be a mug – proudly emblazoned with the school insignia – or a tie – proudly emblazoned with the school insignia, thus rendering it unwearable at most events that would demand a tie. So much for good fortune. On the other hand, if you're unfortunate, you may receive a mostly-full box of dustless chalk or some pens for an overhead projector.

It's probably best if I don't mention that even office temps at mining companies generally expect late-model Commodores as parting gifts.

We're also afforded the privilege of wearing what is generally regarded as the lowest common denominator of professional wardrobes. Students wishing to pass fashion judgment can either be told (a) 'At least I don't have to wear your sucky school uniform' or (b) 'Let's have a working lunch – read: detention – to discuss alternative options I might have for my professional attire.'

Your colleagues are no threat to this universally low standard of dress sense, since the worse they look, the more investment properties we assume they have.

I once knew a teacher who routinely wore an old polo shirt, faded ruggers and sandals who could say, with all sincerity whilst tugging on his collar, 'I wear this shirt with a collar because I take pride in my professional image.' Rumour had it that he owned a resort somewhere in the Whitsundays.

My friend Andrew, who's not a teacher, has a theory that explains why teachers tend to be canny with their money: they have more holidays to think about it. Now this may certainly be plausible, but teaching friends of mine have suggested an equally plausible explanation for this phenomenon: no other career makes one as motivated to think about getting out of it as ours! **T**

Mick Wilkinson is the Student Activities Coordinator, Student Services, at Northside Christian College, Brisbane.