



INTERESTING TIMES

What do you do when a staffing crisis means you're 600 teachers short as the school year starts and teachers fail to pay their registration? In Western Australia, you deregister them. That's what happened in December when 38 WA teachers refused to pay their \$70 registration fee to the Western Australian College of Teaching (WACOT). WA Minister for Education Mark McGowan said publicly that deregistration was the only option. 'It's preferable that we have all teachers available, but I do not make any apology for making sure our teachers have working-with-children checks and are screened to make sure they're appropriately trained,' he told the *Australian's* Amanda O'Brien on 13 December. In correspondence with the Chair of WACOT, Brian Lindberg, on 3 December, however, he wrote, 'In my view, any decision to deregister teachers during the transition phase of WACOT's establishment would be rash... I strongly urge – and so advise – the Board to be mindful of the potential disruption to schools in determining when deregistration should occur.' In his reply, Lindberg pointed out that section 46 of the Western Australian College of Teaching Act 2004 provides for the cancellation of the membership of those who do not maintain their registration by paying the annual membership fee. 'This is not dissimilar,' he reasonably pointed out, 'to similar provisions that may be found in legislation regulating other professions such as doctors, nurses and lawyers.' The 38 teachers were the remainder of more than 1,000 protesting teachers – 350 of them classroom teachers – who originally refused to pay the fees on the basis that WACOT had failed to hold elections for teacher representatives on the Board, or, as Lindberg put it in his letter, 'were concerned about paying their fees when elections to the Board had not yet occurred.' The elections have now been held. State School Teachers Union president Mike Keely urged the estimated 20 state school

teachers who were not expecting to retire to reconsider. 'While 20 teachers sounds like a drop in the ocean, for the 20 schools and 20 classes involved, and the 200 other teachers in those schools, it will be a huge problem,' he told the *Australian*.

NOT IN MY BACKYARD

When Camden's state Labor parliamentary Geoff Corrigan heard that the Quranic Society wanted to build Camden College, a combined primary and high school for 1,200 students in Sydney's outer west, he was thrilled. 'I'm sure the majority of Camden residents will welcome additional educational facilities in our area as they welcomed all other schools in rural areas,' he said. 'I'm sure people won't let issues of religion hinder their welcoming of young children.' Wrong. There was a text message campaign against the proposal, alleged collusion by real estate agents to refuse to sell homes to Muslims and a petition by Kate Robbins, manager of Sinclairs newsagency and pharmacy in Camden. She had 12 pages of signatures before an unknown woman made off with the lot. 'We don't know if she was a Muslim – and what if they get our names and addresses?' Robbins asked the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Angela Cuming. 'Why can't they (Muslims) go to a school with our kids?' Answer: they can. Camden is already home to Macarthur Anglican School, Hope Christian School and St Pauls Primary School. Anyone want to start a petition against them?

COMPENSATION AND INCENTIVE

A United States study of performance-based pay by Michael Podgursky and Matthew Springer, economics professors at the University of Missouri-Columbia and Vanderbilt University respectively, has found that student achievement improves when teachers receive financial incentives. Their study, 'Teacher performance pay: a

review,' published in the September edition of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, suggests that financial incentives improve both teacher quality and student outcomes. The study follows on from another US report, *Performance Pay for Teachers: Designing a system that students deserve*, for the Teacher Leaders Network. That report recommends: an un-capped performance-based pay system that's open to all; rewards based on individual and team-based student gains over time; incentives for teachers who collaborate, and who are effective with high-need or low-performing students; and involving teachers in the development of performance-based pay.

FURTHER, HIGHER, FIZZIER

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This month's Grapevine is by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher.