



The last word The last last word

STEVE HOLDEN FAREWELLS

'THE LAST WORD.'

This is the last 'Last word,' which found its spot here on the back page of *Teacher* in 2004, and quickly found some fans.

We covered flagpoles, after Brendan Nelson – when he was Commonwealth Minister for Education in 2005 – made it a general funding condition that all schools have a functioning flagpole, and fly the Australian flag. We even proposed a flag inspectorate, to check for schools taking the money but sneakily flying the flag incognito in very tall cupboards. 'The last word' has always tried to be useful.

We proposed the Commonwealth government establish a Headscarf and Other Bad Stuff Kids Wear to School Inspectorate – HOBKWSI, pronounced 'hob-squizzly' – after Liberal parliamentarian Bronwyn Bishop claimed on Channel Seven television in 2005 that, 'The headscarf is being used as a sort of iconic item of defiance.'

We introduced Fergus McNickleNakkle, Sonja Onya and Bonga Binga Small Good School to the world.

To celebrate World Teachers' Day, we suggested you dropped what-I'd-really-like-for-World-Teachers-Day hints that you'd really like an assurance that all schools and systems around the world will implement the *UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers* to bring the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment of students up to required standards, as agreed back in 1966.

We hoped you jumped for joy with your 300,000-plus colleagues across Australia on World Teachers Day in 2007, although your jump was probably not as big as the jump by 600,248,012 jumping people who combined on World Jump Day to do one great big jump in an attempt to drive planet earth into a new orbit. And if you think World Jump Day is something we made up, think again: it really happened, at 11:39am, Greenwich Mean Time, in 2006 and – gasp – the earth did have a tiny little wobble. We hope you jump for joy on World Teachers Day this year, on 28 October.

We channelled Ernest Hemingway, whose exam writing effort on the prompt, 'Is it more important to be true to yourself than to conform to the expectations of others?' scored badly even though the grading criteria required something earnest, long-winded and predictable.

We brought you the handiest, dandiest advice ever on memo writing – that's meemo, not memo – in six easy steps.

We got on our high horse about language, misused, abused, jargonised and just plain fancy schmancy, and for some reason – and with apologies – never quite got off the horse.

We, like, literally tore our hair out, not to put too fine a point on it, about clichés.

We addressed the scourge of teachers – newfangled technology – from the no-longer-humble photocopier to apps in the cloud.

We googled 'Google is making us stupid' – and found that Google is making us stupid.

We reported on actual, real research into new year's resolutions.

We got serious about ANZAC Day, cyberbullying, quality teaching, the ethics of scientific research and fabricated data, and more.

Both the Melbourne Press Club, in its 2008 Quill Awards, and the Australian Council of Deans of Education, in its Excellence in Education Journalism Awards in 2006, 2008 and 2010, recognised the column.

'The last word' has always been fun to write, which hopefully means it's been enjoyable to read. We've addressed topical issues in a humorous way, hopefully, to provoke thought through laughter.

Thanks to contributors to 'The last word' over the years: John Collier, Peter D'Angelo, Bev Hewlett, Rebecca Leech, Cynthia May, David Rish, Catherine Scott, Mick Wilkinson and Robert Yen.

It's been quite a ride. **T**

This month's last Last Word was written by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher. His latest book is Somebody to Love published by University of Queensland Press.