

In the beginning

CATHY ROBERTSON

'In February 1972, Malcolm Fraser rang Bruce Milne, an executive member of the NSW Teachers Federation's ACT Secondary Teachers' Association, with an invitation for four members of the NSW Secondary Teachers Association to listen to his second reading speech for the CTS legislation to pass through Parliament. The four of us were Bruce, Barry Price, Dick Lee and myself. We adjourned to a nearby watering hole- it might have been the Wello (The Wellington Hotel) or the Kingston (on Canberra Ave) and we began to talk about what to do next. We thought we're going to have to form a local teachers' federation separate from New South Wales. Barry Price wasn't interested and then someone asked Dick Lee and he agreed to be the President'.

Source: Record of Conversation. AEU History Project. Mick March transcript. 22 May 2019 pp1-2.

Don Dunstan, Premier of South Australia, forced the hand of the McMahon Liberal Government in 1972, by announcing the end of its administration of Commonwealth funded schools in the Northern Territory. This led Malcolm Fraser, the Minister for Education and Science, to introduce a Bill to establish the Commonwealth Teaching Service (CTS) in February 1972. The Bill proposed that a national agency should be established to employ teachers in the ACT, the Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea. The CTS legislation was procedural. Amongst many provisions authorising action by various agencies of the Commonwealth, was one that referred industrial disputes about CTS wages and conditions of service to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. This was important because it overcame any impediments to the creation of Commonwealth Teachers' Federation as a federally registered union, which took place more than two years later, in June 1974.

During the drafting stages of the Bill, the Minister consulted widely, and his department held discussions with the national body of teacher unions, the Australian Teachers Federation (ATF). The two main areas of concern to the ATF were: to ensure the provisions of the Commonwealth Industrial Commission applied to teachers employed under the CTS Act, and to ensure the participation of elected and qualified teacher representatives on all education policy and educational administration bodies associated with the CTS.

In his speech introducing the Bill, Fraser expressed his appreciation for the ATF's help during the discussions. It may seem remarkable that a senior member of a conservative Government would commend a teachers' union for its contribution to his government's legislative program. In this case, there were exceptional circumstances influencing his attitude. The ACT education community had convincingly demonstrated to the Minister their dissatisfaction with the highly bureaucratic and inflexible NSW education system and convinced him that he needed to establish an ACT Education system, independent of NSW. Furthermore, the South Australian Liberal government had given notice that it would cease to provide teachers to Commonwealth schools in the Northern Territory from the commencement of 1973, forcing the Commonwealth to provide a teaching service itself. The Minister understood very well that he needed the cooperation of the ATF to establish the CTS.

At this time, the 1200 teachers working in the 58 schools in the ACT were members of the NSW Teachers Federation (NSWTF). The NSWTF was a hugely successful union, with thirty-five thousand members, representing one hundred percent of the teaching profession in NSW and the ACT. The Federation was by far the largest of the six state teacher unions. Its members were committed and willing to publicly demonstrate their defence of the professional standards embodied in NSWTF policy. The Minister was aware that he needed to promote a convincing case to demonstrate that CTS and an independent education system for ACT schools, would be attractive enough to gain the support of ACT teachers. It was hoped that the ATF and a cohort of Canberra teachers would take on the task of convincing the NSWTF to cooperate with the transition to the CTS. The Minister endeavoured to promote an atmosphere of cooperation and the prospect of a partnership between the community and teachers in the ACT, at a time when the NSW Government was determined to destroy the NSW Teachers Federation.

Fraser listened to the ATF's advice that the Australian High Court's decision in the State School Teachers' Case of 1929¹ stood in the way of CTS teachers having the right to professional and industrial representation by a federal teacher union. The ATF made it clear that unless this barrier was removed, teachers would not join the CTS.

The ATF convinced the Minister of the relevance of the 1929 case, in which the High Court of Australia had rejected teacher unions' claims for a federal award in teaching, on the grounds that education was not an industry under section 51 of the Constitution. This decision applied more widely than simply to education workers: it meant that teachers and workers in other similar government sector services, such as nurses and firefighters, could not follow most of their fellow unionists into the federal jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission. Nor could they enjoy the benefits of a common award for all Australian government schoolteachers, which would have simplified teacher work value cases and eliminated the tortuous annual round of catch-up wage increases for the various state teacher awards.

Fraser made an important concession to the ATF, by agreeing to include a new Part 111 in the Bill, setting out the powers and functions of Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904 in relation to the CTS. This opened the door for the first time to the registration of a federal union representing teachers and to the making of a federal award for CTS teachers; salaries and conditions of service.

The Minister also opened the door to recognising union elected representatives on CTS Committees by accepting the ATF's proposal to include an officer, elected by members of the CTS, to sit on the three person CTS disciplinary appeal board in the body of the CTS Act. Although Fraser declined to accept many other demands made by the ATF, he was courteous enough to list them and provide the Government's reasons for refusal on the record in Hansard. These were later moved as amendments to the Bill, by Kim Edward Beasley MP, the shadow minister for Education and Science. The amendments failed. The CTS Act 1972 was assented to on 17th April 1972.

Launching the Commonwealth Teachers Federation

Whilst CTS legislation was being debated in Parliament, Dick Lee, Mick March, Barry Price and Peter O'Connor all members of the NSWTF Secondary Teachers Association, began to sink the foundations to establish a new teachers' union. They styled themselves as the Ship Committee because they were positioning themselves to be the architects of a new teacher union, the Commonwealth Teachers' Federation (CTF), a ship that would convey teachers choosing to leave the NSW and South Australian Education Departments safely to the Australian Capital and the Northern Territories' new Commonwealth-run education systems, protecting their professional and industrial interests. The Ship Committee's primary focus was the ACT. The South Australian unionists, due their specific needs, set out on a separate journey.

¹ <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article: The Argus 23/08/1929 pp 8 Teaching Not An Industry>

The Ship Committee were committed implementing a flexible and participatory school system, serving the ACT community. In contrast to the NSW system, the system would support the collective and individual participation of teachers in a decentralised school system.

Two teachers, Peter O'Connor and Chris Berry produced a policy paper and a draft constitution for a new industrial and professional organisation for CTS teachers. The structure they proposed included a central governing body of teacher members and three associations for preschool, primary and secondary members with considerable autonomy. They convened several mass meetings, large gatherings of teachers, at the Canberra Workers Club and Campbell High school during 1972. Teachers at these meetings endorsed the framework and added a top tier recognising the ACT and the NT as two separate electoral divisions within the new union body. The Ship Committee were empowered to enter negotiations to achieve federal registration with the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. A second general meeting voted to seek an appropriate grant from the NSWTF to fund the process. In August 1972, the CTF was formally constituted. The status of the new body was problematic due to the uncertainty of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act's registration process for authorising new employee organisations. The motion presented to the meeting was:

Pending (a) the registration of the Federation under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act (1904- 1970) and (b) the declaration of the results of the first elections held after such registration under Rules 33 and 43 of the Constitution, the members holding office within the Federation as at 23 rd August 1972 shall be deemed to have been validly elected and all acts done and business transacted shall be deemed to be valid.

The motion was carried unanimously by five women and eleven men. (there were no women secondary members present.)

Dick Lee and Ian McPhee (NSWTF Primary Teachers Association) were nominated as the President and Deputy President. Membership of the ACT CTF was granted to eligible members for a fee of one dollar. Meanwhile, teachers continued their membership of the NSW Teachers. In November 1972, a CTF Special Conference set the membership fee at \$32.00 per annum.

Many teachers were reluctant to join the CTF in 1973 whilst their employer remained the NSW Education Department, and so they retained their membership of the NSWTF. This changed once the CTS became the employer in January 1974 and the NSWTF agreed to introduce an associate membership arrangement to allow access by CTF members to the NSWTF Health Fund, the teachers' social club and other benefits.

It was an early mark of success for the CTF that it gained immediate recognition by the Interim CTS Commissioner in late 1972. Later, when the CTS Commissioner's Advisory Committee was formed. Peter O'Connor and Dick Lee were invited to join along with teacher representatives from the NT.

Registration as a federal industrial organisation

Twenty-seven months later, on 10th June 1974, guided by the expert assistance from two legal counsels, and following a major review of the federal industrial legislation by the Whitlam Labor Government, the ACT TF was registered, as a federal industrial organisation under the Conciliation and Arbitration (Organisations) Act 1974.²

A sister organisation was registered to represent teachers in the NT. Along the way, the new organisations accepted the Australian Teachers Federation request that the words 'Commonwealth Teachers' be discarded and so the titles for the new organisations became the ACT and NT Teachers' Federations. A significant difference with the NSWTF rules, was that under the provisions of the CC&A Act 1974, all office holders in Commonwealth Unions had to be directly elected by members.

The model rules for the new union were copied from the NSWTF's constitution and adapted to suit the ACT environment. Under the rules, the supreme governing body was the annual conference, the council was the governing body between conferences and between council meetings the executive was the governing body. Members were allocated to one of the three associations: secondary, primary and preschool. The rules also retained some problematic issues: provision for a teachers' social club as a benefit for members and a set of special conditions favouring returned soldiers.

Meanwhile TAFE teachers were not yet covered by the new organisation. They continued to be employed by the NSW department of education and remained members of the NSWTF. After the 1975 Gilmour Inquiry's recommendations were accepted, a separate TAFE authority was established, and TAFE teachers transferred to the CTS in 1977. Similarly, teachers at the Canberra School of Art and the Canberra School of Music were brought into the CTS until they were absorbed into the ANU in the 1980's.

Constitutional amendments in 1976 and 1977 dispensed with the associations and various proposals for regional associations were considered and rejected. A special conference decided that there should be direct representation of primary and secondary school branches according to their size at council and annual conference. In addition, provision was made for preschool and technical teachers to have similar direct access. The executive would be elected separately by all members and not by the council as was the case in NSWTF.

² http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/num_act/1974/



Deborah Price (Gyffyn)

“When I was appointed to Narrabundah High school as a maths teacher in 1973, I joined the Commonwealth Teachers’ Federation (CTS), in its first year..

Mick March was the Deputy Principal and in term 2, he became the acting Principal. I knew Mick from my own school days when he was head of the Maths Department at Telopea Park High. During first term, I learned that I needed a serious operation. The CTS sick leave entitlements were the standard Commonwealth Public Service provisions: the CTF Teachers’

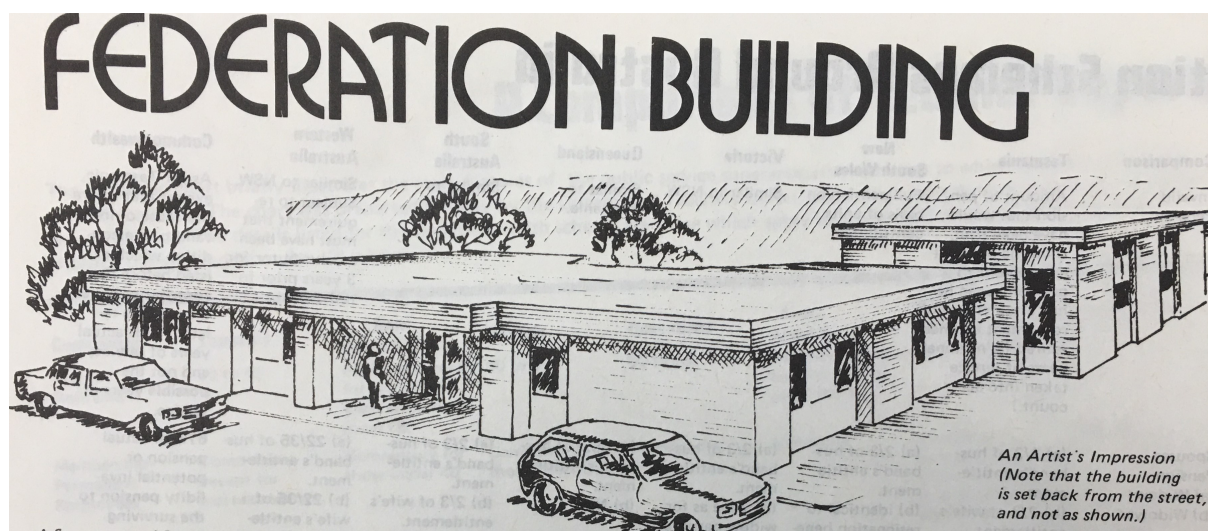
Federation was negotiating appropriate conditions for teachers. On Mick’s advice, I timed the surgery so that I could combine two weeks standdown with two weeks sick leave. This meant the least disruption to students, and my salary continued during my rehabilitation.

“I supported the Federation’s negotiations for CTS salaries to be pacesetters and I attended the first half day stoppage held at the Albert Hall in February and a general meeting in the Canberra show ground April 1974. At the meeting, the decision to participate in a CTS managed work value enquiry was carried by only one vote. After the vote, the meeting ended early. Members felt more discussion was needed. We returned to school and as I recall we were one of only two schools who continued with the stoppage.

“In 1974 the Canberra Mathematical Association (CMA) raised the issue that teachers were not trained in writing curricula. I chaired the first curriculum workshop, called Mathematics for the ACT Primary Teachers, which was held at the Teaching Resources Centre at old Canberra High school in July or August 1974. Dr John Munro, a senior lecturer in the Mathematics Department at the CCAE and a CMA committee member had organised the program but had other commitments. I knew him from my studies in 1972 in the Maths Curriculum which were part of in the Graduate Diploma of Education Course at the CCAE. At the end of 1975, I decided to travel. Unfortunately, I could not take a year’s unpaid leave, so I resigned from the CTS.”

Building the first ACTTF’s premises

The premises of the nascent union during the early years, evolved from the Woden Workmen’s Club, to rent-free in a couple of rooms at old Canberra High school in Acton, and later renting a one room office at the MLC Tower at Woden. The ACTTF became a physical presence with the design and construction of a purpose-built building in Namatjira Drive Weston, which opened in 1978. (In 2023 the building is the Irish Club). The floor plan included space for council meetings and welcomed teachers to drop into the ACT Teachers’ Club after school where there was often a chance to chat with the President or General Secretary.



Artist's impression of the ACTTF building, 1978. Source: The ACT Teacher.

The architects commissioned to design the building, Bunning Smith and Potter, also designed the National Library of Australia. On the educational architecture scene more generally, Bunning, Smith, Potter and Maddern, designed two high schools and four primary schools built in the 1970's.

The building: space included a small reception area, two open plan for areas for admin staff, a meeting room for executive meetings with a bespoke wooden table to seat 16, individual offices for the two senior officers, a large open area for council meetings, and after 1981, a pop up child care-set-up for women attending Saturday morning council meetings, a teachers club bar, parking. After the building opened in 1977, the annual conference weekend was held at Hawker College. Childcare was also available at Annual conference.

Building ACTTF membership

A flat membership rate of \$32.00 per annum was adopted in 1973. This was later replaced at the 1975 Annual conference, when membership subscriptions were linked to movements in teachers' salaries, commencing in Feb 1976. At this time, the CTS agreed with ACTTF to make automatic union deductions from teachers' salaries and transfer the funds deducted directly to ACCTF. From that time the rate was set at 0.6% of the top increment of the Band 1 Teacher's salary. The membership density was reported at 94% in 1976, and the annual report that year claimed that this was better than any other teacher union in Australia. Membership remained at this density until 1982, when the Fraser government ceased employer managed automatic membership deductions. One of the drivers of this level of membership was a union policy that had members serve on probationary and promotional peer assessment panels for members. Membership density grew slowly at first. By 1976, it had reached 94 percent.

	1973	1974	1975	1976
Pre TA	60	83	89	94
Primary TA	530	898	1031	1164
Secondary TA	460	851	1054	1250
Technical TA	0	0	0	55
Associates	0	0	0	8*
Total	1050	1832	2174	2571

* The first 8 members from TAFE were welcomed. However, TAFE college membership became officially recognised by the ACTTF in 1977. Source: ACT TF Annual Report 1976 p4.

Susan Banks



“I began my teaching career as a four-year trained teacher with a graduate diploma in 1975 at Chapman Primary school and I joined the ACT Teachers’ Federation shortly afterwards. I later taught at North Ainslie, Yarralumla, Red Hill and Urambi primary schools. After retiring in 2000, I worked as a casual in the Autistic Unit at Yarralumla Primary.

“I subsequently studied at ANU School of Art. I have held solo and group shows since 2012. I was a molecular biologist at the Medical Research Council’s research laboratories in Cambridge, UK, before I married and then came to Australia in 1969.

“When I began teaching, my two children aged 6 and 5 were students at Turner Primary school. I came from a very democratic workplace in Cambridge into teaching and in my very first staff meeting, our principal announced as something of a joke, that he had had an indignant woman on the phone saying that the kindergarten reading books were sexist. Even the word itself seemed to puzzle him.

“It was 1975 and around the time of the original Brazen Hussies (In 2020, Brazen Hussies became the title of an ABC documentary about the women’s movement in Australia). So I seized the opportunity to say, ”Well I think she’s right.’ A frightening silence followed during which I realised that I was not called on to comment and I seriously wished I hadn’t.

“I’m pleased to say that shortly afterwards, with others in the Teachers’ Federation, we started the Elimination of Sexism in Education Committee and now amongst other gains when I when I go down a a volunteer to the primary school to hear children read, the books are most definitely no longer sexist and are not too bad on diversity either.

“Teachers, who were also mothers, carried on the job of caring for their children and so when a Stop Work meeting was called, we brought our children along. I clearly remember an incident at a Stop Work meeting in May 1976. It was held at Manuka Oval and the officials gave their speeches from the field whilst we sat in the stands. My son, Tim, found that the strip between was a great place to ride his bicycle from which he wouldn’t be parted. His wheel caught one of the power cables and the speaker, I think it was Keith Lawler, was stopped in his tracks. Everyone roared with laughter and Tim realised that all his teachers were watching. At the time, I worried my son had been traumatised; recently (he’s a lawyer now), learned that he used to boast about the day he stopped all the teachers in the ACT from speaking their minds.”

The CTS begins to take shape

The formation of the CTS benefitted from Commonwealth government support for the provision of a high functioning, dynamic and forward-looking school system in the ACT and trade unions voices in the industry and more broadly, in society. At this time, there was very little scope for professional women to represent or participate in the development of the ACTTF or the CTS.

When the acing CTS Commissioner, Jock Weedon took office, he appointed Dick Lee and Peter O’Connor, the ACTTF’s senior officers, to his CTS Advisory Committee (the

Committee) and its subcommittees in January 1973. Their role was to represent the professional and industrial interests of teachers. They began with a clean sweep, clearing away the ninety-three years of administrative scaffolding that held together the supplanted NSW education system. Although the Federation was unsuccessful in its proposal for a CTS teacher registration board, the Advisory Committee agreed with the ACTTF on most other issues.

At that time, the NSW system used a Seniority List system for the decisions about the transfer and promotion of teachers. This system recorded the date a teacher was entered on one of the four lists, sorted by qualifications, inspection reports, promotion level and length and category of service. And as a matter of convenience, the list system was used for the first appointments to the newly created and therefore vacant assistant principal positions in the ACT in 1974. The Commonwealth Public Service was moving to merit based system and panels comprising public service appointees, including union representatives in some cases. This model, suitably adapted to the teaching service, was adopted by the CTS.

It was significant that Dick Lee and Peter O'Connor convinced the Commissioner to discard what they saw as the most destructive elements of the NSW department's administration of the teaching profession: the inspection and evaluation of individual teachers and schools by departmental officers – in both cases the inspections were carried out by centrally controlled non-teaching inspector/administrators. There was agreement that the CTS would adopt a decentralised school-based framework for assessment for probation and an eligibility-assessment for promotion assessment for the non-teaching and master teacher levels.

Professional career paths for teachers

The committee firmly rejected the NSW department's maze of classifications, salary scales and myriad allowances for regional and specialist situations such as one teacher schools. The principles and policies the ACTTF sought to introduce in the CTS were a CTS teacher registration board, selection by merit but, reflecting the practice of the Commonwealth Public Service at that time, seniority was maintained in the Promotion Appeal process to decide between candidates of equal efficiency. They proposed a simple classification and salary structure with four Bands to apply to all schools. However, above the Band 1 classroom teacher level, there were two-corridors separating preschool/primary career paths from the secondary level classifications. The Commissioner agreed to introduce seven salary allowances to meet special schools and specialist teacher requirements. In 1977, when the TAFE system was transferred into the CTS, a similar four-band structure was adopted.

Salary increments at the Band 1 level, were addressed by salary starting and finishing points for recognising the gradation in value of two, three- and four-year teacher qualifications. The number of increments in the Band 1 salary scale were identical for preschool primary and secondary Band 1 (classroom) teachers with similar qualifications, but this was not the case for bands 2,3 and 4. At those levels, there was almost a ten percent gap between the three promotion bands for preschool and primary positions and the secondary bands. At the time, this was accepted practice in other Australian jurisdictions.

By contrast, it was agreed that selection for promotion should be managed by a central committee for each sector and band level. This resulted in school-based panels for probation and eligibility appraisals and allowed for participation by one representative from the central administration. For appointments to a specific classroom vacancy or promotion position, the Committee agreed on system-wide panels, which later included the principal of the school. The Federation nominated two representatives to these panels, and they were chaired by a professional teacher seconded to the central office.

Separate arrangements applied to promotions appeals and disciplinary appeals. The CTS Act 1972 provided for a ballot for the election of ACTTF representatives to the CTS

Promotions Appeals board for a two-year term and to the CTS Disciplinary Appeal Panel for a three-year term.

Protecting professional conditions of service

It was a significant impediment to the protection of professional standards, that Commissioner's powers were subject to Commonwealth Public Service Board (PSB), the agency responsible for service-wide conditions. The PSB, was responsible for implementing the legislative requirements covering conditions of service such as superannuation, long service leave, worker's compensation, and also wage and conditions of service decisions made by the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The PSB, and not the Commissioner, controlled the decision making about salary levels and salary increases. Professional principles and standards informing the architecture and infrastructure of the teaching and learning were not matter of any interest for the PSB prior to 1973. It remained wilfully ignorant until 1982, when the confrontation between the ACTTF and the PSB during the ACTTF salaries campaign, reached its flash point.

In 1972, the Fraser government had guaranteed the ACTTF that the Commonwealth would top up any shortfall in superannuation and long service leave benefits for teachers transferring from NSW. The PSB was made responsible to oversee the necessary arrangements and include the adjustments in the framework for the CTS terms and conditions of service. As for any new conditions of service applicable to the Public Service such unpaid maternity leave for women, when the Labor government passed the Maternity Leave (Australian Government Employees Act 1973), the CTS Act was immediately amended to apply these provisions to eligible CTS employees

Leadership role in determining school staffing allocations

The Canberra Times report on 25 January 1974 reported that the overall improvement in schools following the creation of the CTS was, 'a 43% increase or 600 new teachers for the ACT at the beginning of the school year in 1974'. However, it was achieved by the ACTTF members who stepped in to ensure the CTS project's milestones were achieved.

The commissioning of the Interim Schools Authority (ACTSA), the agency responsible for decisions about school staffing, was delayed until mid-October 1973. The Interim CTS Commissioner took action to ensure there was a firm staffing formula in place in January 1974 by authorised Dick Lee and Peter O'Connor, assisted another CTS teacher, Keith Lawler, to draft the CTS staffing allocation. They used a calculation that combined teaching loads, non-teaching executive positions, a teacher librarian position, and an ancillary staffing allocation for every school. They also set the thresholds for each school principal according to student enrolments.

Arguably the most important gain for the ACTTF at the time was that schools with enrolments above 296 students would have non-teaching principals. Teaching loads were agreed for the three salary bands in preschool, primary and secondary schools. Principals at preschool, primary and secondary levels were to have equal status and salary. The formula guaranteed better staff student ratios by providing a teacher equivalent for each thirty students. In addition, school executive officer positions would comprise one third of the staffing allocation. There was also some relief from full-time teaching loads for Band 2 and 3 officers and a reduction of the Band 1 teaching load for teachers in their first year of service. A teacher librarian was to be additional to each staffing profile and with two teaching aides as ancillary staff in every school.

In the first week of August 1973, the same group of three, but who were now acting as the ACTTF's representatives, attended a meeting to present the formula to the Labor government's Minister for education, Kim Beazley and the Interim CTS Commissioner. Afterwards the formula became a key policy of the ACTTF, known as 'the staffing formula', and the ACTTF maintained it frequent distribution in the 1970's and 1980's for the information of and implementation by ACTTF members in schools.

Challenges to the shape of the academic year were on going in the debates on the Interim ACTSA during 1975, 1976 and 1977. The Federation was successful in achieving 201 days as the total number days in a school year, the minimum number of public holidays, and the agreed on the text authorising the periods of paid stand-down for teachers during school holiday periods each year.

However, the ACTSA parent representatives did not always support the ACTTF's proposals: pupil free planning days and the Easter Tuesday public holiday were contested. After a lengthy debate and a teacher half day stoppage to demonstrate teacher support for the Federation's position on Easter Tuesday, it was permanently reinstated in the Easter holiday breaks in 1976.

In the next four years, after 1976, there were many attempts to undermine both ancillary and teacher staffing to reduce education costs. By 1979, the ACTTF President Lawler noted ACT education system has disappointed the hopes of its creators for 'a dynamic and forward-looking school system'.

1974 National Wage Case increases and teachers' salaries

At the beginning of 1973, Clyde Cameron, Whitlam's Industrial Relations Minister, had adopted a national policy of salaries growth and improvements to conditions of service, using the Australian Public Service as a trend setter. This had created a positive atmosphere around negotiations for the CTS.

Commencing in 1974, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) monitored the cost-of-living index each quarter and at adjusted payrates in federal awards pay with percentage increases to cover price increases. The NSW Industrial Court and the other states quickly adopted similar guidelines in step with the national wage policy. There were lags between the Commonwealth movements and the state catch ups. After a trial in 1974, national wage indexation system commenced on 30th April 1975. The system continued under Fraser's government in 1975, albeit with partial indexation until June 1978, when Malcolm Fraser implemented a wage freeze. For a period of three years, the system supported consumer purchasing power. The impact on wages was significant: average male weekly earnings (AWE) increased by more than ten percent in 1973, and by twenty eight percent in 1974, With the help of an orderly system of wage increases, and Government's control over interest rates, by 1975, teachers could look forward to owning a house in a suburb, a car, and a colour TV.³

1973 – 1975 ACTTF goes on the offensive

CTS Commissioner Lenihan established a leadership position for CTS salary benchmarks when he issued his first CTS Salaries' Determination in October 1974. The result was a generous margin above NSW teacher salary levels of between four and ten percent. This determination was viewed as the final milestone. CTS teachers were expecting to begin the school year in 1974, amidst an atmosphere of excitement and common accord. Both parties had worked alongside each other to ensure the future prosperity of both the ACTTF and the CTS.

But the salary margin proved ephemeral. When an unexpected increase occurred to Victorian teachers' salaries in December 1973, it set off a ripple of disruption to Australia-wide teacher salary levels. CTS salaries lost their pace setter relativities overnight. When the CTS opened for business in the ACT, in January 1974, CTS teachers forfeited their access to the increases awarded to NSW teachers and were paid the lower salaries offered by the CTS. The wage round that followed left the CTS Determination at the back of the field sometimes and at others nearer to the top. And the PSB overruled the Commissioner's views, preventing CTS salaries from keeping its place at the top of the ladder, relative to state teacher increases.

³ Megalogenis, G. The Australian Moment. Viking. Penguin Group 2012 p.41

The ACTTF organised a series of stop work meetings and they were attended by more than 1200 teachers. CTS teachers demonstrated their wish to condemn the Commissioner's CTS failure to restore the margin above NSW teacher salaries. Members voted to employ the services of industrial counsel to prepare an ACTTF work value submission and present it to the Commissioner. However, on receiving the ACTTF's work value submission, the Commissioner and the PSB still did not change their position.

A new opportunity for the ACTTF to pursue the salary claim was created when the ACTTF was awarded formal status as a federally registered union in April 1974. The application process took sixteen months due to the Labor Government's industrial relations reforms. Without formal status as an industrial organisation, the ACTTF could not access the officers and services of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) to arbitrate on the ACTTF's log of claims as an industrial dispute. However, once federal registration was achieved, the dispute over salaries was immediately referred to the AIRC. This was followed by a comprehensive work value case in front of Commissioner Taylor. The case argued by the ACTTF before the Commission was lengthy. The Commission issued a decision and made an award granting generous salary increases in April 1975. The Commissioner's Award did not grant the position sought by the ACTTF: CTS salary levels were not placed above those of the state government teacher salary tables at that time. The Commission was careful to give reasons for his decision - it was too early in the operation of the CTS to obtain evidence that the work of CTS teachers was of a higher work value than the work performed in the state jurisdictions. For that reason, the Commission did not grant that part of the ACTTF's claim for a salary margin. Immediately after this award, a policy of automatic quarterly wage adjustments commenced at both federal and state levels. This continued until 1979, when a wages freeze followed. It was not until 1981/2, that the ACTTF would have another opportunity to address CTS salary benchmarks. The exception to this was the consent award of the AIRC, made with the agreement of the ACCTF and the PSB, in 1978 to establish ACT Technical and Further Education (TAFE) teacher salaries, after the CTS took over TAFE in the ACT.



"I left school at 15 and became a qualified PMG telephone technician. Afterwards I studied full-time for a Bachelor of Science with honours physics at the University of NSW. I also have a Grad Dip in Computing Studies from the former Canberra College of Advanced Education and a Dip Ed from the Sydney Teachers College.

"I was appointed as a Mathematics teacher at Sydney Technical College in 1973 then transferred to Canberra TAFE College in 1975 on country service. I was appointed to the CTS in April 1977, as a Band 1 Mathematics teacher. In 1979, I was promoted to Band 2, responsible for the Mathematics

Department at Reid TAFE, then Band 3 as the head of the School of Applied Science for a year before ACT self-government in the ACT.

"I joined the union in 1976 when the ACTTF needed a TAFE branch to negotiate the terms and conditions before the takeover by the CTS of TAFE in the ACT.

"Peter O'Connor and Keith Lawler came to a meeting of the NSW Teachers Federation at Reid Campus and asked for some members to join the ACTTF - I can't remember how many were required - and so for a while I was a member of both unions.

"Before the takeover, we were told we would not lose any conditions. The actual takeover took place a week before Easter, in 1977. NSW teachers had for a long time, finished teaching at noon on the Thursday before Easter so they had time

to travel home for Easter. This was particularly for those teaching at Broken Hill. The Wednesday before Easter, we were told by our new employers that we had to work a normal Thursday before Easter. When it was pointed out that there was a commitment about not losing any conditions at change over, we were told we hadn't, this change happened the day after the changeover. Not a good start.

"This was only a foretaste of what was to come. The transfer of NSW teachers' superannuation entitlements to the CTS and the CSS without disadvantage was deal breaker at the time of the takeover for many teachers. When I retired in 1999, I discovered that ex-NSW TAFE teachers were in my opinion, denied the no-disadvantage commitment for their superannuation entitlements - a thesis could be written on this shameful topic. I happened to have 'fluked' getting my entitlements. Just before my retirement I had asked the CSS for an estimate of my entitlements and this confirmed my calculations.

"When my super pension started flowing in, it was way down on the estimate. I challenged it and with the help of ACT AEU, I won because my pension was calculated using a different method to the CSS's estimate.

"However, at that time, there were a number of retiring ex-NSW TAFE teachers who were caught in what I believe was a terrible deception. The ACTAEU ran a legal case and as I had done a lot of research for the super calculations, I offered to help with the case - I had contributed to several successful industrial cases in the early 1980's on TAFE issues. My offer was not taken up, and ACTAEU lost the case because, in my opinion, the finer points of this case were not generally understood. The result was many ex-NSW TAFE teachers were affected and suffered a substantial ongoing financial loss."