
QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION



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Letter to the Editor: Courier Mail

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Responding to: Giles Auty, article 16.02.02 "Politics Not for Teachers"

Giles Auty (CM 16.02.02) presumes too much when he takes to task the members of the Independent Education Union for highlighting a call for policy on asylum seekers which would be consistent with international covenants including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

Members of the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA), numbering over 50 000, have a legitimate right and accept a responsibility to speak out through the collective resources of their union about such an issue. Part of the IEUA's core focus is to encourage discussion among its members on industrial, educational and equity issues.

Schools and teachers would abrogate their fundamental social responsibility if argument and debate on social issues was outlawed and our youth and our future as a nation would be the poorer. Students are asking questions about the issue of asylum seekers and they have a right to seek a considered understanding.

Mr Auty would have us believe that education should occur in a political vacuum, free of social contention and complexity. Seemingly then teachers ought not challenge such social evils as racism, inequality and prejudice. Nor should they in Mr Auty's prescription find a place for the pursuit of tolerance, reconciliation, justice and a fair go.

If social evils are to be thwarted then we need people willing to speak out and question social policy.

Members of the IEUA are proud to join other fair minded Australian in speaking out on the justice issues arising from mandatory detention of asylum seekers in the shared hope that we might as a community determine a socially responsible policy on this issue.

Mr Terry Burke

Secretary

Independent Education Union - Queensland