

FOOD & WINE: WESTON CREEK GOES MEDITERRANEAN: INSIDE

The Canberra Times

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CORALIE FAREWELLS CAPITAL

For 55 years she's been our own publicist to the stars, but it's time for Coralie Wood to say goodbye. The local theatre legend - who founded the Canberra Area Theatre Awards and has wrangled celebs from Dame Edna to Torvill and Dean - is moving to Melbourne to be closer to family. "It was a great life. A wonderful life. And I loved every moment of it," Coralie said.

REPORT: INSIDE



Coralie Wood in her Deakin unit. Picture by Karleen Minney

BRINDABELLA DEBT CRISIS Former school board chair says he's owed money

Barred from meetings

Sarah Lansdown

THE former board chair of Brindabella Christian College listed himself as a secured creditor of the embattled school and has been barred from attending cer-

tain meetings after it went into voluntary administration.

Greg Zwaigenberg registered a security interest over the school on the Personal Property Securities Register on October 18, 2024, meaning he claimed a right to the

school's commercial property if it did not repay a debt to him.

In response to questions from *The Canberra Times* about the security interest, Mr Zwaigenberg said he lent the school \$150,000 to cover

books and other "essential items" for the start of the 2025 school year, adding his wife "was not pleased with my not consulting her". He said that money was repaid.

He said he also lent the school a further \$155,000 on

February 7 in order to pay staff wages.

He said in a social media post he and his wife were owed "some \$200,000 overall" and that he was "blindsided" by the Australian Tax Office's move to wind up the

the school on February 18.

Not all staff were paid during the February 21 pay cycle and the school entered voluntary administration on March 5. All staff were paid as normal on Friday.

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NEWS

The Canberra Times

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TIMES PAST

March 12, 1988

On this day in 1988, it was reported that one of Canberra's truly delightful characters, Ralph Wilson, was named The Canberra Times Canberran of the Year. He would be presented with the award at the Canberra Festival Family Affair on the lawns of Parliament House.

The award was given to the person judged to have made the biggest contribution to Canberra during the past year, but in Wilson's case, the award also recognises 35 years of remarkable contributions in the fields of education and the theatre in the ACT.

In that time, he produced 115 plays, and had left a legacy of respect for knowledge among generations of students who studied at the Canberra High School, where Wilson was teacher and principal for many years.

Wilson had been devoted to the world of the theatre since the age of 15, when, as the son of a Newcastle working-class family, supplied with books by teachers who recognised his thirst for knowledge, he read his first play, Brecht's Threepenny Opera, in the original German.

See: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/11002957>



Former Brindabella Christian College board chair Greg Zwaigenberg. Pictures by Karleen Minney, supplied

Barred from meetings

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Mr Zwaigenberg said the school's financial difficulties "are not the result of mismanagement by the board" but from a "coordinated external campaign" by local media including *The Canberra Times*, government officials and the Reform BCC association.

"The challenges facing [Brindabella Christian Education Limited] are the result of multiple external factors," he said.

"The media's sensationalist reporting, combined with public statements from government officials such as Minister Berry, have significantly disrupted our financial stability and undermined confidence in our institution."

Mr Zwaigenberg did not attend the administrators' meetings with staff and parents last week. He said he found out five minutes

before the staff meeting on March 5 that he was not welcome to attend.

"It is deeply hurtful that, after all the non-public efforts my wife Teija and I made, including providing a crucial \$155,000 loan on 7 February to ensure all staff wages due were paid, and specifically given it was to these same outspoken staff, in return a concerted attempt was made to demean and marginalise me personally by the Administrators, who knew full well my wife and I had shored up the previous payroll," he said via social media.

Mr Zwaigenberg has deleted much of the content from his social media profile related to regulatory action and media reports about the school.

He posted a YouTube video titled "I Love Teija Shane & Sarah, 23 Years devoted to Brindabella has produced

Children Like Ours - Greg Z" at 4:24am on March 10, alongside a lengthy caption.

Mr Zwaigenberg said media reports of Education Minister Yvette Berry's decision to take regulatory action against the school "played a pivotal role in eroding parental confidence."

Ms Berry took action in September and commenced further action last month after receiving evidence the school was not complying with school registration standards. The school got a two-week extension to respond to the February 20 show cause notice.

In term 4, 2024, the school was urging parents to pay the entire year of school fees for 2025 in advance for a small discount.

Mr Zwaigenberg said the school took \$4 million in early payments but parents stopped paying fees in November amid the news of

regulatory action.

He said enrolments declined by more than 200 students and the school was once again facing cash-flow problems.

The Canberra Times has obtained documents filed by the Tax Office in the Federal Court which states the school owed \$8,001,259.96 on January 5, 2025.

A document provided by Mr Zwaigenberg from lawyers for the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation shows the debt was \$5,962,940.26, including general interest charges, as of February 16, 2025.

Mr Zwaigenberg said the board offered to settle the "historical debt of \$5.9 million" over the next 12 months at a meeting with Tax Office officials but this offer was rejected.

The Tax Office filed a winding-up application on February 18.

TODAY'S WEATHER

CANBERRA Min 14 Max 29

Cloudy
Chance of any rain: 20%

CANBERRA AREA

Cloudy. Slight chance of a shower.

Light winds. UV Index predicted

to reach 9 [very high].

LOTTERIES

Weekday Windfall. Draw 4518.

Winning numbers: 27, 7, 21, 17,
14, 33. Supplementary: 41.

6. Division 1: \$1,000,000.00.

Division 2: \$4027.60. Division

3: \$179.25. Division 4: \$18.80.

Division 5: \$15.20. Division 6:

\$15.50.

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