



NEW PODCAST SERIES

BOUNCE BACK

Airbnb founder says an IPO is easy compared to COVID {P13}

FORWARD

SLASH

LIFE & TIMES {P12}

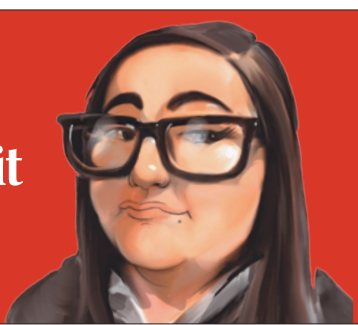
FROM HERO TO ZERO

Kathy Jackson goes from whistleblower to criminal



Strenth!

How long does it take to build a carpark? {P2}



WAGE SUBSIDIES TO PUT YOUNG AUSSIES TO WORK

Tax breaks on the road to recovery

EXCLUSIVE

SIMON BENSON
GEOFF CHAMBERS

Average families will receive up to \$5000 in income tax relief and young Australians will be targeted through a back-to-work wage subsidy in a budget that will map a path to economic recovery and seek to prevent a lost generation of unemployed.

In the most important fiscal and economic statement to be delivered by a treasurer in more than 60 years, Josh Frydenberg will offer a jobs lifeline for up to 700,000 Australians aged under 35 who have been forced onto welfare payments.

He will also call on Australian households to turbocharge the post-pandemic economy through a revamped income tax plan that will deliver about \$2000 to the average earner and more than double that for households.

The Australian understands the direct wage subsidy — a key centrepiece of the budget — will be limited to those under 35 and made to businesses taking on young Australians who have been forced on to JobSeeker during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The demand-driven budget spend will be underwritten by a new debt ceiling of more than \$1.1 trillion and a deficit of just over \$210bn, as revealed by The Australian on Monday.

The jobs boost, first flagged by The Australian last month, could potentially rescue hundreds of thousands of younger people from long-term unemployment and lower wages by offering incentives to move them off the welfare queue and back into the workforce.

Almost 700,000 Australians aged up to 35 were receiving JobSeeker and Youth Allowance payments at the end of August.

Weight of nation on his shoulders

INSIDE STORY

TOM DUSEVIC
NATIONAL CHIEF REPORTER

In mid-March, Josh Frydenberg's second budget was a mere eight weeks away. The direction was set: the first surplus in 12 years to restore a fiscal buffer, reforms to raise the economy's speed limit, capital works for bushfire and drought recovery, and tidy house-keeping on costs.

But closing borders to China on February 1 to deal with the pandemic's first wave had started to bite. With the daily number of new coronavirus cases hitting 100, the stockmarket tanking, interest rates falling and strict lockdowns looming, it was time to break the glass on Treasury's emergency plan.

Cormann leaves his fiscal mark

By any measure, the biggest hole in next year's budget will be the absence of Mathias Cormann.

No other finance minister has served longer in the job. Arguably, none has been as influential.

Today is the seventh and final budget for the senator from Western Australia, who arrived 25 years ago as a migrant with English as his fourth language.

SIMON BENSON P4

Budget20

The wage subsidy aimed at leveraging businesses to drive new economic growth will help transition the economy off the \$101bn JobKeeper program which will end next March.

The bringing forward of the already legislated second-stage tax cuts for low to middle-income earners by a year will be coupled with other income tax relief measures to be announced in Tuesday's budget.

This is designed to inject billions of dollars back into the economy as the stood-down workforce and the unemployed are weaned off JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments. As of mid-September, almost 1.83 million Australians were listed under job-seeker programs.

Mr Frydenberg's second budget will focus on restoring and creating millions of jobs, getting more cash into the pockets of

Australian businesses and workers, and driving private sector investment through allowances and tax incentives.

The more contentious stage-three tax cuts for higher income earners, scheduled for post-2024, will not be brought forward.

Treasury had strongly urged the government to wean businesses off JobKeeper payments and introduce new supports to help get Australians back into work. In the JobKeeper review handed to Mr Frydenberg ahead of the July 23 economic and fiscal update, Treasury said "the government should consider support for other groups of people who are not employed".

"In particular, investment in skills development for displaced workers and targeted wage subsidies aimed at people newly entering the labour market during a recession," the Treasury review said.

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COMMENTARY P10

son and Frydenberg would progressively ditch fiscal rules, shake the bureaucracy for left-field ideas, virtually privatise the national payroll and live by the mantra that every spending proposal served up by departments and ministers would be judged by a single metric: job creation.

"In this year's budget there are so many more measures both by number and by size than previous budgets, a reflection of the economic challenge we face" says Frydenberg in his Parliament House suite, cramming for the event that will define his custodianship and the nation's immediate future.

"It's taken a lot of work over a long period of time to get to this point, and you've seen just in the volume of announcements pre-budget how much activity there is, how significant the announce-

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Vatican rivalry and the 'money trail'



STEFANO COSTANTINO / MEGA

Cardinal George Pell enjoys an aperitif at the bar outside the Vatican in Rome after his return there from Australia

JOHN FERGUSON
PAOLA TOTARO

Authorities should investigate allegations that a disgraced Catholic cardinal used Vatican funds to corrupt the sex-abuse case levelled against George Pell, according to his former defence barrister.

Robert Richter QC, Cardinal Pell's lead barrister in the Melbourne County and Magistrates courts, said the Hollywood-style claims that more than \$1.1m in church money was used as a bribe should be independently examined.

Three prominent Italian news-

papers have reported that Cardinal Giovanni Becciu, a rival of Cardinal Pell, was suspected of paying the money to influence the failed case against him.

Viv Waller, the lawyer representing the complainant, said he had not received any of the money allegedly sent from the Vatican.

No evidence confirming the plot has been furnished by Cardinal Becciu's accusers.

Ms Waller said the surviving altar boy in the criminal case had no idea about what was being alleged. "My client denies any knowledge or receipt of any payments," she said.

Mr Richter said the allegations

were serious and should be investigated by authorities with the capacity to track money. "These are serious allegations and they need to be investigated properly and independently," he said.

"Only then will we know where it's gone."

Victoria Police has not received a complaint about the money transfers, which have further scandalised the Vatican and coincided with Cardinal Pell's return to Rome.

Cardinal Becciu has strongly denied any wrongdoing.

"I categorically deny interfering in any way in the criminal trial of Cardinal Pell," he said.

Italian newspapers have reported that Cardinal Becciu is suspected of arranging for €700,000 (\$1.1m) to be sent to unnamed people in Australia to ensure unfavourable evidence against Cardinal Pell.

There has long been unsubstantiated speculation about outside interference in the Pell charges but no one has provided evidence to back up these claims.

The Italian newspaper Il Messaggero quoted the former right-hand man to Cardinal Becciu claiming that a bank transfer was made from the Vatican to a bank in Australia.

The article quotes Monsignor

Alberto Perlasca as saying the transfer was made at the same time that the child-abuse case against Cardinal Pell was developing in Australia.

Monsignor Perlasca worked closely with Cardinal Becciu when the latter was second in charge at the Vatican's secretariat of state.

Vatican sources suggest the Pope is considering the launch of a "maxi processo" — a kind of super inquiry — to investigate the allegations against Cardinal Becciu.

Those include claims of multi-million-pound London property deals and the existence of a slush fund to dig dirt on alleged

Continued on Page 2

I'm the underdog: Palaszczuk

SARAH ELKS
QUEENSLAND POLITICAL
REPORTER

Annastacia Palaszczuk has ruled out forming a minority government with crossbench support as she declared herself the underdog at the October 31 Queensland election.

As the Premier prepared to dissolve parliament on Tuesday to begin a 3½-week campaign, her LNP opponent Deb Frecklington visited the New Acland coal mine on the Darling Downs, signalling that the opposition would seek to stoke resentment in regional communities over Labor's mixed messages on coal.

Ms Frecklington announced the LNP would put Labor last on how-to-vote cards in every seat, sparking Labor accusations the LNP had done a deal with One Nation and the Greens to ensure more crossbenchers would be elected, allowing Ms Frecklington to cobble together a "Frankenstein minority government" after the election.

Some Labor strategists fear the move would make it difficult



for Labor to win, given the ALP's low primary vote (down to 35 per cent at the 2017 state poll).

The Opposition Leader also ruled out doing deals with minor parties to form government in the event of a hung parliament.

In 2017, One Nation preferred against sitting MPs — helping to deliver heartland Brisbane suburban seats of Mansfield, Aspley and Mount Ommanney from the LNP to Labor.

This time, Pauline Hanson's minor party is taking a different tactic, and giving voters a "split ticket" that allows them to decide which major party to back.

Ms Palaszczuk, seeking a third term, holds power with just a two-seat majority in the 93-seat parliament including seven seats in regional Queensland with a margin of 4 per cent or less. The

Premier predicted the campaign would be "very tough".

"We're the underdogs, we're behind in the polls," she said, announcing a defence aircraft deal with Boeing, at its factory west of Brisbane. "It's been very personal and very nasty in the past few months."

A new YouGov poll of 2000 Queensland voters, published in The Courier-Mail, shows Labor's primary vote has jumped from 35.4 per cent at the 2017 state election to 37 per cent, putting the ALP neck and neck with the LNP.

The YouGov poll's two-party-preferred result gave Labor an election-winning lead of 52 per cent to the LNP's 48 per cent — a wider margin than the 51.1-48.8 result in 2017.

But a breakdown of the poll shows support for the government is patchy across the state, with a rise in support for the LNP in the critical regions, where One Nation's vote is collapsing, and a bounce in the Greens' vote in Brisbane. If Ms Palaszczuk wins a

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MORE REPORTS P7
EDITORIAL P11

Jackson found guilty of \$100,000 union swindle

TESSA AKERMAN

Former Health Services Union national secretary Kathy Jackson swindled more than \$100,000 from her own organisation, it can be revealed, after the Victorian County Court lifted a suppression order on a secret court process.

Jackson, a former union corruption whistleblower, on Monday pleaded guilty to two fraud charges, 10 months after being found guilty of two similar charges at a trial.

Jackson was lauded as a whistleblower by the Abbott government, having exposed the corruption of health union officials Craig Thomson and Michael Wil-

liamson. On Monday, however, she admitted while appearing in a small video box on WebEx that she had defrauded members of her union while in senior roles, including as national secretary.

In total, the four charges which stretched from 2003 to 2011, accounted for \$102,893 of HSU funds used to pay for personal flights and other items.

Initial estimates valued Jackson's fraud at about \$500,000 — she was found not guilty of two other fraud charges and 18 counts of theft at a trial in December that was the subject of a suppression order until Monday afternoon.

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Permitted fire-prone clearing doubled

EXCLUSIVE

YONI BASHAN
NSW POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

The NSW government will more than double the amount of native vegetation that can be bulldozed around fire-prone homes — from 10m to 25m — ahead of the upcoming bushfire season, according to leaked documents.

The proposed amendments, contained in a cabinet-in-confidence memo obtained by The Australian, fall significantly short of the 50m buffer sought by some senior Berejiklian government ministers, setting up further division over contentious environmental policies.

“Amendments include ... 25m of vegetation clearing along fence lines according to a yet-to-be-approved code covering clearing in endangered and threatened species habitats, riparian corridors and clearing for non-bushfire risk mitigation purposes,” the document reads.

‘(The) financial impacts for the state government will be substantial’

CABINET-IN-CONFIDENCE
MEMO

posers,” the document reads.

Cabinet will on Tuesday consider the government’s response to the NSW bushfire inquiry that was established in July in response to the catastrophic Black Summer bushfires.

The fires, which lasted four months, killed 34 people and destroyed more than 3000 homes across the country.

The cabinet documents also reveal that funding required to put in place the inquiry’s 76 recommendations would reach \$220m in 2020-21 and \$1.09bn in the next four years.

The most significant costs this year would include \$28m for a state strategic fire trail network, \$27m for protective clothing and equipment and \$18m for a tanker fleet upgrade.

While the inquiry, led by former NSW police deputy commissioner Dave Owens and former chief scientist Mary O’Kane, made no findings in relation to land clearing, it did make observations about the current scheme.

Under the “10/50” policy, homeowners are allowed to clear trees within 10m of their property and underlying vegetation — but not trees) up to 50m away. “Many

question the effectiveness of the scheme, given many properties cleared in accordance with the scheme were still affected by the fires,” the inquiry report noted.

The cabinet submission will propose 25m of vegetation clearing to take place along fence lines “to simplify complex vegetation clearing requirements”.

“The (Rural Fire Service) case is that 25m is needed for effective firefighting regardless of the state of the boundary,” it reads.

Sources with knowledge of government discussions said moderate-aligned ministers, including Environment Minister Matt Kean and Planning Minister Rob Stokes, were pushing for as little change as possible to the existing scheme.

Others, including Deputy Premier John Barilaro and Emergency Services Minister David Elliott, wanted more clearing.

Critics of the “10/50” rule contend that it has been misused by landholders to enhance development opportunities, scenic views and property values.

In its submission to the inquiry, the National Parks Association of NSW recommended repealing the rule in part because it relied on self-assessment.

The NSW Wildlife Council agreed, saying: “Allowing clearing without expert approval risks environmental considerations, threatened species and ecological communities being either disregarded or inadequately assessed.”

Mr Barilaro and the Nationals publicly brawled with Gladys Berejiklian over another environmental policy — the protection of koala habitats — only last month.

He has since taken mental health leave and is absent from parliament, meaning he will miss the cabinet discussion.

Mr Elliott, Mr Kean and Mr Stokes all declined to comment, citing cabinet confidentiality.

“(The) financial impacts for the state government will be substantial,” the document reads. “The plan would implement all 76 of the report’s recommendations over several years to spread financial impacts (sic) over several budgets.”

Cabinet will also discuss whether the government should compensate landowners for damage caused to fence lines, a question that featured prominently during the inquiry.

It heard that public land managers — including the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation — were often perceived as “bad neighbours” because they did not always reduce fuel loads on their side of the boundary.

Business travel ‘never coming back’ as fly-in meetings die

EXCLUSIVE

DAVID SWAN

Business travel will never return to pre-COVID levels, according to Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky, who says travel has been irrevocably changed by the pandemic.

Speaking exclusively to The Australian for episode nine of the Forward Slash podcast, Mr Chesky said executives would no longer stomach the idea of flying for hour-long meetings, and technologies like Zoom had forced thousands of companies — his in-

cluded — to reconsider the importance of travel.

Airbnb slashed 1900 jobs in May — about 25 per cent of its workforce — with the San Francisco-based company decimated by global travel bans. It lost 80 per cent of its business in eight weeks.

“Business travel was the most profitable part of travel. And I don’t think it’s ever coming back in the same way it looked before,” Mr Chesky said. “That’s gone down a ton. And it’s going to look very different. A lot of people are now realising they don’t need to get on an aeroplane for a one-hour meeting, people are realising you

‘Airbnb ... is about connecting people, and this feeling of belonging’

BRIAN CHESKY
AIRBNB CHIEF EXECUTIVE

just don’t need to travel for business in the same way.”

Amid the bloodbath, Airbnb cut not only staff but also many aspects of its business, including plans to launch a transportation service, a magazine, and a hotel product.

Mr Chesky said the tech com-

pany was now focused on returning to its roots — holiday accommodation — and in most countries, including Australia, holiday travel was beginning to look radically different.

“What people are going to want to do is get out of the house, especially as more people are working from home. Those with means are going to need a change in scenery and environment, and they won’t necessarily get on aeroplanes, or to big cities or crowded hotel districts, but they will get in their cars and go to smaller towns, smaller cities and travel outdoors,” he said.

“In Australia, what we’re seeing is they’re not going to Sydney and Melbourne, but they’re going to places in the countryside and doing smaller trips more locally. It’s going to level the playing field and spread through smaller communities.

“Airbnb at its best is not about travel, and it’s not about real estate. It’s about connecting people, and this feeling of belonging. We’re going to use this as a moment to get back to the roots of Airbnb, and back to what made this company really special.”

BUSINESS P13

Jackson guilty of swindling union’s \$100k



AAP

Kathy Jackson was found guilty in December by a jury of two counts of obtaining financial advantage by deception

Continued from Page 1

At the time, Jackson was found guilty by a jury of two counts of obtaining financial advantage by deception — about \$35,000 — by double-dipping travel expenses on a trip to the US and paying off a debt for her former husband.

Jackson pleaded guilty on Monday to a further two charges of financial advantage by deception, amounting to \$67,793.

Jackson was secretary of the Victorian HSU No 3 branch when the deception took place between 2003 and 2010.

The charges against Jackson were split into two to make it easier for the jury. In the first, she claimed her then husband, Jeff Jackson, had arranged to take \$22,000 from her HSU branch

without her knowledge to pay for his Mercedes.

Jackson said she had a “complete meltdown” when she found out and threw a rubbish bin across her office.

Following three days of deliberation, the jury found her guilty of two counts of obtaining financial advantage by deception.

The second trial was due to begin in May this year, with Jackson facing 48 charges, but she entered into a plea agreement on Monday afternoon, pleading to just two charges of dishonestly obtaining a financial advantage.

HSU national secretary Lloyd Williams said Jackson had stolen from low-paid health workers and she should be jailed like Williamson, the former NSW secretary.

Williamson was released last

year after spending five years in jail.

Mr Williams said the notion that Jackson was a whistle-blowing crusader was a “myth”.

“Everybody in the union knew that she was no crusader and that she was corrupt,” he said.

“(The conviction) confirms what we knew all along.

“For those in the Liberal Party who called her a ‘lion in the union movement’, I hope they take stock and take a good look at themselves because everybody else knew that narrative was wrong.”

The Federal Court ordered Jackson to pay the union \$1.4m in 2015 for misappropriation of HSU funds. The funds at the centre of these allegations came from a Commonwealth Bank account

that Jackson had personally set up and named the “National Health Development Account”.

This bank account contained \$250,000 from Melbourne’s Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre that Jackson said was paid as a penalty to the HSU for breaching the employment entitlements of staff at the centre.

Jackson declared bankruptcy and the union is still her biggest creditor.

Mr Williams said Jackson’s financial state had made recovery of the funds difficult but they would continue pursuing her for the money “whenever and wherever we can, provided we are using our members money appropriately.”

Jackson told the court during her trial that she was devastated

to be before the criminal court for “trying to do the right thing all the way along”.

“I care and still care for those members of the union, not just the Health Services Union but unions around the country,” she said.

Jackson’s financial status may soon change, with the \$30m fortune of late Sydney silk David Rofe QC the subject of a NSW Supreme Court action.

She is the executor of Rofe’s estate, and is one of a dozen people, including Rofe’s carer and ex-partner Gregg Hele and Mr Hele’s arch-enemy Nick Llewellyn, fighting over how to divide the estate after they failed to reach a mediated settlement.

Jackson will return to the Victorian County Court for a sentencing hearing on November 17.

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ALICE WORKMAN

Dude where’s my car?

Happy Nerd Christmas! Before we get fiscal with Josh Frydenberg’s numerical speed dating lockdown, let’s take a drive down budget memory lane with this in-the-red riddle: how long does it take to build a carpark? More than 18 months apparently. We all remember Scott Morrison’s pork-barrelling Oprah moment from the last budget in April 2019 — you get a carpark! You get a carpark! If you’re in a marginal electorate, you get a carpark! The Prime Minister and Treasurer set aside \$500m for a National (actually just Western Australia, Victoria, NSW and Queensland) Commuter Carpark Fund, plus \$149m from the Urban Congestion Fund, to construct up to 25,000 spots adjacent to train stations. The only problem? Much like a parked car, it hasn’t gone anywhere. Not one single carpark has been completed.

Parked ... or stalled?

A faceless mandarin from Alan Tudge’s Department of Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure confessed to Strewth that just four out of 47 projects (37 of which are in Liberal electorates, including four in the Treasurer’s seat of Kooyong) announced in the lead-up to Morrison’s miracle win last May are under construction. The four lucky locations are Mandurah, on the southwest

coast of WA, and Beaconsfield, Cragieburn and Hurstbridge in Victoria. Our revhead sources say the handbrake was applied well before the pandemic hit, but that hasn’t stopped a blanket excuse of the COVID-19 speed bump. We’re told the three structures in Danistan are “on track to be completed by the end of the year”. Others are shovel-ready. “Construction is expected to be under way on more than 20 commuter carparks in the next 12 months” with all 47 “under way or complete in the next 18 months”. Just in time for WA’s March poll and the next federal election?

Mug’s game

“Think of Tuesday as a retreat to move forward,” one lyrical Liberal mused to Strewth. A lesson in fiscal hubris, perhaps, after the Prime Minister’s mysterious time-travelling statement on May 8, 2019: “We’ve brought (past tense) the budget back to surplus next year (future tense).” Not just for the Quiet Australians, but the grammatically flexible! This paper’s own Nikki Savva described the prediction as a “crime against English and the truth”. Should we stand by for: “We’ve brought the economy out of recession next decade”?

Makes perfect cents

Speaking of the Liberals iconic \$35 Back in Black mug ... guess what’s currently for sale in the White House gift shop for \$US100? A “President Donald J.

Trump Defeats COVID” commemorative coin. Pricelless! “First 1500 Orders Receive a Complimentary Presidential Blue PPE Mask with Coin!” A bargain given the “now rare President Trump & Kim Jong-un Korean Peace Summit coins” will set you back \$350. There’s no image for the COVID coin yet. Pre-orders ship from November 14 (11 days after the election), but designer Anthony Giannini says it’s “informed by superhero graphic art because surrounding President Donald J. Trump is a mythos never before seen in a US president, a mythos not unlike the Epic of Gilgamesh”. Change is ... good?

Trump’s drive-by

Hindsight is 2020. Literally. Trump tweeted on October 25, 2014: “The Ebola doctor who just flew to N.Y. from West Africa and went on the subway, bowling and dining is a very SELFISH man — should have known!”

Better latte than never

Spotted! A strong contender for the most Canberra Bubble™ sign. A poster indicating a “Coffee Waiting Area” has been placed on a gold stand in the newly refurbished staff dining room, unkindly called “The Trough” by locals. The full knockdown refurb is part of the \$8.4m Grand Designs of the kitchens across the People’s House. Suspiciously, sushi is on the menu despite the 147km distance to the sea.

Not for turning

Pin this quote! “Minority government’s don’t work.” Annastacia Palaszczuk declared on Monday. “I can absolutely rule out — no deals,” the Queensland Premier promised if there is a hung parliament post-October 31. But what about the Greens? “Absolutely not ... I place no deals.”

A women’s place is in ...

At midday on Tuesday, Australia’s Senate will officially be 51.3 per cent female. After Greens senator Lidia Thorpe is sworn in (completing a three-month handover from former Greens leader Richard Di Natale), the majority of senators will be women for the first time in the Senate’s history, with 39 women and 37 men. Susan Ryan would be so proud! However, in the so-called House of Representatives, the election of Labor’s Kristy McBain (who replaced Mike Kelly in Eden-Monaro) takes it to just 31.1 per cent female, the highest it’s been — with 47 women out of 151 seats. Gunnai and Gunditjmarra woman Thorpe has promised to “shake things up” in the upper house. She was the first Aboriginal woman in the Victorian parliament and is now the first Aboriginal senator for Victoria and first federal Aboriginal polliie for the Greens. She’s got a busy first day scheduled, starting with a smoking ceremony at the Tent Embassy outside Old Parliament

House then an escort to (new) Parliament House by traditional owners. Strewth has previously reported Thorpe’s proposed PPE for day dot was a Black Lives Matters mask and Stop Adani trucker hat. But we’re told she’s opting instead for a possum skin cloak and a message stick memorialising the 441 First Nations people who have died in custody without justice.

She’s the voice

Her excellency Linda Hurley has a song for every occasion. The former teacher and wife of Governor-General David Hurley printed a literal Government House song book, so guests don’t trip up on the lyrics to It’s a Long Way to Tipperary when they literally sing for the supper. BC (Before COVID), of course. But she hasn’t let a pandemic pop her plan to turn Australia into a “singing nation”, talking to the G-G’s official Facebook page to post musical videos. To mark World Teacher’s Day, Hurley (Mrs) penned a song to show her and Hurley (Mr)’s appreciation for educators. Lyrics to the jaunty piano-backed tune include: “Teachers are so special, they’re caring and they’re kind. They’re always busy working, new activities all the time. They care about their students, planning lessons that are fun. With creativity, their learning is happily done.”

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