

ThePoint



‘A merged tribe’: Celebrating the 10th birthday of the IEU Victoria Tasmania

The story of the Victorian Independent Education Union and Independent Education Union of Tasmania merger, and its most defining moments.

In August 2011, this publication changed its name from *VIEUpoint* to *The Point* and the welcome to new Tasmanian comrades was the front-page story.

‘The IEU Victoria Tasmania is the culmination of months of work and co-operation by the two branches,’ it began.

‘The Tasmanian branch had long been concerned that although they had an active and achieving membership, they were not able to provide the full range of services to

their members because of their size.’

IEU General Secretary Deb James said VIEU was very pleased when the Tasmanian IEU accepted their offer to merge.

‘We had worked very well in the past and this merger formalised a structure that we knew would benefit members.’

VIEU had been sending staff to assist IEU Tasmania for years.

Current Tasmanian Organiser Jeremy Oliver, then an IEU member,

recalls that Angela Briant, then IEU Tasmania Secretary, recommended the amalgamation to get ‘better support for members with legal and bargaining issues’ and to improve the economies of scale in running the organisation.

The Point reported that the merger delivered Tasmanian members access to more services, ‘including quality publications, legal and industrial staff, and specialists in WorkCover and Health and Safety’.

It hailed the achievements of the Tasmanian colleagues such as caps on co-curricular activities and broad powers for consultative committees. The Tasmanians were keen to take advantage of improved training opportunities and the industrial expertise of the Vics.

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Online overhaul



Much as we still love the printed material you hold in your hand, the IEU Victoria Tasmania recognises the need to streamline our digital presence.

So, make sure to check out your new, revamped, spruced up and altogether prettier website. Not only is it easier to read and navigate, but we're also beefing up our news section, with much more regular posts, including our own content and a weekly wrap of all the best education and union news and reads. Your feedback is always welcome to: info@ieuvictas.org.au

Head to: ieuvictas.org.au

Vale Barry Nas

The IEU was shocked and saddened to learn of the passing of Barry Nas, a well-respected and much-loved teacher in the Catholic Education system in Northern Tasmania, and a life member from the Tasmanian IEU prior to amalgamation with the Victorian branch.



Barry was still working as a teacher at Sacred Heart Launceston, and his passing will leave a huge void for all members of that school community. The IEU passes on our condolences to Barry's family and to all those who knew him and will miss him.

Tussling with tax

It's not the end of the world, just the end of the financial year. And a few minutes spent wisely on your tax now can save a lot of boring hassle later.



Firstly, your IEU membership is fully tax-deductible: don't forget to include it in your claims on your tax form. Also tax deductible are contributions you made to charities before June 30, 2020. We know it's highly likely you tipped in some funds to APHEDA, the Australian union movement's global justice organisation, which strives for the achievement of dignity at work, social justice, economic equality, and the realisation of human

rights in our region and around the world.

Once your warm inner glow is achieved, learn what other items you can claim as a tax deduction. The ATO's Tax Time Toolkit for Education Professionals, is a (relatively) simple guide to the common deductions available to education workers.

For the many of us who have spent a significant amount of this financial year working from home, there is a temporary 'shortcut method' for claiming

a deduction for home office expenses in the time of COVID – essentially this works out to a deduction of 80 cents per hour worked from home. There are (very) simple instructions about this at the ATO site accessible through MyGov.

Consider the depreciation on technology like computers, laptops, printers, mobile phones, and tablets that cost more than \$300. These can all be claimed if they are used for

work purposes. You can also claim for conferences, excursions, courses, travel, textbooks, and meals and accommodation costs linked to your career that come out of your own pocket. For assistance or advice, particularly if your tax arrangements are complicated, consult an accountant - tax advice is also tax deductible!

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The fight for teacher vaccinations

The IEU, and the entire union movement, has argued long and hard for teachers to be prioritised for COVID-19 vaccines.



The IEU campaigned on the issue from late 2020. The ACTU – with IEU input – made a detailed submission to the federal government in March. And the IEU, alongside other education unions, continued lobbying for teachers to get vaccinated as the Delta variant made the pandemic more infectious amongst younger people.

The spluttering vaccine roll-out meant treating teachers as 'frontline workers' was put in the too-hard basket. As late as 19 July, Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews acknowledged that school transmission was a 'real issue' but blamed the lack of vaccine supply for not increasing eligibility.

'The big limiting factor here is not advice to prioritise A over B,' Mr Andrews said. 'It's how much supply we've got.'

'Until we have literally pallets of this stuff arriving, as we were promised, then the current priorities will remain in place,' the Premier said.

Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt also passed the issue on – to the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

'That is for ATAGI. There are many that are assessed by the Australian technical advisory group on immunisation,' he said.

'Around the world and in Australia, what we have done is follow the greatest risk which has been about age-based vaccinations...'

However, the increased transmissibility of the Delta variant of the coronavirus meant more young people and schoolchildren were being infected

than during previous outbreaks.

In Victoria, in mid-July, infections had affected students and teachers in a dozen schools.

On 16 July, the IEU stated: 'Teachers have been enormously over-represented amongst those who have contracted COVID in the current Victorian outbreak. This only serves to underline what the IEU and others have been saying since last year – schools are very high-risk transmission sites and for the safety of the broader community, school workers must be prioritised in the vaccine roll-out.'

'If the many calls by education unions and independent experts over the last eight months to prioritise vaccines for education workers had been followed, it seems likely that today we would be facing a smaller and more manageable outbreak here in Victoria.'

'Parents, students and staff want our schools to remain open. More importantly though, the simple fact is that an unvaccinated workforce in a such a high-contact environment poses an unacceptable risk to the broader community.'

In Victoria, 44 per cent of teachers are aged under 40, meaning without a policy change, they might not become eligible for vaccination until late in the year.

Parents Victoria executive officer Gail McHardy said: 'Due to the Delta variant being such a worry to all ... it would increase families', students' and teacher confidence if teachers were eligible to be vaccinated now,' she said.

In New South Wales, the vulnerability of teachers was recognised when teachers

and education support staff in three local government areas were prioritised for vaccinations from 16 July.

More than 10,000 teachers and non-teaching staff from 236 schools gained priority access.

The IEU welcomed the change but renewed its call for all teachers and education staff to be safeguarded. A joint press release from the IEU, the Australian Education Union, and the United Workers Union called for the Minister, Greg Hunt, to 'prioritise access to vaccination for teachers, educators and support staff in schools and early learning centres'.

Christine Cooper, Acting Federal Secretary of the Independent Education Union of Australia, said: 'Teachers and education support staff have exposure to an extensive proportion of the community.'

'They have at all times met the challenges of this pandemic with professionalism and commitment to their students and communities. They too, deserve to feel safe and protected.'

'Instead of getting schools on a 'return-to-normal' path, we have teachers and support staff experiencing long waits for the vaccine. The way forward for schools and for society is to ensure that all teachers and education support staff have priority access to vaccination. This will safeguard schools and centres as the safe environment needed for the essential uninterrupted delivery of quality education.'

Deb James, IEU Victoria Tasmania General Secretary, wrote to employer representatives of all Victorian and

Tasmanian Catholic and independent schools to request the provision of additional paid leave for vaccinations, pointing out that it had been difficult for education staff to book vaccination times after school or on weekends.

She said the provision of paid vaccination leave was an important way for employers to demonstrate care for the health and safety of employees, students and families, and a way to help schools avoid closures.

Victorian Catholic employers all agreed to provide the additional leave, as did some independent schools.

In May, some educational specialists were included in priority vaccination access listed by the Victorian state government. The vaccination eligibility guidelines sent to Victorian schools were upgraded to include 'all teaching, support and administration employees in specialist schools directly working with students (within 1.5 metres of students for more than 15 minutes)'

The guidelines also applied to the same categories of staff if they work with 'students specified underlying medical condition or significant disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living'.

By early August, with lockdowns in three states, and schoolchildren and teachers amongst many falling ill with the coronavirus, the hope was that improved vaccine supply might enable teachers to take their rightful place at the front of the vaccination queue.



GENERAL SECRETARY
DEBRA JAMES

Action must match words on educator workloads

In July this year we reached the 10-year mark in the merger between the VIEU and IEU Tasmania.

Our Committee of Management has benefitted from the input of Tasmanian sector reps and the Branch is much stronger together. I'm really proud of all that we've been able to achieve for our members with a merged tribe.

One of the things that struck me as we got to know our Tasmanian colleagues is just how similar the issues are for teachers and education support staff across both states and in both sectors.

Workload pressure tops the list. Teachers and principals are working many hours outside of the school day and on weekends while time during the day when not teaching is consumed by meetings, administration and vastly increased record-keeping. Education support staff say they don't get enough time to properly prepare and collaborate with teachers to

best support students.

We're seeing teachers leaving the profession. We're seeing staff emotionally and physically burnt out.

Something's got to give.

It's time employers took this workload problem seriously. We understand there may not be a 'one size fits all' solution but acknowledging there is a problem and taking steps towards improvements, having listened and properly consulted, would be a good first step.

Negotiations for Enterprise Agreements in the Catholic sectors in both states are about to commence. Employers are on notice that workload improvements are a key issue in this round of bargaining.

Through this pandemic we've seen firsthand just how committed, capable and versatile our teachers, education support staff

and principals are under extreme pressure.

They have been called on to do the most challenging things on very short notice and have, by and large, taken it in their stride.

I'm so proud of our members and all they've done to keep learning going for our students. They've demonstrated their professionalism and commitment despite all the challenges.

There has been a lot of very well-deserved recognition and praise of education staff from politicians, employers and from parents and the community.

But if those delivering praise really care about our educators, if you really value what they do and recognise just how far they will go for their students, then please stop taking them for granted.

Now.

Our colleagues in Tasmanian independent schools came on board about a year later and together we've worked hard to get to know each other, meet the needs of our new members and deliver on expectations around the amalgamation of the branches.

Our Tasmanian members have responded really well to the new faces they've seen over the decade, working with them on individual member issues, sitting at the bargaining table in negotiating Collective Agreements, campaigning with them on sector-wide issues and delivering professional development and union training.

Burnt out: The scourge of workloads

Workload management is a key issue for the IEU during negotiations in the current bargaining period in Victorian Catholic education.

Here are the stark facts:

IEU State of the Union survey (2020) workload findings:

- 68% of teachers regularly or always take work home or work during evenings, weekends, and holidays
- 49% regularly feel stressed or overwhelmed by work expectations
- 48% regularly or always go into work when sick or ill
- 42% never or rarely believe their employer provides support and advice to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

NOUS survey (2018) key findings:

- 63% of teachers had worked between 41 and 60 hours the previous week
- 11% had worked between 61 and 70 hours, and 4% over 70 hours
- 93% of teachers thought their overall workload had increased in the last three years
- 88% of teachers reported that assessment and providing feedback and administration tasks had increased their workload in the last three years
- 72% of teachers thought that technology had increased their workload in the last 3 years.

In late 2020 *The Point* reported: 'The review provided irrefutable and independent evidence that staff in Catholic schools are already working excessive hours and that there must be change at both the system and school level to ameliorate the negative impact'.

Responding to the workload survey findings, IEU General Secretary Deb James said, 'teachers, education support staff and principals are rightly frustrated and angry that they can't get on with doing the job they want to do – teaching, leading, and bringing out the very best in all the students in their care'.

She said increased work had a negative impact on their morale, their ability to perform their core work, and, most worryingly, their wellbeing.

In 2019, *The Educator* reported that Australian lower secondary teachers spent 24.9 hours per week on non-teaching tasks compared to the OECD average of 18.2 hours per week.

More recently, the NSW IEU surveyed members on the impact of Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) requirements on teachers, finding most respondents had to submit the same or similar data on multiple platforms and had issues with uploading data during peak times.

'The NCCD process has a significant impact on workloads for learning support teachers, with nearly half of all respondents reporting they receive no additional release time and are undertaking five or more hours after school per week to complete the process,' the survey reported.

IE's Monica Crouch identified these time-munching duties facing NSW teachers, but common to all: excessive documenting of programs; data collection prioritised over teaching time; system initiatives such as data walls; and the 'datafication' of learning, with teachers 'required to upload data at every turn'.

ABC local radio concluded that a 'huge teacher shortage' is imminent if workload intensification is not addressed. The station devoted a *Conversation Hour* to the issue of teachers leaving the profession, saying casualisation, short-term contracts, lack of respect, low pay, huge workloads and COVID lockdowns are 'driving them away'.

They said 53% of people with a teaching degree do not currently work in education and 20% of people who graduate with

a teaching degree do not register as teachers upon graduating.

Sally Butler, a casual teacher from Melbourne, said she wasn't surprised that teachers are walking away and COVID was causing people to ask, 'if teaching was for them'. And schools concerned with the bottom line are using casuals to avoid paying holiday pay.

There's even more pressure on casuals during pandemic lockdowns when insecure work becomes even more uncertain.

Former primary school teacher Elizabeth said she left teaching because the workload 'just grew and grew and grew'.

'So, every year they'd take away another bit of support so by the end of time I did finally decide to leave I just felt overwhelmed, and it was impossible to get everything done.'

Elizabeth said teaching is 'like being on stage every day'.

'You stand up in front of your classroom and you put out everything you've got and then you have to go to a meeting or get on a phone call with to a parent and it just drains everything out of you.'

She said teachers come to her and say, 'Please can you help me. I just can't sustain this any longer'.

'I've talked to people who are broken, who are just unable to get off the couch, they're crying, they can't see any hope for the future, but they still get up go to work the next day because they're worried about their financial position.'

She said many female teachers who have been out of the workforce don't have a lot of super, find it difficult to get a permanent position and have often lost long service leave. If they or their partner gets sick, they can suddenly find themselves in a 'really difficult financial position'.



Other callers said the emphasis on accountability, preparation, record-keeping, and data analysis had increased stress and burnout, particularly in the last ten years.

Sam, from Geelong, said class plans, marking, exams, professional development, staff and student meetings and parent interactions also subtracted from the primary task of teaching in classrooms.

She said she was 'absolutely shattered' by the experience of teaching for ten years.

'I think people really underestimate the energy it takes to engage with 25 students every period and keep in touch with them.'

'I think most teachers would still say they love teaching. It's not a job for those who want to treat it as a 'nine-to-five'... An ability to relate to students in a way that engages them and leads to learning is a real skill and also a talent or a vocation. I don't think that should ever be undervalued.'

The IEU will continue to fight for provisions in Agreements which require meaningful consultation around workloads and prohibit unreasonable workloads.

AEU escalates campaign for a better deal in Victorian government schools

On 30 July, the Australian Education Victoria Branch Council authorised their Branch Executive to prepare an application for a protected action ballot.

This follows 50 bargaining meetings over seven months with government negotiators who, the Branch Council notes, have not formally addressed AEU claims relating to 'measures that would address the excessive workload, salaries and conditions of teacher, principal, assistant principal, and education support members.'

A protected action ballot is

the first step towards taking protected industrial action – which could take a number of forms from specific work bans on, for example, marking, meetings, camps or other specific duties through to stop work action, such as a full-day strike. There are several further steps to this process, including a successful ballot of all AEU members – so employer representatives have

ample time to genuinely address the outstanding matters in the AEU claim.

We continue to follow the Victorian Government School bargaining closely. The next government schools Agreement will set the benchmark for salaries and conditions across Victorian education. In our current negotiations for a new Catholic education Agreement

we are claiming the maintenance of pay parity for teachers, and improved workload management and other conditions won in government schools will enhance our ability to negotiate workplace improvements for IEU members across all our schools.

We support the actions of our colleagues in government schools as they campaign for a fair outcome which addresses

the growing workload crisis and offers salary increases that acknowledge the crucial work of school staff.

Take me to your new leaders

In the last edition of *The Point*, we farewelled senior IEU stalwarts Cathy Hickey and Loretta Cotter. In this edition, we welcome their successors Kylie Busk, Nick Sahlqvist and David Brear.



Your new IEU Deputy Secretary **David Brear** taught English in Catholic secondary schools for 13 years and in the ELICOS sector both in Australia and overseas. He was a curriculum co-ordinator, year level co-ordinator, and IEU sub-branch rep at Salesian College Sunbury and Catholic Regional College Sydenham before joining the IEU as an Organiser in 2001.

For many years, David's patch was East Gippsland and the north-east of the state. He co-ordinated the IEU bargaining team for independent schools and also worked with members in the ELICOS industry.

He has considerable experience negotiating Enterprise Bargaining Agreements in independent schools where he has worked with members and school leaders to negotiate wages and improve conditions for staff, while also recruiting new members and building respectful relationships with employers. David has negotiated a number of first-time EBAs for independent schools including Geelong Grammar, Plenty Valley Christian College, Northside Christian and St Leonard's College.

He has also worked closely with members in Catholic schools, sat on a number of CECV Committees as the IEU representative and is currently on the IEU negotiation team for new Agreements in both Victorian and Tasmanian Catholic schools.

While doing all of this, David completed a law degree and was admitted to practice as a lawyer. He has appeared as an advocate in the Fair Work Commission and has provided advice and support for IEU members on a range of issues.

David has been part of the IEU leadership team for the past seven years as Assistant Secretary where he has largely co-ordinated the work of the organising staff.

Married with two adult children, David hails from a family of teachers and committed union members. As an experienced teacher, organiser and a lifelong learner, David is suited to the challenges of a senior role. His varied skill set, broad range of knowledge and strong work ethic ensure his passion for equity will inform the IEU for years to come.

'I'm committed to working every day for IEU members to support them in whatever way I can,' David says.

'I'm proud to be a member of the IEU and consider it a privilege to be a leader of this union. Many of the challenges facing us are complex and difficult but we have a skilled and committed staff and a growing membership - all of whom are determined to make a difference.'

Your new IEU Assistant Secretary **Kylie Busk** also has a family background in education. She's the proud daughter of a primary school teacher and principal, and during her childhood she spent weekends, school holidays and pupil-free days hanging out at school while Mum worked.

'Despite both my sister and I declaring we were bound for other paths, we have both ended up becoming teachers,' Kylie says.

She worked for 14 years as a secondary teacher, mostly in Catholic education, including a year in the UK. A history and politics teacher by training, Kylie also taught SOSE, Commerce, English, Business Management and held leadership roles in curriculum roles prior to becoming a Pathways/VET/VCAL Coordinator during her final years in schools.

Her first year in Catholic education in 1997 coincided with the IEU's landmark 'parity' win in the sector.

Kylie says becoming a sub-branch rep at De La Salle College in 2004 was a 'life changing moment'.

'The De La sub-branch at that time was a large, active group and on their behalf, I stepped up to proudly speak at the 2008 stop-work meeting at Dallas Brooks Hall. The feeling of solidarity that day was so powerful.'

Later that year, Kylie joined the IEU Committee of Management, and she joined the IEU as an organiser in 2010, starting with western Victoria and ending up in Gippsland.

Kylie is keen to ensure that regional and remote IEU members are supported with advice, support and access to union activities, personal development and training, no matter where they live and work. She enjoys working as a stakeholder on representative, registration, and curriculum bodies in Victoria and Tasmania, and on federal bodies like ACARA and AITSL.

'I've constantly in awe of the amazing work of educators and all those who work in schools, even more so than over these last 18 months of COVID. I look forward to building on the amazing strength we have as a union - building the capacity, skills, and resources our amazing IEU staff use to ensure members have appropriate support and advice, that member voice is loud and clear in decisions that impact them at work.'

'I'm determined to ensure the safety of everyone in our schools is at the centre of decisions and that our union continues to grow and thrive.'

'Solidarity.'

Your other new IEU Assistant Secretary **Nick Sahlqvist** has extensive experience in the trade union movement in two Australian states and the United Kingdom.

Nick entered the union movement with the Queensland Branch of the IEU, where his work was focused on Workplace Agreement negotiations with individual schools and across the sector.

After moving to Cambridge, UK, in 2009, Nick was National Officer with the FDA, the union for the Senior Civil Service in London, a role within Whitehall where he dealt with government ministers and senior civil servants across departments as varied as the Foreign Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He also led the FDA's Organising Committee.

Since joining the Victorian Tasmania Branch of the IEU in 2012, Nick has covered the Western Districts between Geelong and Portland. Whilst completing the day-to-day work as an organiser he supported other organisers with their independent school bargaining and recently took over co-ordinating this role for our union. He is also an IEU delegate to Geelong Trades Hall Council.

When Nick was completing his Law and Politics degree he worked as a lifeguard in Yamba NSW and in retail in Brisbane at Rebel Sport where he met his wife. He is married with two young daughters, one of whom attends the local Catholic Primary School.

Nick looked for work in the union movement following the introduction of the WorkChoices legislation by the Howard government.

'As I was finishing my law degree, WorkChoices became the law of the land. I thought it was an abomination that was stripping the working rights of most of the Australian workforce. I felt compelled to do something to defeat this legislation and decided working in a union was the best way to start,' Nick says.

Nick is looking forward to the challenge of supporting the staff at the IEU to deliver the best outcomes for our members into the future.

'I'm really proud to work for a progressive union like the IEU Victoria Tasmania and I'm excited to help shape and support its work for all our members into the future.'

New face, same comitment



DEPUTY SECRETARY
DAVID BREAR

I am excited and proud to be taking up the role of Deputy Secretary at the union I joined as a graduate teacher way back in 1989.

Things have changed a lot since then, but two things that I firmly believe have remained the same are the importance of education in our lives and the importance of being in a union.

If anything good is to come out of this pandemic, it might be that it has become clearer how central the effective functioning of schools is to the fabric of our society and our way of life. We tend to take our institutions, including schools, for granted when times are good but the pandemic has shown how our institutions need to be resilient and strong so they can adapt to support us all when they need to.

I know how hard our members work to make our schools great and I know how hard everyone has worked to pivot between onsite and remote learning. Teachers and Education Support Staff have stood up and continued to do their jobs at home, or wherever they need to be. When you think about it, it's been an amazing effort to keep this whole thing ticking along. Reports are still being written, content covered, and lessons held.

However, this has come at a cost. Our members were working at high levels before COVID, and the pandemic has made things worse and something needs to be done.

We have already begun discussions with employers on new Enterprise Agreements covering Catholic schools in Victoria and expect to start these talks in Tasmania later this year. We are also at the table at over 40 independent schools in Victoria and Tasmania.

If employers want schools to remain resilient institutions, they need to provide them with adequate resources. That means doing something about workload to begin with.

The IEU has never been stronger - our membership is at an all-time high. We will continue to do everything we can to support all our members in the important work they do. We will continue to push and campaign hard for what we believe in.

I would just like to finally acknowledge the work of my predecessor as Deputy Secretary, Loretta Cotter. I worked with Loretta for many years. She is a committed unionist, an extremely hard and intelligent worker, and a good friend of all of us at the IEU office.

From the President



UNION PRESIDENT
MARK WILLIAMS

As we begin to move back to a more normalised routine in schools (again!), I can't help but think about the incredible work undertaken at such short notice by teachers and education support staff with no notice from our education authorities.

Thank goodness for the wonderful and reasonable leadership of principals from many schools in ensuring their teaching teams were given adequate planning time before remote and online learning commenced.

It is also reassuring (and no surprise) that school leaders understand and recognise there is significant time and energy required for existing programming to be modified so learning activities continue to be relevant and accessible to students via somewhat limited online platforms.

Whether or not you support the Andrews' Government's strategy in combatting COVID, the short notice in notifying schools of lockdown #6 was very unfortunate. It was not sensible to expect school leaders, teachers and support staff to undertake online learning without reasonable time for planning and preparation, no matter how long the lockdown was expected to last. School communities were left wondering if their hard work in previous lockdowns was valued, and some school staff were less motivated to work as hard again.

Having said this, I know from talking to colleagues that even though many staff may have felt less appreciated, a sense of commitment to student learning took over once each school day began, and staff members quickly remembered their daily online routines.

Schools performed morning 'check-ins' each day for whole classes, and wellbeing checks with vulnerable students and families. They targeted maths and literacy groups in primary schools, held intervention groups with support staff, and scheduled specialist program tutorials following as close to normal timetables in secondary schools. All of these activities flowed due to the commitment, flexibility and resilience of staff, students and the many parents assisting as they worked from home.

I congratulate all school communities in succeeding again in adversity!

What happens when there's a positive coronavirus case at your school?

Lockdown is tough enough, enforcing remote learning on staff and students, but when the pandemic strikes the school community, the stakes are raised.

Andrew Neal, Principal of Bacchus Marsh Grammar (BMG), was one of the first school leaders to deal with the issue directly. In mid-July, a BMG teacher who had attended a staff day had tested positive to the virus. That led to all staff isolating and getting tested and the cancellation of classes. It meant quarantine – you can't leave your house at all – rather than lockdown.

'We were contacted around lunchtime by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) who informed us that there was a possibility of a positive case,' Andrew says.

'We organised a staff meeting for 4pm that day to discuss issues either way with staff and then started to get students and staff organised in case we were locked down. I asked that our reserve supply of masks be distributed as soon as possible.

'We remained in contact with DHHS through the afternoon and received confirmation of a positive case at about 3.45. We then spoke with staff and passed on the instruction to go home, get tested and isolate.'

Sharmeen Hussein, the IEU Rep at BMG, found out about the positive case via Zoom.

'The next thing I did was organise the class materials for the students that I teach, grade fives, so they could conduct their remote learning with ease.'

She is grateful to the school for how it handled the crisis.

'The school communicated the initial school closure through emails and zoom meetings in the most efficient manner. I couldn't speak more highly about how well our school has handled the communication and management,

checking on staff and keeping us well informed of the ever changing circumstances.'

Sharmeen said adapting to being in quarantine was 'hard, but doable'.

'I am a mother of two children that attend Bacchus Marsh Grammar. It was a challenge to manage teaching, being a mum and not being able to step out of the house. However, it made me feel very grateful for everything that I have, and the community support was tremendous.'

She says the biggest difference between lockdown and quarantine was not being able to get fresh air.

In dealing with the outbreak, Andrew says his aim was to be as clear and concise with his messaging as possible and in the initial stages not to be bogged down in detail.

'This outbreak could have had the potential to be a major outbreak given the size of the school and the geographical spread of the school's catchment.

'The aim was to get people home and tested as quickly as possible to allow DHHS to ascertain the size of the problem. In all our communications we were guided by the staff from DHHS, who were terrific.'

BMG had a COVID plan and had workshopped what to do if such an incident occurred. But Andrew admits that he had to make some quick decisions without a 'full suite of information'.

More teachers tested positive, and the situation changed 'by the hour'. On Day 13, testing Andrew revealed another positive case, a staff member who had initially tested negative and was without symptoms.

Andrew says if a school experiences a positive case, whether staff or student, it is vital that the news is communicated as quickly as possible.

'I think schools taking an active role in communicating and reinforcing DHHS advice is vital as schools and staff are a trusted voice and can help get the public health advice across.

'The main thing is that I think you need to remain calm and follow the medical advice. I think we can all help by getting vaccinated quickly and I am an advocate of schools making this as hassle-free as possible.'

As we go to press, three more schools have been closed. Our best wishes go out to any members and schools affected by such stressful situations. Be sure to call on your Organisers for expert assistance.

Lockdowns: The bad and the good

IEU Organisers report that the experience of school closures and remote learning during lockdowns in 2021 has been as varied as the schools where members work.

At one extreme are schools that had 'learnt nothing' from the travails of 2020: 'I am amazed that there are still some school leaders who are still breaking the COVID requirements to open up their school. Firstly, by getting all staff in for unnecessary meetings during hard lockdowns. Then, having 15 staff in to supervise 20 students...'

The mental health of members was a concern for many Organisers, with the cumulative effect of so much remote learning and 'COVID-19 uncertainty' exacerbating the stress of lives 'already dominated by work'.

'This in itself is a concern because people's lives are dominated by work seeping into every facet of their daily lives, and they are unable to have any real separation between work and leisure.'

On the other hand, it was reported that most IEU members and sub-branches were better prepared to address staffing arrangements for remote learning.

And one Organiser said many members and reps have reported that the sense of union and community in their school has deepened each lockdown.

'Where people initially felt very

isolated and that they were going it alone, as we have had future lockdowns people have felt more confident/ comfortable reaching out to their union reps to talk about any issues or areas of concerns to raise as a collective.'

Discrimination survey delivers hope, and a wake-up call

Key stakeholders in the federal government are seeking to enact the contentious Religious Discrimination Bill 2019 before the next election.

IEU Industrial Officer Jess Mekhael says the Bill would give religious bodies a 'positive right to discriminate under the guise of religious freedom, thereby reducing the rights of those who are already susceptible to discrimination'.

Such laws would impact directly on the rights of workers in faith-based institutions, so the IEU ran a survey of our members in July to better understand their workplace experiences. The survey met with a tremendous response, with nearly 1200 members completing the survey.

We invited comments, and received many encouraging stories of open, welcoming and diverse workplaces and schools seeking to improve after recognising historical issues. Unfortunately, too many other members told us they'd suffered or witnessed shocking institutionalised intolerance.

Great strides are being made in many of our workplaces. But some are increasingly out of step with community values, underlining the importance of legislation which ensures that everyone in our schools is protected from discrimination.

However, legislation can only go so far, and it is up to all of us, particularly our school leaders, to embrace diversity and ensure that all members of our school communities are welcomed.

Thanks to the many members who told us their stories. In many cases this was an act of real bravery. We will continue to advocate for the protection

of our members and their students from discrimination.

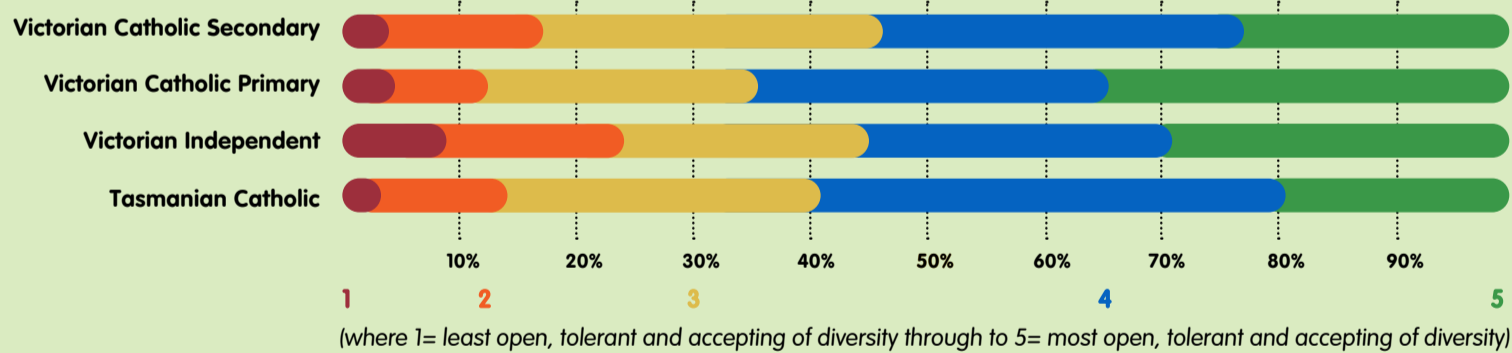
Here is a selection of comments from this revealing survey:

- '(A colleague) marrying a same-sex partner was told that under no circumstance was it to be mentioned to students. I thought that this was fairly intolerant and hypocritical of a school which goes out of its way to support gender diverse students. If you're willing to support your LBGITQ student population, then you should do the same for your staff.'
- 'We were explicitly told to not speak about the equal marriage vote (with staff or students). A teacher at my school didn't get her contract renewed because she had a baby with her female partner, a teacher got vilified because she and her partner had a baby out of wedlock, and I know of a teacher who is privately undergoing IVF treatments and hasn't told leadership for fear they will lose their job.'
- 'Being gay in a Catholic school is inherently conflicted, especially in leadership. A don't ask / don't tell approach is the norm – definitely not healthy but (it) was my choice to sign up for it. Not a reflection on the rest of the leadership team which is made up of wonderful people who value diversity. I know it will drive me out of Catholic Ed eventually.'
- 'As a queer person working in a Catholic school, I have had to keep much of my private life secret for threat of termination. Students with diverse gender identities or sexual orientations have not been supported and staff are not provided with adequate training.'
- 'I have to keep my sexuality a secret as I fear I would be fired or targeted by leadership at my school. I understand they have a right to their faith, but it feels awful having to hide who I am. I'm scared that I might let it slip one day and change the relationship I have with my co-workers forever.'
- 'Students are forced to comply with gender norms and told that being gay will send them to hell.'
- 'The principal of our Catholic primary school referred to 'questionable lifestyle choices' that he may have to 'investigate' if solid information came to light, in (an) address to the whole staff. It very quickly became obvious that he was referring to a particular staff member that he believed to be gay. There was nothing subtle about the discussion and was perceived by many as a warning to the said staff member.'
- 'In 2020, I worked at an independent school at which these topics would not be at all accepted in their beliefs and If you were to show any sign of being same-sex attracted as a student or staff member or even be a member of a union they'd find ways to get rid of you quickly or bully you out.'

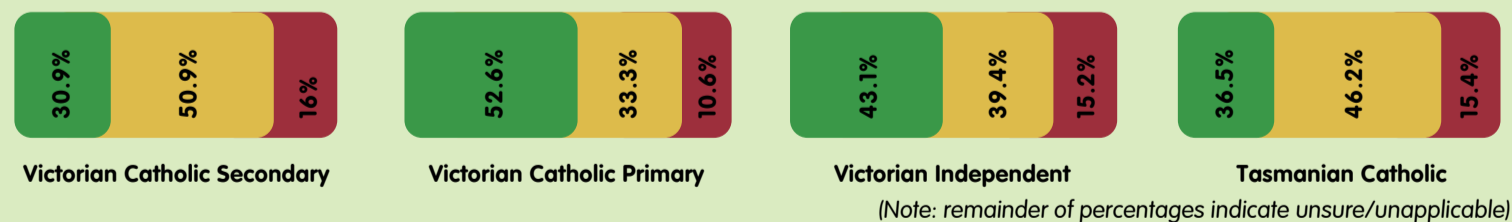
- 'From experience, they design their employment contracts to weed out anyone they don't want or cannot fit within narrow parameters of acceptance.'
- 'I resigned from this position, and I am not same-sex attracted but do believe that the level of control they have over the school, or their own community would have serious implications for any staff member or student that are in it and are.'
- 'I worked at a faith-based school for 10 years and was horrified at some of the things that happened. Whole school assembly about the evils of being gay and that abortion is murder. They felt safe to do these things because they could select staff who were all Christians and use the powers to discriminate in employment. It creates a school with extreme views. It's not best for students, in fact it causes harm. I left because I was so disgusted by their version of Christianity that I've completely walked away from my belief.'

See below for key findings from the IEU Discrimination Survey

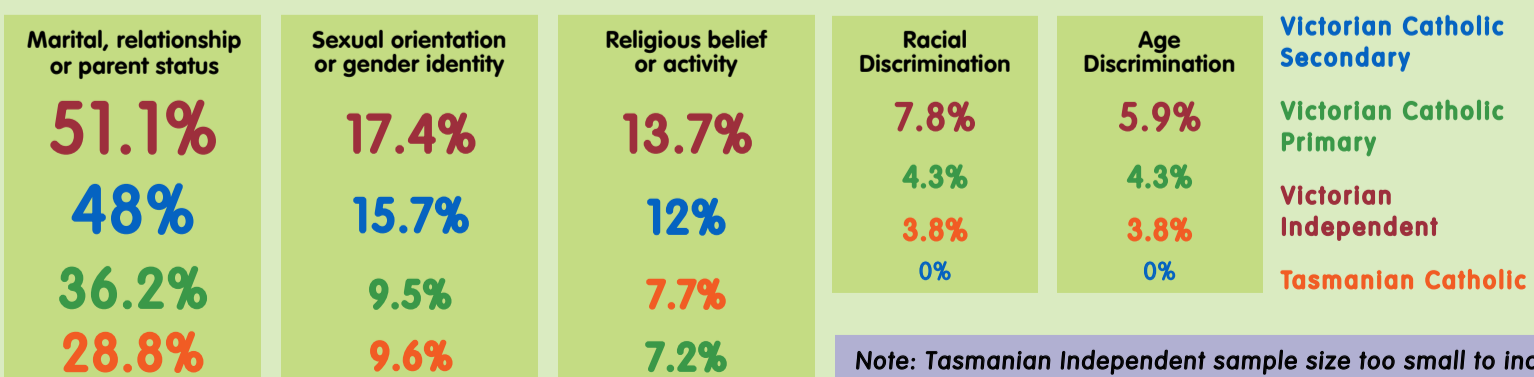
How do you rate your workplace in terms of openness, tolerance and acceptance of diversity?



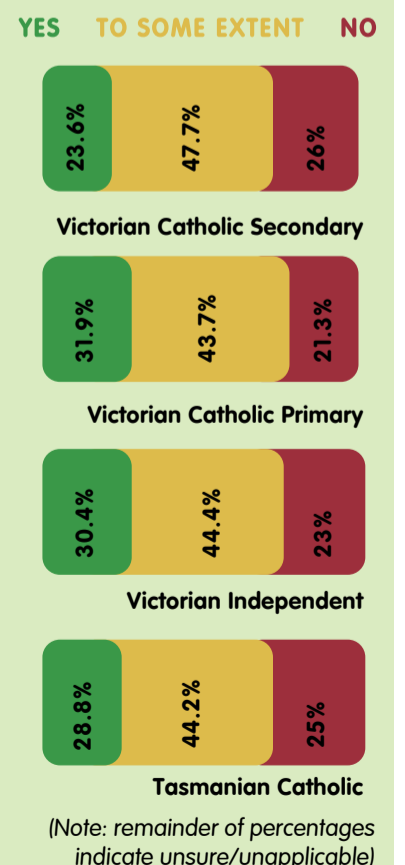
Do you feel that diversity amongst the students in your school is supported and celebrated? YES TO SOME EXTENT NO



Have you witnessed or been subjected to discrimination in your workplace for any of these factors:



Do you feel that staff are confident in being open and honest in the workplace about factors such as belief, marital/relationship status, parental status, sexual orientation or gender identity?



Note: Tasmanian Independent sample size too small to include in the survey results

Independent bargaining round-up

Our union is bargaining at many workplaces with schools picking up Agreements that were delayed due to the pandemic lockdowns last year and other Agreements recently expiring.

Whilst the bargaining outcome in the Victorian Government sector is still unknown, members are trying to resolve local concerns with workload proving to be the biggest issue.

Members have served the Log of Claims at **Bacchus Marsh Grammar**, but meetings have been delayed given the Coronavirus outbreak and subsequent quarantine at the school. Members are looking forward to negotiations recommencing once that significant setback is resolved.

Girton Grammar negotiations are also progressing well with the bargaining team looking forward to the response from the employer to the last of the members' claims in coming weeks.

The Geelong College has finalised a new combined all-staff Agreement and are proceeding to ballot shortly. Members have been successful in bargaining for a Staff Forum Committee, the introduction of an overnight allowances for some camps and increases to several leave entitlements.

Members at **Christ Church Grammar** have also finalised their Agreement and are in the process of working with the employer on drafting the Agreement.

Members at **Woodleigh School** have made the difficult decision to seek a Protected Action Ballot Order. Bargaining has been underway for several years at the school with members feeling little progress has been made. It is hoped that

if the ballot is approved and successful, industrial action won't be required, and the employer representatives and members can reach agreement before any action commences.

MLC has conducted meetings with the bargaining team online in this round of bargaining due to constantly changing restrictions. Many conditions have been agreed in principle with wage increases still under consideration.

Camberwell Girls Grammar bargaining meetings have commenced and the bargaining team is working to deliver the best outcomes for members at the school.

Launceston Church Grammar school has recently issued a NERR to commence bargaining for teaching and non-teaching staff and are making a proposal for shortened Agreements due to funding uncertainty. Our union is working with members at the school to determine their preferred response.

Members at **Highview College** are in the process of developing a Log of Claims with a survey due to be conducted in coming weeks and bargaining expected to commence in Term 4.

The bargaining team at **Firbank Grammar** are close to a result, with a half day bargaining session in coming weeks hoped to achieve a final Agreement.

Curriculum reviews progress report

Reviews of senior secondary curriculum are currently being undertaken in both Victoria and Tasmania.

In Tasmania the Year 9 to 12 project aims to make education in Tasmania more meaningful and engaging, and to improve:

- numbers of students staying in school through to Year 12 and/or further training and education
- attendance rates of students at school and/or further training and education
- achievements of students in the career pathway they choose.

Members and schools were consulted through 2019 and 2020 but progress was disrupted by the COVID pandemic. In response to feedback, the implementation timeline for most of Tranche 1, together with Tranche 1B implementation, was extended to 2023. This will enable more time to be focused on working with schools and teachers on the professional learning required to support implementation.

However, concerns have emerged in relation to Tranche 1A which consists of six Level 1 and 2 courses intended to be available for use from 2022. Member concerns have focused on the nature of the feedback summary, specifically that summarising by theme does not tend to provide the detail of some specific issues they have had with the documents and a growing frustration that teacher feedback is largely being ignored. There is also growing frustration about the requirement to provide endless feedback on these course documents without appropriate resourcing to support this additional work.

Together with our colleagues from the AEU Tasmania we have raised concerns about the announcement of additional upcoming 'twilight' course development information sessions. These seem to have been scheduled with little notice to schools, and without consultation. There scheduling fails to recognise that this is already a period of peak workload around reporting periods in school. AEU and IEU members have engaged in the consultation process well and have already committing many hours to achieving the aims of the project but concerns are now heightened.

We will now be taking extra time to consult about course design, with project staff developing a program of consultation and personal

development for later in the year. We'll again be working with members to ensure good engagement continues with this important work.

Late in 2020 the Victorian Government published the final report of the Firth Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling and confirmed it accepted all recommendations in principle. The Secretary of DET subsequently established the SSPR Taskforce and Project Control Board, and appointed an Assistant Deputy Secretary (ADS), to oversee reform emerging from the Review. Work on the SSPR agenda commenced in December 2020, in collaboration with the VCAA Senior Secondary Certificate Reform.

The Review aims to ensure all Victorian secondary school students have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning options, and to look for ways to improve transitions for students between school, post-secondary education, and work.

It will work with stakeholders to change community, school, parent, teacher, student and industry perceptions of vocational and applied learning. This is a more significant task than just implementing technical reforms to the system. Maintaining the international reputation of the VCE whilst building confidence and enthusiasm in a new certificate will require broad, measured and detailed stakeholder engagement to help build a strong, clear consensus for the reforms.

DET and the VCAA have implemented a multi-pronged approach to consultation and engagement with students, families, carers, schools, TAFEs, universities and other service providers, peak bodies, industry and employers.

This includes the IEU who are now involved in the Senior Secondary Reform Reference Group which commenced its work in late June. The Minister of Education James Merlino will be involved directly in this process.

We look forward to working with members to ensure their voice is heard in the development of this important reform.

Extended school visits to be trialled for support staff

Education staff are so busy, Organisers have devised a new way to catch up with members.

Just another workday. School starts at 9am. I get there at 8.15am to get some preparation done. Recess starts at 11am - I don't have recess - helping a student, a quick toilet stop, then doing duty. Lunch starts at 1.15pm - first half: yard duty, second half: bolt down lunch, make a few parent calls, write some student observations from last class. 3.20pm there's an after-school meeting/parent teacher interviews/PD/ marking/ more prep. Go home. Exhausted. Don't stay for IEU sub-branch meeting, too tired and washed out.

Most teachers will recognise the preceding as a normal day of teaching. School days have always been busy, but these days all staff, both teachers and support staff, barely have time to take a breather. Schools seem to believe if there are a few minutes unaccounted for, then that time must be filled. There are countless tales of staff not having the time to eat, take a toilet break or make an important call in their break times.

The IEU used to be able to visit schools at recess or lunchtime and talk to many staff members. However, recently

it has been almost impossible to grab enough time to have a meaningful conversation.

So, the IEU is adapting. Until the end of the school year, we are trialling extended school visits to connect with members at larger schools, both Catholic and independent. This means your Organiser and Support Staff Officer Tracey Spiel can visit together so that proper conversations can be had.

We are tailoring the visiting times to suit members. We can come from the beginning of recess and stay till after lunch, or

arrive before lunch and extend the visit to include some time after school.

Early results show this enables teaching and support staff to have much more satisfactory engagement with their union Organisers. So, if you have a spare during class times or you can arrange a different break time, we can accommodate to better connect with you and your colleagues.

We want these extended visits to help us to build union power in our schools, to increase the IEU profile, and to recruit new

members to the union. It also means we can listen to your concerns and issues and answer any questions you may have.

We will be gathering feedback and data on this trial to see if this is a system for the future. We believe that it is a great strategy for larger schools, and we would love to hear from schools that would like to be part of this pilot project.

Please be in touch with your Organiser or Tracey Spiel (tspiel@ieuvictas.org.au)

What is bargaining? Part one: The groundwork

The nuts and bolts of bargaining, the process which delivers improvements to pay and conditions of members.

Unions seeking recruits have been known to use the sketch *'What Have the Romans Ever Done For Us?'* from Monty Python's *Life Of Brian*. In that sketch Reg, the leader of the People's Front of Judea, asks it of his group. In union scenarios, it goes: All right, but apart from maternity leave, superannuation, worker's compensation, Medicare, Occupational Health and Safety, paid annual leave, the award system, and pay increases, what have the unions ever done for us?

The punchline should be bargaining.

The IEU works with its members to negotiate hundreds of Enterprise Agreements (EA) with independent and Catholic Schools, private education providers and ELICOS colleges.

Bargaining is the grinding, often protracted, work undertaken by the IEU to achieve these EAs and ensure working conditions and wages are maintained and modernised. It can be a long-winded and complex process.

The union's Better Bargaining Booklet defines Enterprise Bargaining as the 'legislated process of negotiation that occurs between the employer, employees and their bargaining representatives'.

'An Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) is an agreement between an employee and an employer

or group of employers (e.g. Catholic schools). An Enterprise Agreement is the workplace rule book that sets out the conditions of employment, including pay and leave entitlements, disciplinary processes and the roles and responsibilities on employees and their employer.'

Before negotiations towards an EBA commences, your union has done a heap of work. Sometimes employers refuse to bargain, or they delay the process. Union tacticians can then choose to pursue a Majority Support Determination (MSD) from the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

An MSD is a determination issued by the FWC if an employee's bargaining representative (the union) proves that a majority of employees want to bargain for an Enterprise Agreement with the employer.

So, Organisers must have galvanised enough support in the workplace to ensure 50% or more of workers will support the bargaining. This is what reps do day in, day out – recruiting, informing, listening, building momentum. Depending on the employer's attitude and the issues involved, Organisers can use email, rep meetings, or other events to firstly ascertain levels of support, then try to grow it.

Then they choose whether a secret ballot, survey, collection of written statements or a petition

is most appropriate to indicate majority support for bargaining.

As employers might undertake their own 'surveys' of employees, which can justify results favourable to them, the union must get its own feedback from members about the issues that concern them and their colleagues, to give the worker's perspective proper representation.

The union must know the workplace and its concerns and whether it can deliver the majority required to force the MSD. Reps must be properly consulted, and their feedback factored into survey questions which 'take the blood pressure' of all employees. This means lots of meetings and phone calls and face-to-face meetings, as well as group emails and surveys; there are no short-cuts when building support for action.

In independent schools and Catholic education, potential claims are often compared to what happens with state school pay and conditions. Agreements in that sector can act as a catalyst for negotiations, and a clear point of comparison. So, the IEU must consider the timing of its bargaining. It must clearly lay out to members and their colleagues what they are fighting for and where the gaps are between their conditions and those of state school compatriots.

Work undertaken before negotiations begin can include:

- training for bargaining reps and other workplace leaders
- gathering member ideas through surveys, meetings and phone calls
- developing the Log of Claims (statement of desired terms)
- recruitment activities
- employer research (financial information, upcoming projects, staffing profile, etc.)
- industry research (how the school compares to others)
- source policies and other documents
- industrial research around any relevant Award or legislation changes.

IEU members across independent and Catholic education have fought hard and won some great conditions for all employees in our sectors. However, over time some employers seek to erode or stall improvements to wages and working conditions in schools. It is only through collective power and strength that we will continue to build on and improve conditions in our workplace.

So, the punchline to the Romans joke could have been very long – we haven't even started with the nuts and bolts of the negotiation process itself – all the Mafia cigars and nuclear brinkmanship... Stay tuned to read about that in the next edition.

NAPLAN evolves

In 2021, over 1.2 million students from 9000 schools and campuses participated in NAPLAN tests.

Over 70% of them – 870,000 students from over 6300 schools – undertook NAPLAN online.

NAPLAN testing requires students to sit four tests of reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation), and numeracy.

It was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic.

New low-no bandwidth (LNB) technology was trialled for the first time this year at over 80 schools/campuses, with 3500 test attempts submitted.

ACARA reports that online testing was successful, and all participating schools were able to complete tests online. Preliminary online school results were due at schools in July and NAPLAN 2021 summary (preliminary) information was due to be released in August. Individual student results should be accessible to parents by September and a national report will be available by the end of the 2021 school year.

At a 2 July meeting of Education Ministers from around Australia the following was agreed:

- writing will continue as a census test
- a language test separate from writing will be part of the annual census-based standardised assessment program
- ACARA will explore shifting the test to as early as possible in the school year and aim to deliver test results in two weeks
- assessments will remain in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9
- ACARA will look to incorporate critical and creative thinking in English and Mathematics into the existing NAPLAN domains, with advice to be provided to the next Education Ministers' Meeting.

A federal review of NAPLAN stated its purpose was 'monitoring progress towards national goals, school system accountability and performance, school improvement, individual student learning achievement and growth, and information for parents/carers on school and student performance'.

Bargaining with the Catholic employers

With Agreements expiring, negotiations on pay and conditions are approaching in two states.

Victoria

The Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement passed its nominal expiry date in April and, after surveying members and consulting widely on the claim, it was then served. The employers have been slow to get underway, in part because of the fundamental restructuring they needed to undertake to ensure a corporate structure existed to operate every school.

We've had several 'pre-bargaining' meetings and discussed most of the Union's Log

of Claims. We expect members will soon receive the 'Notice of Employee Representational Rights' (which you do not need to respond to). That will signal the commencement of formal bargaining.

Our colleagues in the AEU are bargaining with the government, but very little progress has been made and preliminary steps are being taken to prepare for industrial action, should it become necessary. We are hopeful that the AEU and Victorian Government will reach some level of agreement before

the end of September, thereby speeding up our negotiations with the Catholic employers.

Tasmania

Our current Agreement was negotiated in 2018 and expires at the start of September 2021. After the expiry, wages will continue to increase because they are tied to Government sector teachers' wages, but all other conditions are up for negotiation.

Many conditions have been improved in Government schools since we last bargained in 2018. We indicated to Catholic

Education Tasmania that we would consider their request to delay bargaining if they would deal with these 'catch-up' matters, but they refused. So, there is no agreement to delay, and these 'catch-up' matters will now form part of our claim for a new Agreement.

The Union is about to survey IEU members to develop our draft claim. This will then be circulated to individual workplace Sub-branches for feedback, and then endorsement by your elected Union reps.

Mental health is a workplace OH&S issue requiring a 'complete cultural change'

The pandemic has focused attention on the psychological demands of education like never before, but major improvements in mental health hazards were already long overdue.

Many psychological hazards are ignored or poorly addressed, such as:

- high or low job demands
- low job control
- poor organisational change management
- poor support
- violent or traumatic events
- poor workplace relationships
- low role clarity or role conflict.

Employers often fail to treat mental issues as hazards in the same way they would physical hazards, and some don't even understand they are compelled by law to identify and act upon risks to mental health.

Organisers often hear misconceptions. Recently, an organiser was told by an employer that employees being exposed to violence at work 'was really about wellbeing and not really an OHS matter'.

The truth is that mental health issues, many caused or exacerbated by unsafe work, force many IEU members to leave their school, reduce their hours or suffer psychological injuries which don't get included in the statistics for workplace psychological injury unless they make a claim for workers' compensation through WorkCover.

It is vital that employers realise their legal duty to provide and maintain safe workplaces includes ensuring the psychological health of employees at risk.

IEU OHS trainer Emma Morrissey says there are some positive signs of progress, but 'it's a mammoth task and really needs complete cultural change in the sector, not just individual schools'.

In May, the Fair Work Commission and independent policy think tank the Australia Institute delivered the report Investing in *Better Mental Health in Australian Workplaces*.

Its first words are: 'Australian society is experiencing an epidemic of mental illness that imposes enormous costs on individuals with poor mental health, their families, and the broader economy. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, one in five Australians reported mental health challenges of some sort'.

It says while the causes of mental illness are not fully understood, factors contributing to mental illness and injury are well-known and preventable. And chief amongst them are unsafe workplaces, which 'contribute significantly to the incidence of mental illness and injury'.

'Workplace factors which contribute to mental health problems include unreasonable job demands, exposure to violence and trauma, long or irregular working hours, an absence of worker voice and control, and bullying and harassment,' the report states.

'Studies indicate 15% to 45% of mental health problems experienced by employed people are attributable to conditions in their workplaces.'

Workplace-related mental illness and injury are estimated to cost \$15.8 billion to \$17.4 billion per year in Australia. Eliminating mental health problems caused by work-related factors and stressors would expand Australian GDP and reduce government expenditure by billions of dollars per year.

However, the report concludes that

Australian employers and WHS regulators have been slow to respond to the issue 'with the attention and forcefulness this crisis deserves'.

It says our work health and safety laws has been effective in reducing physical injuries and illnesses in workplaces, but an equally rigorous approach has not been applied to reducing workplace mental health risks.

'The current regulatory system does not specify explicit enforceable requirements compelling employers to take mental health risks equally seriously – nor does it equip workers, their representatives, and regulators with the tools needed to ensure employers live up to those responsibilities.'

'The tragic result is thousands of lives destroyed by preventable mental ill health, and many billions of dollars in lost output and additional fiscal expenses.'

The report looked forward to Australia modernising its practices to the level of other industrial countries, where psychosocial risks in workplaces 'are already treated with the same urgency and rigour as they combat physical health and safety dangers'.

'It is past time for Australia's WHS policy-makers to address the mental health crisis in Australia's workplaces head-on.'

Perhaps the first steps are being taken.

After much prodding from the union movement, Commonwealth WHS ministers have accepted recommendations from the 2019 Boland Review of the model work, health, and safety (WHS) laws overseen by Safe Work Australia.

This includes making specific regulations and codes of practice regarding psychosocial hazards to place

a positive obligation on employers to minimise and eliminate hazards to mental health from the workplace – just as they are required to in relation to physical hazards.

While the lawmakers might be catching on, many education staff are yet to see changes in their workplaces. Emma notes that in OHS training courses the IEU delivers to Health and Safety Reps, psychological hazards including work-related stress, excessive workload, bullying, and exposure to violence, dominate discussions about risk for education sector employees.

Very few HSRs report that these hazards are identified or well managed in their workplaces. What pervades is the sentiment that these stressors are 'part of the job', in complete contrast to what is actually contained in WHS legislation.

We're running an HSR refresher on work-related stress on Wednesday 27 October. You can make a booking via our website: ieuvictas.org.au/all-events-training



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Going part-time in a pandemic

Sometimes jobs are only offered on a part-time basis because that's what suits the employer. For example, just about all Learning Support (teacher aide) positions are only offered part-time. But then many members who have been working full-time need to go part-time for one reason or another. This article should help you to understand your options for moving to part-time work.

First, the three big mistakes:

Before we talk about how to do it, let's talk about the traps. Staff who go from full-time to part-time regularly make one (or more) of the following three mistakes, and it will ultimately cost them dearly:

1. Temporary v permanent

You agreed to go part-time for a year. You get to the end of the year and can't wait to get back on a full-time wage, but the employer says, 'we don't have a full-time role for you next year'. You dig out the emails and there is nothing that clearly says that you have a right to return to your full-time role – ever!

2. Fixed-term contract

You ask to go part-time. The principal says 'OK, here's your new contract'. You sign and it all goes well. Until November when the principal says they don't need you next year. You check that contract, and it says 'fixed-term'. The employer **cannot** make you accept a fixed-term contract to go part-

time, but if you sign a fixed-term contract – that's it. You agreed to give up your right to ongoing employment.

3. Later changes to hours and days

When you agree to go part-time, you will normally agree to specific days and hours. The problem is that the employer retains a right (under certain conditions) to change your days and hours. Full-timers' hours are fixed and permanent, but part-timers' hours can be changed. If you are going part-time just for a year or two, make sure you agree to the days and hours and fix them for the whole period of the part-time work, otherwise you might find your hours being cut even further, or that you are

being rostered on days you can't work. If you are going part-time permanently, be aware that you are now vulnerable to reduced hours and changes to your days and hours.

Who can go part-time?

Whether you can go part-time will normally come down to whether you have a valid reason. Here are the usual reasons:

Just because

Anyone can go part-time if their employer will agree to it. Just be sure to properly record in writing **exactly** what the agreement is. Is it permanent or temporary? If it's permanent, it should be recorded as a variation to your ongoing contract. If it's temporary it should be recorded

as such with a clear statement of what is to happen at the end of the agreed period. Normally you will return to your substantive full-time position unless a further agreement is reached. In any case, you should ensure that the agreement is put in writing but never sign a new contract or anything that says your employment is 'fixed-term' when converting to part-time.

Returning from parental leave

Parents have certain rights to temporarily go part-time. Section 65 of the *Fair Work Act* confers a 'right to request' flexible working arrangements (which includes going part-time). However, like most of the conservative federal government's legislation, it's

Union Winter Internships

Over the winter break, the IEU hosted two student teacher members as part of the paid Union Winter internship program.



The program runs bi-annually through the Victorian Trades Hall and allows young workers to immerse themselves in the world of unionism. It is an awesome opportunity for young people to contribute to building the union movement in Victoria, and to develop their campaigning and activist skills.

This round we recruited interns straight from the AEU/IEU student-activist network and found four passionate student teachers to be placed with the two education unions and work together on a joint project about student member engagement.

Meet our future generation of unionists as they reflect on the internship:

Lana – Melbourne University studying a Masters of Secondary Teaching

Union Winter was Lana's first real experience of unionism, after she recently moved to Australia after years of travel and a wide range of working experiences. Her application showed a strong correlation between the values of teachers and those of activists. Lana has fully embraced the union movement and since become very active in the student activist network: attending meetings and sharing her passion with other student teachers at Melbourne Uni.

Q. Unionism means to me...

A. A community that collaborates to improve and fight for working rights and conditions.

Q. Some of the things I did as an intern ...

A. I was very involved in a group project to create, plan, and organise a proposal to increase the connections between the unions and student members. I also participated in a conference, and had the opportunity to attend, and support a strike.

Q. My proudest achievement...

A. I feel I built knowledge about the unions, leading to increased confidence talking about unionism, and its importance, with my peers. This newly discovered activist assurance makes me feel proud to continue and pursue advocacy.

Q. The best part of the program...

A. The fact that I got to experience a week at each union, seeing the differences between the systems. I feel fortunate to have spoken with so many people at the union, sharing a broad view of the unions.

Q. Things that happened and how they impacted me... (can be small or big)

A. The overall experience has changed my vision of activism, developed my knowledge of unionism, and strengthened my values. I feel so glad I had the opportunity to be a part of this internship, and I have met incredible people I will love to remain in contact with ongoing.

Charlie – ACU studying a Bachelor of Primary Teaching

Charlie has been a dedicated member of the student-activist network since the beginning of 2020 and had already participated in our activist training prior to the internship. He possesses great leadership qualities and will no doubt

make an excellent teacher. He continues to do important work building our connection with ACU students and is even developing an IEU student member newsletter.

Q. Unionism means to me...

A. Workers gathering together to use their collective power to shape their workplace and the world.

Q. The best part of the program was...

A. Talking to the passionate workers at the unions. I found their experience super valuable.

Q. The most fun I had was ...

A. The Geelong Regional Libraries walk-off was a great experience. To see a group of workers from all different walks of life band together, get active and fight for better conditions was inspiring.

Q. My goals at the completion of the internship are...

A. I want to get more involved in the education space at ACU. Continue to be active in the Union movement whilst I do my degree and when I start my teaching career at the completion of my studies.

Q. An area I wish I had the chance to explore further...

A. I would have liked the experience to talk/meet members either through graduate calls or workplace visits.

Q. The biggest challenge currently facing young people in the workforce is...

A. The main challenge faced by young people in the workforce is exploitation. Young people are particularly vulnerable because we often do not have enough experience to know what is normal or acceptable in the workplace. While this leaves young workers vulnerable, unions can provide a platform for young

people to connect with other workers to understand their rights. When many workers do this, they can unite to change workplace conditions and culture.

Q. Anything else you would like to share

A. Just a big thank you, I acknowledge and appreciate how much effort goes into organising this program for us.

Charlie and Lana worked closely with the AEU interns, John and Thy, who also spent a week at the IEU and worked collaboratively on the project about student member engagement. Thanks to all who participated!

If you're a student member and would like to get more active with your union, you can join our student-activist network. We hold regular activist training, social and educational events. Scan the QR code to join the mailing list!



practically useless to employees because the employer can just say 'no' and there is nothing you, the Fair Work Commission or the courts can do about it.

Most union-negotiated Enterprise Agreements have much stronger provisions that confer some rights and a mechanism to resolve disputes. For example, the Agreements in Victorian and Tasmanian Catholic Education set out how to engage in a 'return to work part-time agreement'. These are quite detailed, so speak to your union rep when you are planning to return from parental leave.

The Victorian Government has quite strong Equal Opportunity legislation that makes it a penalizable breach for an employer to 'fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your responsibilities as a parent or carer'. The Union took a Catholic primary school to VCAT because

it said it didn't like teachers job-sharing. We argued the policy was discriminatory because most part-time teachers are women. The school was forced to write to us confirming that it had abandoned the policy and would permit job-sharing.

Parent or carer, or you have a disability, injury, or illness

Again, there are various rights for people with children (other than return from parental leave), carers, and people with disabilities (including temporary disabilities) under various instruments.

Section 65 of the *Fair Work Act* applies to people with kids at school age or below, people required to care for a member of their family or household, and people with a disability but, as described above, it's virtually useless.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity legislation (discussed above) is quite strong and gives rights to anyone with kids under 18,

people required to care for any other person (not just family/household), and anyone with a disability (which can include illness or injury). It is a penalizable breach for an employer to fail to make 'reasonable adjustments' for you, which could include allowing you to go part-time. Whether your request to go part-time is reasonable or not will depend on both your needs and the employer's needs.

Transition to retirement

The *Fair Work Act* confers a right to request flexibility to anyone over the age of 55 but is unenforceable. Union-negotiated Enterprise Agreements are increasingly providing a right to go part-time as part of 'transitioning to retirement'. A good example is Clause 41 of the Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Employer Agreement 2018 which provides that employers can only refuse a request to

go part-time as a transition to retirement on reasonable grounds, and provides a bunch of protections to employees as well as a procedure to enforce it.

How to do it

Step One: Speak to your Union organiser. It might seem like a straightforward thing that you should just be able to sort out with your manager/principal. **Warning!** There are many traps and various rights under various instruments. It's important to ensure that that your request is in the right form and advanced under the most favourable legislation or Enterprise Agreement.

Step Two: Carefully formulate your request and put it in writing. If you can be flexible about your hours and days, make sure you say so, because then any refusal is more likely to be 'unreasonable'.

Step Three: Carefully document any agreed part-time arrangement. Make sure you have

clear agreement on your new days and hours before you sign off on it. If it is temporary, make sure it specifies the period and is clear what is to happen at the end of the period. If you want to lock in the hours and days, make sure this is very clear otherwise the employer may be able to further reduce (or increase) your hours or muck around with your days and hours of attendance. Don't sign a new contract.

Step Four: If there is no agreement, speak to your Union Organiser about your options to push the request more firmly: the Union has had many successful outcomes through a variety of disputes and claims.

Student Conference exposes the needs of young teachers

Event organisers know better than most how the global pandemic has changed the world.

While many of us wait through lockdowns and faltering vaccination programs curious about what the world will look like on the far side of COVID-19, some events are giving us a glimpse of the future.

After July's successful Online Student Teacher Conference, almost a third of participants said they'd prefer future conferences to be run exclusively online. Equally, about a third preferred face-to-face participation and a quarter wanted a hybrid model. Older readers keen for the end of the Zoom era might marvel at these numbers, but younger activists and potential unionists have clearly embraced communications technology.

The conference, a collaboration between the IEU and the AEU, was run online to safeguard it from lockdowns but also to eliminate the need to travel, especially for those who live regionally. This policy ensured bigger numbers for the event. The Conferences are run twice yearly to provide young unionists with knowledge and tools which help them become teachers.

'The Conference allows IEU and AEU student members to come together and network, learn about the union and become more aware of the supports we offer, both those they can access now as a student member and into the future when they enter the profession,' says IEU Project Officer Irina Hochwald-Jones.

Feedback from these Conferences are monitored carefully by Irina and IEU Early Career Teacher Officer Jacqui Scott, with such data informing future engagement.

The most obvious takeaway from that feedback was that young Australian teachers are desperate for indigenous issues to be central to education.

The session *Decolonising the Classroom*, run by keynote speaker Al Fricker, was very popular.

Typical of comments was: 'I loved Al Fricker's speech and his emphasis on using

indigenous pedagogies in the classroom always, not just for indigenous topics'.

Another said their key insight from the conference was to 'connect with quality Aboriginal community resources and incorporate two-way learning for all'.

Though all sessions met with favourable responses, *Decolonising the Classroom* was the most popular, with over 70% of participants rating it '5 out of 5'.

The session aimed to give attendees not just invaluable knowledge but also 'practical steps to ensure equitable learning environments for children'.

'The success of Al Fricker's session demonstrates that young people have a deep interest in issues relating to social justice and equity. It is important that we utilise this interest to illuminate the role of unions in achieving social equity.'

Overall, 91% of participants rated the entire event at least 4 out of 5, with 54% rating it 5 out of 5. Numbers were similar for how relevant the teachers-in-waiting found the content: 88% rated it at least 4 out of 5. The positive feedback is not surprising, given the preparation put into such events, specifically designed to meet the needs of prospective teachers.

The session on Unions, 'Industry & Employment', imparted important union history and wins, explored how the National Employment Standards, Awards and Enterprise Agreements operate and showcased the role of unions in shaping employment conditions in education.

Students also learned the specifics of pay and other entitlements they can expect to encounter and how collective strength creates strong working conditions.

The Q&A panel enabled student members to ask principals, union reps and industrial officers questions relating to their future employment. This feeds into the second event later this year, which will focus on becoming job ready and features sessions on CV writing, interview

skills, principal panels, addressing key selection criteria, and VIT.

Students also learned the specifics of pay and other entitlements they can expect to encounter and how collective strength creates strong working conditions.

There's a fine line between information overload and providing essentials. Attendees have varying levels of prior knowledge and diverse backgrounds and analyse the education of educators to fill gaps in knowledge. The content, medium and level of detail is carefully tailored to provide information that is 'relevant, accessible and engaging'.

But not only is this an opportunity for the students, it is crucial that the IEU has a presence with younger people entering the teaching profession, many of whom know little of unions and their benefits.

Notable amongst the feedback: 'Being in either union is probably a good idea'; 'Unions are great!'; and 'I know my rights better and what AEU/IEU membership could help me do'.

Even amongst those who prefer to participate online, 'Zoom fatigue' is a reality and future events may feature 'blended modes of delivery', preserving the benefits of online conferences while also providing student members with a genuine networking opportunity.

Irina and Jacqui say many young people don't see how unions fit into the rapidly changing world of work and so



we must adapt our messages and service provision accordingly.

'We need to listen and respond to the real material needs and concerns of young people, while showing them how the union is their ultimate tool in building a better world.'

The IEU offers free student membership and makes several presentations to universities each year at no cost. More details can be found at: ieuvictas.org.au/student-members

GRADUATE DIARY

Remote Learning Blues

In the last edition we heard about the confronting start to Cassandra's teaching journey. In this instalment, here comes COVID.

My heart sank as those dreaded words were uttered by the Premier... We're going into lockdown, again! The experience of being a first-year teacher in Victoria in 2021 has been challenging to say the least. Just when you think, 'I've got this', you're getting your teeth into the curriculum, you're starting to see some

growth in your students, and you're making headway with behaviour through routine and setting clear expectations... BAM!

The students are remote learning again.

My experience of teaching through remote learning has been challenging, as I am sure it has been for the majority

of teachers. It's difficult to get students to engage in the content, and when you do get them to engage, the work that the majority submit is well below the standard of what they would complete in the classroom. It leaves me having to re-teach content once students return to school, essentially rendering the time spent in remote learning lost. In

Student teachers reveal their COVID-19 struggles

The Victorian Government advice remains: If you can study from home, you should continue to study from home. But what does this mean for our pre-service teachers?

Are they getting quality education and enough placement experience to equip them for the classroom?

We reached out to our student teacher members to find out how their studies have been impacted since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out early last year.

Many preservice teachers (PSTs) reported that their degree has been completely moved online since the outbreak in March 2020. It seems that some universities were planning a return to on-campus learning this semester, but those plans were disrupted with the most recent lockdown in Victoria. For some Master of Teaching students, this means that almost the entirety of their teaching degree has been conducted online.

Last year the VIT made concessions for PSTs, lowering the requirement for a minimum number of professional experience days to 45 days for anyone graduating in 2020 or 2021. Previously it was 80 days for undergraduate degrees and 60 days for postgraduates.

Student teachers appear to be having different experiences with professional placement, some reporting they have had slight hiccups but have managed to complete some placement on-site, while others have suffered significant disruption throughout.

'All my placements, including my last one, have been affected by the lockdown and have been partially or wholly online.'

'My final placement was supposed to start in the last lockdown, then I had re-scheduled with my school over the next few weeks, so it is now postponed again. My primary school for placement sends home learning packs and do not do online classes. They are re-using materials from last year. So, I am already behind by 2 weeks. Will need to try and catch up again.'

'...a community engagement placement was cancelled, and I can't help thinking I will regret not getting the experience.'

Many student-teachers rely on work outside of their studies to get by financially. With much of this work being casual or otherwise precarious, the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have had detrimental impacts for some. While many PSTs found the COVID supplement support payments a relief, they have not received consistent financial support.

'I'm really lucky that I work at a school (learning support) already so have promptly moved online. However, this wasn't the case in lockdown 3 earlier in the year and I lost hundreds of dollars.'

'Work has been severely diminished.'

'It was tough when these payments finished, and subsequent lockdowns meant I could not do casual work. Obviously, this creates financial stress and now means I take whatever shifts I can while things are open because I am worried, we might lock down again and my income will disappear.'

On a more positive note, one student reported that their university provided additional support payments to international students who could prove financial hardship, as well as weekly frozen meal packages for four months for students who were struggling. Universities have also been promoting free counselling and academic support programs.

All PSTs we spoke to expressed difficulty in maintaining motivation, focus and confidence due to the changes wrought by the pandemic. Some talked about experiencing isolation and felt they missed out on friendships and extra-curricular activities, while others spoke of the difficulties studying in their home environments and from the assumption that they had access to the technology required to study online.

'Last year and even last semester, it felt very lonely, it's like we're all in the same boat but all alone doing it.'

'Your life becomes about what you can



do at home. In some ways I am grateful I had something meaningful (Uni) to pass my time. It is however hard to stay motivated when the human element is taken out of the experience and everyday has the exact same routine. Online learning makes it only about the learning and makes it hard to make meaningful connections, get involved in student events and programs. For me, this meant that most of the human interactions I got were through a computer screen. This is not a motivating way to learn or teach.'

'I have three housemates and we all study, so we're basically all studying together in the living room of the house, which is nice but as soon as someone has to talk or participate on Zoom it becomes an issue.'

'I have definitely struggled with maintaining my focus with all that's going on in the world. It's a bit terrifying and at times I haven't coped well with that. Some classes work really well online; however, I've had others where they had no classes, no lectures and minimal contact to the university. It was hard to stay motivated and I found the learning experience to be considerably worse. Online learning itself I don't mind but to not even have tutes or lectures sucked. On the other hand, I feel like I've had classes go the other way and overload you with a bit too much.'

We really must commend these PSTs for their commitment and perseverance - they will no doubt make adaptable and resilient teachers. When asked how they felt about entering the classroom, they gave mixed opinions.

'I feel ok about entering the classroom but the changes from online to in person and back in schools are disconcerting as a pre-service teacher.'

'I am concerned the upon entering the workforce, it will be abundantly clear that I have had limited experience with behaviour management in person teaching. That's not something you can

practice the same in online spaces.'

'I'm actually feeling pretty confident because there's been so many challenges that I've had to solve all by myself! It's a bit scary for sure but I'm really excited.'

The IEU offers free membership to all student teachers. To join the IEU as a student member scan the QR code or email jscott@ieuvictas.org.au



an already overcrowded curriculum the weeks lost are crucial, yet there is no way to get them back, and a choice must be made. Do we teach them less of everything to cover the content, or do we leave some content out to make up for the time lost? It's a lose/lose situation in my opinion.

Looking beyond lockdowns and disrupted routines, coming into my third

term of teaching I have been feeling more confident. The process of writing my first round of reports allowed me to take a moment to appreciate the growth in my students. It has been exciting to share students' successes with them and with their parents and carers. I am starting to feel like I might be doing some things right.

As I start to feel more positive about

my role as a teacher, as I start to feel more comfortable as a part of my school community and form stronger relationships with my colleagues, in the back of my mind the end of the school year is fast approaching. I now have to consider, as do a lot of graduates, that my initial one-year contract will be coming to an end, and with it, the school's obligation to keep me

on. So, just as we are settling into our new careers and feel like we are finding our feet, we have no real sense of job security past the end of Term 4.

The Learning Hub: Don't miss this vital resource

In partnership with the Teacher Learning Network, the IEU offers a comprehensive professional development webinar program.

Our free member-only webinars are offered live or on-demand and cover a huge range of topics.

Members have responded strongly to the programs as vital tools to improve their teaching skills and manage their careers, as evidenced by the following testimonials:

'The Learning Hub provides an excellent range of Professional Learning courses that I can actively participate in or view on demand. The presenters are engaging and well-credentialed educators, who share current research outcomes and provide practical strategies, tips, and advice that I can incorporate into my teaching practice. The sessions continue to give me fresh insights both personally and professionally.'

'The professional development provided by the IEU is varied and provides a wide range of topics to enhance student learning and teacher knowledge. Many of the sessions have challenged my thinking and have broadened my understandings. The sessions dealing with challenging behaviours and those addressing students with ASD and learning difficulties provided practical and informative advice.'

'The convenience of being able to access the presentations, particularly during periods of lockdown has been invaluable and has enabled me to accrue the professional learning hours for my VIT registration. Feedback from the participants during the sessions is also very beneficial. I am very grateful to be able to access the Learning Hub.'

Selina Fisk is an example of the high calibre of presenter the Learning Hub attracts. She is presenting the *PD Webinar - Using Data to Improve Feedback to Students* on Wednesday 20 October.

Selina has 16 years of teaching experience in Queensland and England and following the completion of her doctoral thesis in 2017, she started her school data consultancy practice, Aasha for Schools. As a speaker and facilitator, Selina works with schools, leaders, and regions to develop data-informed strategies for schools, leadership teams and teachers.

She's published two books on how schools and teachers can use data better. In an era where teachers are swamped by data and record-keeping, this is a topic of keen interest.

Selina was recognised as an ACEL 'New Voice' Scholar in Educational Leadership Research in 2019.

She is committed to maximising student voice, focusing on positive psychology, and developing well-calibrated mindsets in young people.

Her current coaching work focuses on using data to guide and track student and school improvement and wellbeing.

Other upcoming Learning Hub highlights include the PD webinars *Teaching Strategies and Resources to Support Students with Dyslexia, Mental Awareness in your School* and *Responding to Expressions of Toxic Masculinity in Schools*.

Check out what's coming up at the Learning Hub page on the IEU website, at: ieuvictas.org.au/ieu-learning-hub

Hitting the ground running

Last term we launched the IEU Early Career Teacher Support Huddle program and hosted several online events for teachers in their first few years in the profession.

All early career teachers, union members as well as non-members, are welcome to attend these meetings, as we understand some teachers new to the industry may not yet have had the opportunity to join the union.

Our aim is to meaningfully support early career teachers through the exciting chapter of starting a career as an educator. Union is about building community through collective strength, shared commitment, and empowerment at all stages of your working life. The support huddles are directed and shaped by the needs of teachers like you – involvement from our early career teacher members is of paramount value to us and your peers. We make sure there is plenty of time at each meeting for open discussion, a Q & A session and to share our experiences (good and bad).

You asked, we delivered

In Term 2 our early career teacher members identified the areas of their career that they most needed information and support in. Based on this, the support huddles covered topics like 'Your Career, Your Union', 'Pay, conditions and entitlements', 'Report writing' and 'Handling difficult conversations at work'. Where necessary, we brought in experienced teachers, IEU delegates, and Organisers to present and answer your questions on the spot.

At the end of term, we sent around a survey to participants. Here's what they had to say about the program:

- *'The huddles provided me with practical ways of dealing with real life situations.'*
- *'I feel I now know about a variety*

of different rights etc. that protect me in the workplace, mostly because of our union!'

- *'Now I know there are a lot of grad teachers who are in the same boat as me. I should reach out to the IEU or a colleague for help/suggestion whenever needed.'*
- *'The IEU are pretty supportive.'*
- *'The huddles covered excellent and relevant topics. It was great to have guest speakers. ... The PowerPoint slides provided after the huddle have been good when I couldn't attend.'*
- *'I really appreciate the work the Early Career Teacher team at the IEU are doing. Keep it up!'*

Next up: Live Q & A with VIT (moving from provisional to full registration)

Join your fellow early career teachers for our first IEU Support Huddle of Term 3! We're covering the VIT process of becoming a fully registered teacher and will be joined by guest presenter Linda Blakis from the provisional registration team at the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Linda will give an in-depth presentation covering all the steps to move from provisional to full registration, including the inquiry process and what kind of support you should be receiving. We will then open the discussion to allow questions to be put to Linda, IEU Organisers, or to each other.

Who can join?

Provisionally registered teachers working in the Catholic/independent sector (both union members and non-members)

When?

5:00 - 6:30pm
Thursday 26 August 2021

Where?

Online - you will receive a Zoom link via email.

Register now by scanning the QR code or email Jacqui Scott at jscott@ieuvictas.org.au



Building Positive Behaviour midyear CRT Conference

Robert Burns once famously said: 'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men. Gang aft a-gley'. Or to translate, the best laid plans of mice and men can still go wrong.

What was so wrong about the midyear CRT Conference? Only that COVID-19 upset

the plans for casual relief teachers to finally have a face-to-face learning and networking experience. That aside, the online conference itself was brilliant!

The conference was designed based on the feedback from previous conference participants, to incorporate the following presentations via keynote speaker:

- Rapport Building – strategies for building this in the classroom. An

interactive session giving participants the opportunity to experience rapport building activities.

- Restorative Practices – an extremely popular topic when presented in other forums but hasn't been presented at CRT Conferences.
- A horizon scan of current behaviour programs. We recognise that schools adopt different methods to create their school culture around behaviour, including Positive Education, Special Learning Units that cater for students with social

and emotional difficulties, Flexi Schools, and curriculum programs to respond to disengagement.

Let's stay positive and know that we will meet in person again soon! Check our revamped website at ieuvictas.org.au/all-events-training for the next CRT Conference. In the meantime, check out Learning Hub at the website. Our free, member-only webinars are offered live or on-demand and cover a huge range of relevant topics.

Learning and teaching in the shadow of a mental health crisis



Simone Biles. Liz Cambage. Naomi Osaka. Tom Dumoulin. This is just a short roll call of current Olympic champion athletes who have publicly identified as having mental health issues that required them to take time out to regroup and seek support.

The public profile of these athletes makes it so much easier for those of us in education who are responding to mental health issues every day. It helps us to promote the conversations we need to have in our staff rooms and classrooms.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the mental health issues that our community experiences. Some athletes have cited COVID-19, and the consequent lack of crowds, access to support staff and the isolation they are feeling as triggers in their mental health issues. As teachers and educators, we have been at the forefront of supporting our students and their families through the pandemic and the many lockdowns. We understand the impact of isolation on people. We have permission, like at no other time in the past, to open the space for conversations about mental health and about our need as teachers and educators to increase our knowledge about mental health.

Let me say from the outset, that no one expects teachers and educators to be psychologists or counsellors. Our own education profession calls on us for so much; we do not want to be stepping into the sphere of other professionals. However, as teachers and educators, we do have a responsibility to consider the mental health of our students. The words of Dr Simon Crisp (www.neopsychology.com.au) are still very clear 10 years after they were written:

'Schools are one of the major socialising influences in a child's life. Schools hold great potential to create a social and emotional environment which can foster and promote healthy psychological and social development. Indeed, educational success and healthy psychological development are interdependent and self-reinforcing. Simply put: Happy kids learn better, and unhappy kids struggle to learn. If only from the point of view

of educational success, it is part of a school's core business to support and facilitate psychological health as well as respond effectively and promptly to the psychological problems of students.'

(*TLN Journal Vol. 18 Nos. 2 Equal in Dignity and Rights: Mental Health in Education, 2011*)

We are challenged by Dr Crisp to think about our response in three steps:

1. Prevention – mitigate risk factors such as effective bullying policies and practices.
2. Intervention – policy and procedures and adequately staffed services that can respond to students identified as high-risk or in crisis, including wellbeing policies and processes, and adequate resourcing of and for counsellors.
3. Postvention – appropriate procedures to reduce the impact of traumatic or stressful events, like the death of a student, or contagion from the mental health issue of another student.

What underpins these three steps is professional development for teachers and educators in schools and early childhood settings. Schools, school systems and early childhood providers need to invest in their staff to ensure that they can engage in professional conversations that will lead to effective prevention strategies.

Teachers and educators need training in intervention strategies, increasingly referred to as mental health first aid. Teachers and educators need to have time to develop practices that promote safe spaces for students with mental health issues. Take for example some of the terrific work that has been done in recent years by Berry Street and similar organisations to promote an understanding of trauma aware teaching (see *TLN Journal Vol.*

26 No.2 Trauma-Aware Teaching, 2019). There is an opportunity for teachers and educators to be community leaders on this critical issue.

The critical role of teachers and educators in Victoria in improving community mental health was recognised by *The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System*. Recommendation 17 of that report is about supporting social and emotional wellbeing in schools.

The Royal Commission recommends that the Victorian Government:

1. fund evidence-informed initiatives to help schools support students' mental health and wellbeing. This will include anti-stigma and anti-bullying programs.
2. make a digital platform that contains a list of these initiatives.
3. develop a fund to support schools to choose the best initiatives for them. This will be based on School Readiness Funding for kindergartens. Priority will be given to schools in rural and regional areas.

Funding will be provided by the Victorian Government over time to develop initiatives, but as with all scarce resources, the education sector will need to lobby for the funding to meet this recommendation. This is an opportunity for your IEU sub-branch to meet and make a collective commitment to lobby your local member of parliament (state and federal) for more resources to support schools to respond to mental health.

The Royal Commission recommendations (<https://finalreport.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/download-report/>) also provide a great opportunity for an English class, a Health and Human Development class, or even a Pastoral Care group to take up the challenge of writing to politicians and education authorities to keep up the pressure to implement the recommendations.

Even without the weight of a Royal

Commission, Tasmanian IEU members can meet and commit to the same lobbying actions of state and federal representatives. There is room for improvement in the mental health system in every state.

The IEU Victoria Tasmania, through its Learning Hub, has committed to bringing practical professional development support to members. Three courses are listed for second semester:

- SIEU2123: trauma-aware teaching (with Berry Street) Wednesday 25 August
- SIEU2126: mental health awareness in your school Wednesday 25 August
- SIEU2129: building quality relationships with colleagues Wednesday 20 October (* these course will also be available as online recordings)

The COVID-19 crisis has demanded much from the Australian community and as teachers and educators we have been called on to be leaders in our community. The last reminder in this article is to look after your own mental health and to look after the mental health of your colleagues. As IEU members we are not isolated. We belong to a group of like-minded teachers and educators who we can work with to keep improving systems in our schools and early childhood spaces. We need spaces where resilience is fostered and supported, and it becomes the natural thing to do to seek out support for our mental health.

Michael Victory
Teacher Learning Network
mvictory@tln.org.au

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEBINAR SERIES SEMESTER 2 HIGHLIGHTS

FOR WEBINAR DESCRIPTIONS
AND REGISTRATION:

www.ieuvictas.org.au/webinars

WEDNESDAY 25 AUGUST	WEDNESDAY 25 AUGUST	WEDNESDAY 25 AUGUST	TUESDAY 31 AUGUST	WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER	WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER	WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER
Trauma aware teaching	Mental health awareness in your school	Getting a class back on track (secondary focus)	The Safe Schools' program and the support it offers teachers	Conversations on teacher appraisal that lead to improved performance	Strategic change management using Michael Fullen as your guide	Applying for a leadership position - writing the cover letter and the application
4:30pm to 5:30pm W/ Brendan Bailey	6:00pm to 7:00pm W/ Bernadette Sheedy	7:30pm to 8:30pm W/ David Vinegrad	5:00pm to 6:00pm W/ TBA	10:00am to 11:30am W/ TBA	10:30am to 12:00pm W/ Noel Dillon	12:00pm to 1:30pm W/ David Tyson

LABOUR HISTORY

Fifty years since the first ever Green Ban

Flinders Street Station. Queen Victoria Market. Melbourne City Baths. Abbotsford Convent. The Royal Botanic Gardens. The Regent Theatre. Princess Theatre. What do all these significant Melbourne landmarks have in common?



They still stand today because unionised construction workers standing in solidarity with community groups prevented them being demolished by greedy property developers.

Unions are always focused on secure employment, higher wages and better working conditions. But history shows organised workers can also achieve outcomes beyond the workplace which have far-reaching impacts on society.

In 1971 this was demonstrated when unionised workers withdrew their labour and formed a coalition with community groups to impose the first-ever Green Ban to prevent unethical attacks on the natural environment and community spaces.

The New South Wales branch of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) under the leadership of respected unionist and communist Jack Munday wielded immense power during the 1970s because of high member density and a democratised structure that ensured members' voices were heard.

In 1968 Munday said, 'it is no point winning great wages and conditions if the world we build chokes us to death', a simple yet important message that

underpinned the ethos of Green Bans.

So, when 600 middle-class resident activists in a wealthy area of Sydney's outer suburb Hunters Hill called on the BLF to support their campaign to prevent Kelly's Bush Park from destruction, they found an unlikely alliance with the working-class members of the BLF. The workers refused to provide their labour to the developers, and, with the support of the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association, the Building Workers Industrial Union and over 600 residents, the bushland was saved from being bulldozed for units or townhouses.

When the developers threatened to proceed without union labour, the BLF announced it would issue a stop-work order on the construction of a North Sydney office block owned by the developers.

The developers backed down.

Fifty years on from this first Green Ban, Kelly's Bush Park remains intact.

After this initial success, the BLF deployed Green Bans in support of a range of community-led campaigns that had lasting impacts on the social, cultural, and economic fabric of Sydney, then Melbourne and other Australian cities.

Over two years, more than forty

Green Bans were imposed in coalition with feminists and anti-apartheid, indigenous and gay activists, saving low-income housing, green spaces, and heritage buildings.

But history shows organised workers can also achieve outcomes beyond the workplace which have far-reaching impacts on society.

Green Bans had a significant impact on environmental legislation, town planning and public attitudes, ensuring more socially responsive and ecologically responsible developments. Never again would the people affected by developments be ignored.

The use of the Green Ban tactic is regaining interest amongst today's unionists. In Sydney, the Maritime Union of Australia, and the Construction

Union (CFMEU) have formed a coalition with local community groups to save the historic site of Willow Grove in Parramatta, which is under threat of demolition by the NSW government to make way for the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum.

A victory at Willow Grove can be a reinvigorating step for unionists, reminding hearts and minds that we can fight for causes not limited to pay and conditions.

And with our planet on the brink of environmental collapse, the expansive possibilities organised workers can achieve are more important than ever.



REP PROFILE

Marching into the fire

What's it like becoming a Rep at a school after your union was instrumental in it being penalised with a massive fine?

New rep Stacey Hector, an IEU member since 1999, has been teaching at the Australian International Academy (AIA) for seven years. In 2016, the Federal Court ruled that AIA had 'employed too many teachers on fixed-term contracts and falsified paperwork during IEU investigations'. AIA was fined \$150,000 plus \$290,000 in legal costs for nine contraventions of the Fair Work Act. Federal Court Justice, Christopher Jessup, described the school's practice as 'calculated deception'.

So, all in all, a daunting environment in which to be a unionist!

Stacey confirms that gaining leverage for the IEU at AIA was 'challenging'. There was minimal union presence and no rep until she stepped up. The first sub-branch meeting was not held until June this year.

'After the dispute was resolved there was a lot of anti-union talk from management. No pay rise? Blame the union; they fined us. No shiny new buildings? Blame the union... So, there is a group of staff at the school who have been there awhile and see the union in a negative light.'

She says it was 'unique' for the school to have a union rep. Even before the dispute, 'not many people identified as union'.

'Union meetings have been furtive whispers in the staffroom kitchen or in classrooms during breaks. Nobody really knew who else was in the union and it was almost seen as a shameful thing. I was one of the few union members who was happy to announce themselves as union. That is changing though, which is fantastic.'

Membership is rising and the relationship with the school is

improving to the point where it has approached the IEU to negotiate its EBA.

'So, it's about changing perceptions around unions not just being for the individual but for the collective. Luckily, last year the union was able to help with some very unfair demands during remote learning and many staff members are beginning to see the benefit of union membership.'

Stacey's first job was at Port Pirie in the mid-north of SA in the 1990s, where she was won over to unionism by a successful campaign for better conditions and pay rises.

After moving to Melbourne in there was a 'natural progression' from enthusiast to rep.

'I'd managed to get a few people to join and staff members had already been asking me about the union and what it does, and I had been happy to explain how

membership works and directing them to the website. I decided to take it on because really I'd been more or less doing the job in an unofficial capacity for a while.'

Stacey appreciates the difficulties facing people who went through the turmoil of the AIA dispute.

'I've had conversations with a few people who had been at the school during the dispute. I don't try to force the union or the ideas on to them. I listen to their concerns and acknowledge that, yes, being a union member didn't actually help the person in the way they had hoped.'

'Then, I move on to the changes that have come into effect like the changing of the contracts. I also talk about the concept of the union as a collective working for everyone.'

'At the end of the day, I can't make someone become part of

the union, but I can listen to their concerns and remind them that union membership is always an option if they want their concerns addressed. I've also been talking to them about the EBA and what that means moving forward.'

Stacey's attitude to unionism is straightforward.

'I've always enjoyed being part of something bigger than myself and now I get the chance to talk more openly about it.'

Celebrating the 10th birthday of the IEU Victoria Tasmania *(continued from front page)*

There had been 'overwhelmingly positive' feedback from members about the merger in both states.

Deb says current IEU staffers Dino Ottavi and Tracey Connolly worked for IEU Tasmania prior to the merger and played key roles in making it work.

One of the first Tasmanian stories in *The Point* discussed the Sacred Heart School at Geeveston, often cut off by rain, floods, ice, and snow. The 'genius idea' of principal Stuart Kelly to reduce travel on dangerous wet, dark roads?

A radical new high technology called Skype.

Tasmania was years ahead of the remote learning curve!

2014: Protests and Progress

Tasmanian (and Victorian) members also made front-page news in 2014, rugging up for rallies in the chilly winter streets of Launceston, Hobart, and Burnie, after becoming frustrated by a breakdown in negotiations for a new Agreement.

'Eighteen months since the Tasmanian Catholic Agreement expired. Twenty-seven bargaining meetings with the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO). Three rallies. Hundreds of angry, fed up IEU members,' *The Point* reported.

The actions were taken to exert pressure on the TCEO to 'come back to the bargaining table with a fair and reasonable offer'. The Agreement had expired in 2012 and bargaining came unstuck around 'a small number of important claims' – support staff wages, instructional loads for teachers and redundancy.

The TCEO claimed they couldn't afford

to pay for these.

'Unfortunately for the TCEO, we've heard that all before and know it to be rubbish,' *The Point* stated. The TCEO had not produced a 'compelling financial argument to back up their assertions' and was about to receive a 26% rise in funding.

'IEU members in Tasmanian Catholic education can be proud of the strong turnout for these unprecedented and historic stop-work actions. Catholic employer representatives now know that we are fed up, but we won't give up.'

The late Barry Nas was among speakers at the rallies and Roz Richardson, a teacher assistant shared her thoughts in print, saying she'd had no job security in her 16-year career and her qualifications and skills had never been recognised or rewarded.

In August 2014, the new union held its first 24 hour stop-work action, involving hundreds of workers, 'an outstanding collegial outcome'. The TCEO had not moved at all on the three important issues. They had tried to bypass the union to put an Agreement directly to staff.

The campaign continued throughout 2014, with *The Point* urging Tasmanians to stay strong and vote no to the TCEO 'Agreement' sent out in October.

Loretta Cotter, then IEU Victoria Tasmania Deputy Secretary, said Tasmanian members had an 'unprecedented opportunity to bring home to their employer the reality of their working lives'.

'The TCEO's refusal to guarantee secure employment for the lowest-paid staff in schools has outraged members and non-members alike...'

The TCEO's non-Union Agreement

was 'comprehensively demolished' by November. Despite threats of job cuts, a video campaign, the use of 'ghost' employees in vote counts, and the spread of misleading information, of the 1429 valid votes cast, 1095 voted NO.

On 1 December 2014, while the Catholic negotiations continued, over 350 teachers from 30 Tasmanian independent schools, previously covered by the Tasmanian Independent School Teacher's Association (TISTA), also joined the IEU Victoria Tasmania.

2015: Triumph

By April 2015, an in-principle agreement had been reached with the Catholic employers and in May member's votes provided an overwhelming endorsement of the union-negotiated deal, with 97% support. Deb James hailed it as a 'just and fair outcome delivering a raft of improvements for all classifications of employees'.

Looking back, Deb says the bargaining efforts of Loretta Cotter and Denis Matson (Senior Industrial Officer) were essential. The Agreement would never have been achieved without their efforts.

She also hailed 'the hard work and commitment of members and sub-branch reps who refused to back down until a fair and decent outcome could be achieved'.

Those members wrote letters, signed petitions, marched through the streets, and voted NO to the employer Agreement. It was a win for unity.

The new Agreement was a 'total restructure and rewrite'. It included 40 changes from the 2009 Agreement and

significant improvements for every member and all groups of employees. *The Point* said it was a story of 'solidarity and collectivism prevailing over the employer's initial unwillingness to improve salaries and conditions for their staff'.

To this day, the IEU fights hard for members across Tasmania, with another round of bargaining looming as the Agreement expires.

Kim Merhulik, former TISTA member and now an IEU Committee of Management member representing Tasmania, says it is 'refreshing' that the amalgamated union supports all staff, not just teachers. Her experience of the IEU has been broadened by forums, conferences, Mayday marches and even pub quizzes. She calls the 10-year anniversary 'momentous'.

Tasmanian Council President John Waldock backed the amalgamation in 2011 and he still does.

'The amalgamation with Victoria was the best thing for our members then and it remains so now. Tasmanian members receive a higher level of support and service as a member of IEU Victoria Tasmania.

'We look forward to continued growth and success over the next ten years.'

Nothing beats getting together

Reps play an important role within the IEU as the main point of connection between members and 'the office'.

They are even more crucial when we find ourselves living and working through a global pandemic.

We are committed to supporting Reps in their role through one-on-one support from their IEU Organisers, support huddles, information sessions and especially the formal Rep Training program.

There is a powerful feeling in the room whenever IEU Reps come together to talk about their work, share their experiences and learn together. We are very pleased to hear from Reps that this has been their experience even when 'the room' has been on Zoom during online training over recent months.

One recent participant told us Rep Training was 'the best online training they'd ever done'. While we are delighted by the positive feedback, we are continually looking for new ways to make our programs as engaging, energising and interactive and balanced as possible. This includes scheduling a one-hour break for lunch to encourage Reps to step away and enjoy a coffee in the sun or a walk to get to know colleagues.

Rep Training is designed to focus on skill development, rather than workplace specific knowledge, which provides the opportunity to have Reps from across our membership participate in training together. The added benefit of our new online Rep Training capacity has been the increased participation of Reps from across regional Victoria and Tasmania.

We've been trialling a program that alternates between traditional in-the-room experiences and online training, but current restrictions based on health advice kept the 10 August program entirely online. Most Reps have an entitlement to at least one day of paid Rep Training per year so we look forward to seeing you at training.

Stronger together.

In Term 3, the Experienced Rep session is on 20 August. Book via Member Access at ieuvictas.org.au

VTHC First Nations Union Caucus

The inaugural meeting of the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) First Nations Union Caucus took place on 7 July.

Courtney Theseira is our proud IEU representative on the caucus and spoke very highly of the experience and the unfolding opportunities that new group provides for First Nations Peoples.

Courtney said of the many key take-outs from the meeting, she found communication is central to enacting change in this space. It's vital to communicate with the Land Councils in the area you operate in, and to set up networks and spaces which ensure ideas get shared.

She said the caucus was engaging and gave true opportunity for everyone to talk about specific issues affecting them as workers. It put into perspective the issues experienced by First Nations workers across different types of workplaces.

IEU First Nations members are asked to watch this space, as Courtney reaches out to you with opportunities to become involved in talks, meet-ups and discussions around your issues.

Courtney will reach out to members who have self-identified as a First Nations Person with us. We are reliant on members updating their Member Access details if they wish to receive these communications. Please contact the IEU office if you would like to do this but are unsure of how to update details online.



CAREER CORNER

Getting a job in COVID times

The past 18 months have been challenging enough for those in secure employment, never mind people on contracts or working as casuals.

It has fundamentally changed the way casuals go about securing more stable employment and has impacted people seeking a change of role or workplace.

Casual employees

Arguably, none in the education sector have been more affected by COVID than long-term casual staff in RTOs that have closed and CRTs in schools. Work evaporated overnight, with many RTOs closing their doors temporarily or permanently. Similarly, CRTs have reported a sharp drop in available hours as teachers take fewer sick days, school camps and excursions get cancelled and schools feel able to cover staff absences better. So how should a CRT obtain work?

Firstly, the Victorian Government tutor scheme is still running and has offered a lifeline to many CRTs. See the vic.gov website for more details.

Alternatively, there are many families

who are seeking private tutors for their children who have struggled with remote learning. It could be time to put a notice up in your local café or supermarket. Perhaps reach out to your networks asking if they know of any families seeking a tutor. Finally, use those same networks to get an early heads-up about upcoming job opportunities in schools nearby.

It doesn't have to be your ideal job at this point, just something with a bit more certainty (read 'income') than waiting for the phone to ring each morning. As it is not a time to be fussy, you could also explore the option of taking on a teacher assistant role in a classroom, or a short-term admin vacancy, or a combination of admin/assistant/CRT. What school wouldn't jump at such flexibility!

Finally, there will be those tempted to undertake professional development with a view to upskilling and expanding their employability. As tempting as this is, remember that many courses

are fee-based, will require some time and commitment to study and will not guarantee you a job upon completion. You might be better off applying yourself to networking and job-hunting, even if it means going outside your comfort zone and spruiking your employability with second-degree contacts.

Fixed-term contract employees

In brief, your task is to get your contract extended by whatever means!

Currently, schools have a surplus of funds due to the cost-savings from repeated lockdowns. They are not spending on utilities, camps, excursions, sport facilities, concerts, and performances. Now more than ever ensure you are indispensable, whatever you do: faculty, co-curricular, duties, meetings.

Make sure you are known to be a reliable, risk-free, dependable, competent, and confident employee with a can-do

attitude. If you feel you've already been doing this, then it's an opportune time to make a formal appointment with school leadership and explicitly state your case for a contract extension.

While this could be construed as a pride-swallowing exercise, given the circumstances however, it is a case of whatever pays the bills and keeps you out of the Centrelink queues.

Bear in mind that many staff have deferred their long service leave from 2020 and 2021 and wish to use it in 2022 for a much-needed break. People are still having babies, getting sick and retiring, so there will be ample opportunities within school communities who would prefer to employ someone already known to their students and parents rather than advertise.

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Get the best offers from brands such as JB HiFi, HCF, The Good Guys, Freedom Furniture, Target, Priceline, Woolworths and Coles.

Your IEU membership provides discounts on:



Movie tickets



Insurance



Electrical and whitegoods



Petrol and groceries



Gift cards



Accommodation



Automotive



Promotion or change of employer

The latter point about short-term opportunities applies equally if you are seeking a promotion or new school. Even a new career! The IEU has received many enquiries from members who want to confirm their notice periods ahead of retiring because the past two years have been so tough. Due to the on/off nature of lockdowns and various other restrictions, such as external people not being permitted on-site, you must be ready for all eventualities.

How prepared are you for an interview via Zoom or Teams? What's your camera like? What is in the background? What will you wear?

The format and content of the interview should not differ from an in-person affair, but of course it is harder to read social cues and

body language online, so research to mitigate those deficiencies, sell your strengths appropriately and ensure you come across as confident and capable.

Ultimately, there is the usual balance of opportunity and challenge ahead for anyone wanting to change their circumstances. So, the usual advice applies: Surround yourself with good people and seek proper support from organisations and qualified and experienced professionals in your network.

Support Staff are standing up and being counted

A safe and healthy workplace should be free of behaviour which could victimise, humiliate, undermine, or threaten another person.

What can you do if you're being physically harassed, provided with meaningless or degrading tasks, can hear hurtful or rude comments, or fear abuse from parents on a weekly or daily basis? You still want to work at the school because you love working with the students, but what can you do?

In one Victorian independent school, three Education Support Staff volunteered to form an IEU sub-branch committee to ensure that their colleagues have access to union support and advice.

This school does not have an Agreement, and whilst teachers achieved wage parity with Victorian Government Schools over the years, support staff are still paid at Award rates. There's also angst about rates of pay due to issues with accounting software.

This school needs strong representation as staff are rocked

by turmoil and dissatisfaction with leadership right through the ranks and the parent body. Staff across the board are experiencing many symptoms of mental health injuries.

The positive in all of this is that many of the casually employed learning support staff have now been placed on contract. Also, IEU membership has increased dramatically, with ES density outnumbering teaching staff.

And there is hope! Discussions between sub-branch members have spawned a collective, strategic approach. To establish baseline data, the IEU is in the process of conducting a wellbeing survey which will accurately pinpoint where changes will have the greatest impact. Our three new activists are engendering solidarity amongst staff, and a vision for improvement.

This action is in its infancy, but we will update you with this school's journey.

DELIVERING FOR OUR MEMBERS

To create a brighter future...

NGS Super's Diversified (MySuper) default option delivered a strong **17.34%*** return for the 2020/21 financial year.

At NGS, our core purpose is to provide the best possible retirement outcome for our members. We can't predict the future, but we do our best to create a brighter one.

And because we're a profit-for-members fund, you can be assured that we're working in your best interests.

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Behind the Whiteboard

At the time of writing the scribes of BTW were, like you, back in lockdown (...thanks Gladys!) We remembered how to do it; we remembered the sense of solidarity we felt with our fellow workers; we remembered that it would end... eventually.



Even though we were in isolation and hunched over our laptops at home, the flow of stories from your worlds of work kept coming in – well done! We here in The Bunker love it when you keep us well fed with your stories of wonder and amazement via btw@ieuvictas.org.au

It happened again...!

Yes, dear reader, it happened again. Recently a story filtered to our ears through the P2 masks of members about a poorly-written contract. An independent school claimed that the salary figures recorded in the contract (unfortunately signed by the members before they contacted their union) were an accurate reflection of the verbal conversation some weeks beforehand. They weren't! On top of that, the school claimed that superannuation payments were a part of the total annual salary amount, not on top of it! Moral of the story? Get your contracts/letters of appointment checked by your Organiser **before** you sign them... simple really!

The school that cried wolf?

Here's a familiar story (unfortunately) in these trying financial times... a very large and obviously wealthy metropolitan independent school applied to the Fair Work Commission in November to overturn the 3% increase to salaries enshrined in their current Enterprise Agreement. They claimed a 'significant shortfall' in fee revenue. Then in April they announced a 3% bonus for all staff. Great, we hear you exclaim, except with a one-off 'bonus' there is no associated increase in superannuation payments, LSL payment accrual isn't increased, there is no leave-loading paid on a bonus, nor will future increases take it into account. Bargaining for a new Agreement is taking place at the school this year. Undoubtedly,

employees will remember that the school crying poor was akin to the boy who cried wolf - not to be trusted.

Not a silent witness

There are three things all of us live by as unionists... always get it in writing, never sign anything without getting it checked first, and never attend a meeting on your own. On the last of these three, school 'leaders' often ask staff to 'come for a quick chat' in their office and if the staff member agrees, they turn up at the appointed time only to find a room full of the boss' flunkies and the meeting is revealed to be about a much more serious matter. No warning, no agenda, no preparation time. Always take someone with you if you are asked into an office for a quick chat. The best person to take is your Organiser and the time it takes to arrange for them to attend with you is a good thing as it allows you (and your Organiser) to prepare, and you won't be ambushed. Your Organiser is not a silent witness in these situations – they can speak on your behalf, advocate for your rights, and generally protect you against the bully-boy tactics too many bosses want to use. Call your Organiser early!

Big Brother is (sometimes) watching...

It has recently come to the attention of the BTW scribes that several members have noticed *irregularities* with their work email accounts. One member told us that an 'out of office' automatic reply they had written for a period of approved extended leave was changed to say something other than what they had originally written. Work email addresses are just that, work addresses and as such they are the 'property' of your employer. Curious or unscrupulous employers out there won't

be averse to 'checking' on their networks whenever they feel the need.

Just be careful, dear reader, you never know who is listening/reading and your private correspondence might not actually be private. Remember also that access to work email addresses can be removed by the employer, either during or at the end of employment – so keep a back-up of anything you want to keep!

Moral: Use a personal email address for personal mail.

There are three things all of us live by as unionists... always get it in writing, never sign anything without getting it checked first, and never attend a meeting on your own.

Another practice which we in The Bunker are becoming aware of is text messaging between staff and/or leadership. Unlike emails, these exchanges are not recorded on any network, so if there is a dispute, the records are not always accessible.

In a similar vein is the issue of 'school apps' on privately owned mobile devices. At one school, when members resigned, the school removed downloaded school apps/programs from the members' own phones, which lead to the members losing their own data (photos, etc). There was no malice intended by the school, but it did create issues which weren't

able to be remedied as the members had 'accepted' the terms of the arrangement.

Beyond this, we've seen a concerning increase in issues arising from personal laptops or devices syncing with school networks – in some cases, this results in a personal browsing history being visible to the employer. It doesn't take an enormous stretch of the imagination to realise that this could be potentially embarrassing.

The general advice for all is not to use your own devices for work purposes. If your employer requires you to use a device, they should provide it!

This term, thanks must go to The Teskey Brothers (apparently the BTW scribes must listen to them on a semi-regular basis as it helps with their concentration) and to Taj Mahal – that grand master of electric blues. Don't forget, your Organiser is only a phone call (1800 622 889 / 03 9254 1860) or email (info@ieuvictas.org.au) away and there is (almost) nothing they won't talk to you about... especially if it's to tell them about how union solidarity and collective action won the day in your workplace!

IEU WOMEN

United despite isolation

Term 3 did not begin in quite the way we might have hoped and once again IEU women were dealing with everything involved lockdowns and remote learning.

The latest lockdown, and the COVID pandemic more broadly, highlight the inequalities that continue to be a reality for most women and the work that needs to be done to address this.

SAFE RESPECTED EQUAL CAMPAIGN

The Victorian Trades Hall Women's team are organizing a new campaign, Organise for Equality. The campaign was due to be launched at the Women's Rights at Work Conference (WRAW CON) on Friday 16 July which turned out to be the first day

of lockdown #5! Hopefully the WRAW CON is postponed not cancelled and we will be able to gather later in the year. In the meantime, the campaign has begun with a series of half-hour Zoom organising meetings to start winning changes for working women. You can find out more here: unionwomen.org.au/wraw_con21

Join the Organise for Equality Campaign to fight for working women to be safe, respected and equal. You can get started by coming along to an online organising meeting: weareunion.typeform.com/to/uqBnNowk

All women deserve to be safe, respected, and equal in the places we work. But we know that too often women's work is not recognised, respected, or valued. Working women have spoken out about the issues facing them and we know these are issues that resonate with our members:

- gender pay inequality
- feeling unsafe at work
- retiring with less superannuation than our male counterparts
- experiencing negative effects on our employment and career prospects because of taking parental leave.

Make more (money) from your IEU membership

There are advantages to being a member of the IEU that go beyond your job. Union membership can also improve your bottom line.



Union Shopper is a 100% union-owned organisation that provides members and their families with great deals on a large range of products and services from many of Australia's best brands.

And best of all - it's free!

Union Shopper has been around for over 35 years and uses the united bargaining power of large membership numbers to secure the best possible savings.

You know Union Shopper is on your side - any profits it makes are used to improve the service for members. Electrical goods are a Union Shopper specialty, with hundreds of thousands of members saving on anything with a plug. But you can also save precious dollars on motor vehicles, rental cars, cameras, computers, travel, accommodation, entertainment, wine, gift cards, jewellery, insurance, and health products.

You can potentially save thousands of dollars on your everyday purchases each year. More than enough to offset your union membership fees.

Registered Union Shoppers members receive:

- Easy login access to our Members Only area online
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- Limited-time subscriber-only specials.

You can sign up at:

unionshopper.com.au/sign-up

Teachers Health is a not-for-profit health insurance fund exclusively available to education union members and their families. As a not-for-profit health fund and Australia's largest industry-based health fund, Teachers Health exist for their members. It was created by teachers for teachers over 65 years ago and now covers the lives of over

360,000 teachers, education staff and their families.

Teachers Health gives members access to:

- A not-for-profit health fund
- Great value health insurance
- A range of quality products and services
- Generous benefits
- Fast, efficient claiming options
- An easy switching process
- Access to travel and general insurance.

Teachers Health owns and operates a Health Centre in inner Melbourne offering optical and dental services including no-gap check-ups, and big discounts on procedures and eyewear for members.

Eligible members also have no-cost access to quality, evidence-based health management programs and services, including access to health professionals such as registered nurses, a diabetes educator, a dietitian, and exercise physiologist.

As a not-for-profit health fund, we also give back to the education community through sponsorships, scholarships and health and wellbeing programs.

Teachers Health has an industry leading retention rate of over 96% and keeps management expenses below the industry average. Its business Development Officers visited over 1,900 schools and education workplaces across the country last year.

Compare Teachers Health to other insurance providers at: teachershealth.com.au/compare

Bank First is a bank owned by its customers, and abides by the 10-point Customer Owned Banking Code of Practice. It exists to financially empower people to realise their dreams – not to make money for shareholders.

Created in 1972 by 48 educators who'd grown disenchanted with the way

many Australians were treated by the big banks, Bank First made its first loan to a single mother for a bond to acquire housing for herself and her two children. It still places a value on what people do for the community, not simply by how much money they make. It honours its founding values by supporting education through events, sponsorships, grants and professional development support.

The bank has a focus on putting customers first. If you're unsure about how to achieve your financial goals, Bank First's Financial Planning services can help assess your financial health and help you manage your everyday expenses and debts.

Bank First exists because of its customers, so they're out to empower you to make the best financial decisions. All IEU members are welcome to take advantage of the wide range of services available.

To find out more call **1300 654 822** or visit bankfirst.com.au

Member Advantage is your one-stop online destination for the best discounts on everyday essentials like groceries, dining, travel, insurance, and entertainment.

Tasmania IEU organiser Jeremy Oliver lays it out simply.

'One of the reasons many people use for not joining the union is that they can't afford it, but what if you could join the IEU for free? There is an easy way to do it that not enough of our members are accessing. The first step is to visit the IEU website and go to the 'Your Membership' link at the top of our new web page. This will then take you to the 'Member Advantage' site.

'Once you are logged in you can choose a variety of gift cards from shops such as Coles, Woolworths, JB Hi-Fi, BWS, Dan Murphy's and Priceline. These discounts range from 4% to 10% and when used regularly can save you heaps

over a year. For example, if you have a big family and a weekly grocery spend of \$300, you can purchase an eGift card through Member Advantage for only \$288, a saving of \$12 per week.

'This eGift card can then be linked to the Woolworths Money App and spent at the shop in the same way that you would use a debit card. Over a whole year, this represents a saving of \$624. Using a range of other cards could easily increase this savings to \$1000 for each year that you are a member of the IEU. This is easily more than every membership category with the union (even before tax deductions are taken into consideration).'

Member's Advantage's members-only exclusive deals help you save big on household staples from home through a virtual 24/7 store. And you get to purchase essential products and services without having to compare prices on different websites (they do all that research for you).

Member's Advantage finds you the best deals, notifies you of them, and offers a convenient online shopping experience. It helps you save throughout the year, not just during traditional sales periods like Boxing Day or EOFY, alerting you to the biggest bargains on everything from HD televisions and fuel vouchers to sports equipment and whitegoods.

Jeremy says if you combine Member's Advantage savings with discounts with Teachers Health and Bank First and the question is not whether you can afford to be in the union, but whether you can afford not to be!

The 'Safe, Respected, Equal' campaign will organise to:

- change workplaces: get more women in leadership positions, get more women health and safety reps
- change the system – talk to local and federal MPs
- change the conversation – talk to our networks, use social media to change the way we and others talk about our issues. We will build our reach, our power, and our skills.

IEU BOLD PROGRAM

The Build Our Leadership Development (BOLD) Program continues to engage with IEU women who have been identified as union activists and leaders in our schools across the country. The webinar program

has moved to Zoom allowing for greater engagement and participation. This term the focus has been on support staff working in schools. Our NSW/ACT sisters are campaigning for an improved classification structure and more equitable pay for their support staff members in Catholic schools. They were able to draw on the experience of members in other states through a BOLD webinar in early August.

If you are an activist in your school and interested in learning more about the BOLD program, contact Therese O'Loughlin at toloughlin@ieuvictas.org.au or speak to your Organiser.

REPRODUCTIVE LEAVE

We continue to put a gender lens over the Enterprise Agreements that cover staff

working in our schools. This connects with the 'Safe, Respected, Equal' campaign (see above). An important part is a push for a clause in Agreements that provides for reproductive health and wellbeing leave. This leave recognizes the special needs that can be connected to fertility and sexuality, and that these do not constitute illnesses. The claim removes the taboo and replaces it with an entitlement, thus removing some of the stigma around reproductive issues that can hamper women's progress.

SOLIDARITY TO OUR INTERSTATE SISTERS

Finally, a special message of solidarity to our interstate sisters who are experiencing lockdowns and remote learning. We know how hard it is to deal with everything

that is asked of us at times like these. As women we are often the ones who bear the brunt of the juggle of work, family, and caring commitments, and when this is all happening in the confines of our homes it can be tough. We encourage you all to connect with those you know who may be going through this and share your experiences of what worked to help you through.

You take care of others, let us take care of you.

To all the educators and healthcare professionals who work tirelessly to make a difference – we're here to help you.



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Comparison Rate²

[Q Bank First Home Loans](#)

Interest rate effective 1 July 2021. Credit criteria applies. 1. Annual fee of \$390 applies. 2. Comparison rate calculated on a secured loan amount of \$150,000 for a term of 25 years. WARNING: This comparison rate is true only for the example given and may not include all fees and charges. Different terms, fees and other loan amounts might result in a different comparison rate. Fees & charges apply. T&Cs available upon request. Victoria Teachers Limited. ABN 44 087 651 769. AFSL/Australian Credit Licence Number 240 960.

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NATIONAL UNION ROUNDUP

Workers across industries wield their power

Across Australia workers have been taking industrial action to fight for higher wages and better conditions, and some victories have been achieved.

Recently unionised bookstore employees with the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU) have secured a historic victory in the retail sector after taking industrial action that was a year in the making. Employees at Better Read Than Dead in Sydney went on strike demanding an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. Such an action is rarely seen from retail workers, according to RAFFWU secretary Josh Cullinan.

The strike action came after negotiations with the employers at the bookstore stagnated and the bosses imposed a lockout. Contrary to the notion that online retailers like Amazon have killed 'bricks and mortar' bookshops, many independent bookstores have flourished as community spaces for literary events and for the personalised experience that comes with the expert knowledge of the bookworm staff.

Set in the progressive and hip neighbourhood of Newtown, Better Read Than Dead promotes an inclusive and left-leaning image, but betrayed this image by failing to provide their workers with adequate pay and conditions. A militant campaign run by the unionised workers galvanised community support and led to a victory in which employees won provisions including permanent jobs

for casual staff, redundancy rights, full restoration of penalty rates for Sunday work, paid domestic leave, and health and safety provisions.

The overall conditions won are far superior to almost any other retail setting and could have ripple effects for many other workers.

The ripples have already been felt in Melbourne, where employees at Readings bookstores have also been part of a huge organising effort to unionise through RAFFWU. Over 50% of members voted to negotiate an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and the negotiation process is set to begin. Fresh off the victory of their comrades at Better Read Than Dead, their victory will surely inspire and motivate them in their efforts to secure higher wages and conditions.

The pages keep turning in the story of unionised workers fighting for their rights in the world of letters. In Geelong, library workers represented by the Australian Services Union have been taking part in industrial action in a dispute over pay, safety and security. A stop-work rally was held by union members at Geelong Regional Libraries where they were joined by supporters from the community and other unions.

Staff at public libraries across Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula and

the Surf Coast are among the lowest paid workers in their industry across the state, despite their libraries being recognised as some of the best in Victoria. Staff frustration has been further brewing due to their safety concerns being continuously ignored, with union members demanding a minimum of two people working at any one time, and a permanent security presence at the main library. Further industrial action by ASU members is set to take place in late August.

McCain workers at Smithton in Tasmania have had a crucial win in their ongoing dispute over pay and conditions. Unionised workers with the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) were locked out by their employers before taking any industrial action in an aggressive move that has been contested by the AMWU in the Fair Work Commission (FWC). The FWC heard the union's appeal and found that the lockout was unlawful. This is a crucial win, not just for our members at McCain, but for all workers. AMWU National Secretary Steve Murphy says, 'The AMWU has managed to protect what little 'right to strike' workers still have. We are responsible for defending it and most importantly, we have to improve it.'



INTERNATIONAL ROUNDUP

In **South Africa**, The Department of Basic Education in South Africa and five education unions have launched a COVID-19 vaccination programme for teachers. The unions have combined to share information, promote the prioritised vaccine rollout for educators and counter misinformation. Education International (EI) reports that in October 2020, South Africa and India proposed to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) a temporary waiver of intellectual property rights to enable additional production of badly needed vaccines in developing countries. Although some of the richest nations pledged to help, commitments remain far short of meeting needs. 'The pandemic has accentuated worldwide inequalities, including in education. The inequitable access to vaccines will prolong this injustice, put education staff in danger, and deny the full right to education to millions of students,' said EI General Secretary, David Edwards.

In **Myanmar**, 4,800 miners have been on strike in Monywa township since the February military coup. Maung Maung, the president of the Confederation of Trade Unions in Myanmar (CTUM) said: 'The miners' strike has effectively cut off part of the military regime's revenue. I urge the international community to support the struggle of the 4,800 brave miners. Their resistance is very much dependent on undivided international solidarity.' Valter Sanches, the general secretary of global union IndustriALL, said: 'We commend the bravery of the sisters and brothers from CTUM and will continue to mobilize international solidarity until the Burmese people restore democracy in the country.' IndustriALL has called on multinational companies and brands to ensure respect for human and labour rights in their supply chains in Myanmar, mobilising IndustriALL members to contribute to a global strike fund and working with other global unions to challenge the legitimacy of the military regime at the International Labour Organization.

In **Canada**, the Customs and Immigration Union which represents about 9,000 Canadian Border Service Agency employees has voted in favour of striking as soon as 6 August, three days before fully vaccinated U.S. citizens will be able to visit Canada without having to quarantine for two weeks. The union and employers have been unable to agree on a contract since 2017, with the union negotiating for protections against excessive discipline and harassment, whistle-blowing protections, and remote work provisions. The government had planned to open the country's borders to travellers from other countries who are fully vaccinated on 7 September. The dispute could disrupt mail, the collection of duties and taxes, and the flow of goods, services, and people into Canada.

Globally, over 200 union organisations from 67 countries have called for the World Trade Organisation to be fundamentally transformed, saying: the WTO's own policies have caused its existential crisis, which the COVID-19 crisis only amplified. 'As we predicted back in 1995, the WTO has functioned to establish rules for the world economy that mainly benefit large transnational corporations at the expense of national and local economies, workers, farmers and indigenous peoples, our health and safety, and the environment. Without a labour protection floor, a race to the bottom has repressed wage growth and increased precarious work. The climate, biodiversity, and poverty crises have been ignored; the needed solutions constrained by 'trade' rules. So has the documented rise in inequality within and between nations, as governments have been stripped of essential tools to pursue the wellbeing of their peoples and address the negative impacts of hyper-globalisation.'

Environmental Ed: Get the kids into nature!

Contact with blue-green spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown is beneficial for mental health.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children across our state have needed to stay home for long periods and have often been isolated from friends and extended family. Lockdowns around the world have been associated with a deterioration of mental health, including post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, anger and anxiety.

Whilst we are all concerned with access to learning for our students and limiting the possibility of them falling behind when engaging in remote learning, it is important to have a focus on maintaining their mental health. This is where Education for Sustainability is key!

Growing evidence suggests that exposure to natural environments is associated with mental health benefits. A 2014 study found that people who move to greener urban areas experience sustained improvements in their mental health. Another study conducted this year found exposure to nature is associated with better mental

health outcomes during lockdowns. Engaging with a blue-green space can help lower stress and reduce depression and anxiety.

However, since not everyone can pack up and move to greener pastures, we need to remember the sites at our disposal. A student's own garden or backyard, neighbourhood parks and gardens, national parks and other open spaces can assist children maintain a connection to the natural world.

There are some brilliant resources for teachers and parents to help encourage this kind of connection to nature for our students.

- Environment Education Victoria – *The Blue Sky Classroom* has creative ideas to get students of all ages outdoors connecting with the natural environment. eev.vic.edu.au/resources/education
- Government website *Head to Health* suggests resources with ideas as simple as getting students caring for a potted plant in their room. headtohealth.gov.au/meaningful-

life/connectedness/environment

- *Cool Australia* has lessons, materials and dedicated sections on their website for educators, students and parents.

coolaustralia.org/

Developing curriculum to build engagement with nature should be part of the planning for future lockdown measures and can mitigate the negative impacts of isolation. Getting connected to nature can help maintain better mental health, and we only need to use what our natural environment provides us.

Resources:

- ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4204431/
- ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8162907/
- pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33277006/

COMING UP AT THE IEU

AUGUST

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 **WARRNAMBOOL AND DISTRICT IEU DRINKS**
- 5 **LEARNING HUB WEBINAR**
- 6
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- 11 **LEARNING HUB WEBINAR X 3**
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- 13
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- 19 **VICTORIAN COUNCIL UNIONS TASMANIA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**
- 20 **EXPERIENCED REP TRAINING**
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- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25 **LEARNING HUB WEBINAR X 3**
- 26 **EARLY CAREER TEACHER SUPPORT HUDDLE**
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30 **EXTENSION REP TRAINING**
- 31 **LEARNING HUB WEBINAR**

EVENTS AND TRAINING
UPDATED REGULARLY.

SEPTEMBER

- 1 **National Health and Physical Education Day
Indigenous Literacy Day**
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 **Father's Day**
- 6 **IEU PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GIPPSLAND TOUR**
- 7 **IEU PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GIPPSLAND TOUR**
- 8
- 9
- 10 **World Suicide Prevention Day**
- 11
- 12
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- 14 **IEU PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ONLINE**
- 15
- 16
- 17 **Victoria Term 3 Ends**
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- 19
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- 24 **AFL Grand Final Public Holiday (Victoria)**
- 25 **Tasmania Term 3 Ends**
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29 **LEARNING HUB WEBINARS X 5**
- 30

OCTOBER

- 1 **Burnie Show (Tasmania)**
- 2
- 3
- 4 **Victoria Term 4 Begins**
- 5
- 6
- 7 **Royal Launceston Show**
- 8
- 9
- 10 **World Mental Health Day**
- 11 **PRINCIPAL'S COUNCIL CONFERENCE**
- 12 **PRINCIPAL'S COUNCIL CONFERENCE Tasmania Term 4 Begins**
- 13 **HSR INITIAL OHS TRAINING COURSE (1/5)**
- 14 **HSR INITIAL OHS TRAINING COURSE (2/5)
HSR INITIAL OHS TRAINING COURSE (3/5)
Flinders Island Show (Tasmania)**
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19 **INITIAL REP TRAINING**
- 20 **LEARNING HUB WEBINARS X 3**
- 21 **HSR INITIAL OHS TRAINING COURSE (4/5)**
- 22 **HSR INITIAL OHS TRAINING COURSE (5/5)**
- 23
- 24
- 25
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- 27 **HSR REFRESHER OHS TRAINING COURSE - WORK RELATED STRESS**
- 28
- 29
- 30
- 31

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR
FURTHER INFORMATION.

NOVEMBER

- 1 **Recreation Day (Tasmania)**
- 2 **Melbourne Cup**
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- 10 **EXPERIENCED REP TRAINING**
- 11 **Remembrance Day**
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- 26 **Devonport Show (Tasmania)**
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