



independent education
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In Focus

Chanel Contos

Meet the woman behind the Teach Us Consent campaign

The professional voice of the Independent Education Union of Australia

Uluru Statement from the Heart

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. *This is the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle*. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

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Cover image: Teach Us Consent campaign founder Chanel Contos at the National Press Club, Canberra, 1 November 2023. AAP Image/Mick Tsikas

Editorial

Author and campaigner Chanel Contos, the woman behind the 2021 Teach Us Consent petition that led to major change in the Australian Curriculum, says unionising allows people who don't traditionally hold significant power in their daily experiences to band together. Contos emphasises the power of strength in numbers in our profile (p6), where she also talks about her time at school, her quest to end gendered violence and her new book.

Power is a theme in this edition. Our feature on Closing the Gap in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (p10) about the importance of sharing power so solutions are informed by local Aboriginal teachers and the communities whose children are being taught.

Meet electrician and member of the Electrical Trades Union Raven Maris (p20), who also knows a thing or two about power – the electrical kind. She highlights the need for more women to take up a trade for a lasting qualification and job security, particularly as Australia looks toward a renewable energy future.

Elsewhere, we examine the power of diversity, as a teacher who lives with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder shares her experiences and the importance of embracing neurodiversity in schools as a strength (p24).

Then there's union power. Not only does the IEU have state and territory branches, we have a federal union that advocates for your industrial rights, advances your professional interests and campaigns for fairer laws in the federal arena. Meet the people who represent you in parliamentary inquiries, on taskforces and in working groups on education policy (p18).

We also consider the power of libraries in reconciliation (p12), online influence in the classroom (p22), the emotional load of leadership (p34), and educators uniting across the Pacific region (p15).

We hope you enjoy this powerful edition.

Carol Matthews Secretary

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch

Correction – and call for volunteers

In “How learning endures in Ukraine” in the previous edition of *IE*, we stated a retired member is teaching students in Ukraine via Zoom through a program administered by Monash University. In fact, this program is a collaboration between Classrooms Without Walls and Smart Osvita, with the Monash Virtual School providing support.

The program is seeking volunteers to teach students in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Myanmar. If you'd like to volunteer, can find out more here: monash.edu/virtual-school/programs/international-program

Read the full feature: publications.ieu.asn.au/ie-217/articles3/how-learning-endures-ukraine/

AUS WIDE

Australian Capital Territory

Union takes Brindabella Christian College to task over super

The IEU took Brindabella Christian College to the Fair Work Commission on Friday 17 May over the school's handling of superannuation payments.

Brindabella had failed to pay super to staff from April 2023 to February 2024 and had already been required to pay compulsory super contributions to the Australian Taxation Office for disbursement to staff accounts.

However, the IEU had no evidence that salary-sacrificed amounts for 2023 had been paid – teachers who salary sacrificed 1% or more of their salary were also entitled to an extra 1% contribution from their employer under the multi-enterprise agreements for ACT Christian school staff.

After an unsuccessful attempt to have the matter postponed for two weeks, Brindabella said at the Fair Work Commission that unpaid salary-sacrificed super and additional contributions had now been paid, with a 10% interest penalty. The IEU is seeking evidence of these payments.

Brindabella has also given an undertaking, at the IEU's request, to pay super fortnightly from 1 July 2024 to ensure it is paid on time. The Fair Work Commission has kept the matter open for a report back on 19 June.

“Our members love working at Brindabella, and they've been very patient,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Deputy Secretary David Towson. “It's high time for Brindabella to make good on both their word and their legal obligations – and thereby restore confidence in the school's governance.”

New South Wales

Now's the time for pay rises in independent schools

The IEU is in bargaining meetings with the Association of Independent Schools in May and June for new multi-enterprise agreements for teachers and professional, administrative and operational staff.

Many independent schools now pay teachers less than NSW government schools and Catholic systemic schools, and others only just above.

The IEU is calling for employers to:

- restore the pay premium for teachers in independent schools (5% to 7%)
- provide a fair deal for professional, administrative and operational staff
- address teacher workloads
- improve paid parental leave in line with industry standards and pay super on paid parental leave
- guarantee fair processes for dispute resolution.

As *IE* went to press, organisers were visiting schools, holding meetings and returning motions to endorse the claim. Now's the time to stand together for real change.

Northern Territory

NT government accepts review recommendations

The Northern Territory government has accepted all the recommendations from a recent Review of Secondary Education in the Territory (the Review).

The NT government will move away from the current policy, set out through the Indigenous Education Strategy (2015-24), which relied on boarding as the primary means for students in remote and very remote communities to access senior secondary education, in favour of more choice of secondary education pathways for students and families.

Our union supports schooling opportunities in students' home communities and not requiring them to relocate to larger centres, outlined in our submission to a previous House of Representatives inquiry.

NT-based members have raised concerns regarding boarding schools, given low retention rates of students from rural and remote areas and significant problems arising upon return to home communities, including disengagement from education.

More information and key review findings: bit.ly/3JKDEPa

Queensland

School officers use powerful new provisions

Non-teaching staff in Queensland Catholic schools are making the most of important new provisions achieved during the recent round of collective bargaining. Staff will transition to the Alternative School Officer Classification Structure (ASOCS) during the operation of the agreement.

IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the new ASOCS reflects the nuances and complexities of working in a contemporary school environment. "The previous School Officer classification matrix was archaic, simplistic and failed to capture the realities of work in a modern school," Mr Burke said.

"It was based on a 30-year-old system which relied on an outdated School Officers Non-Government Schools Award and that in turn relied on a clerical and administrative award."

Our union will continue running workshops to assist school officer members in understanding the ASOCS so they can evaluate their own position descriptions to ensure they are appropriate and their positions are classified at the correct level.

To register: ieuqnt.org.au/events/

South Australia

Solidarity with non-teaching staff at Westminster School

In 2023, three schools from the independent education sector cut and ran from enterprise agreement negotiations in an attempt to push through EAs without the endorsement of the IEU(SA). Those attempts failed spectacularly.

Despite this, Westminster School has put an EA to the vote – a vote that the IEU refused to endorse. The union mounted a 'Vote No' campaign and staff overwhelmingly rejected the proposed EA by 137 to 51.

Despite salary offers of 12% across three years for teachers and school assistants, both groups rejected the offer because the school's current school assistant classification structure and accompanying salary schedule are inadequate.

Even with months of negotiations providing ample opportunity to address the issue, the employers simply reiterated their position: there were no issues with the classification structure and school assistants were being remunerated in line with peers in the industry.

We congratulate Westminster teachers for showing such solidarity with their non-teaching colleagues – and look forward to the employer returning to the bargaining table.

Tasmania

Industrial action on the cards

The IEU is considering industrial action after negotiations for a new enterprise bargaining agreement covering staff in Tasmanian Catholic schools dragged into May, two years after the log of claims was lodged.

Employer representatives still haven't matched measures delivered long ago in government schools, including payments for lower-income staff and improvements to salary progression for teachers without the full TRB registration.

Employers are still resisting union claims for workload parity for primary school teachers. In effect, they want full-time teachers to teach an extra hour a week, and for part-time teachers to earn 4.5% less an hour than their government school colleagues.

Employers are also persisting with unreasonable claims for the right to relocate employees and lengthen the school year.

And they've brought a new claim – the right to fill vacant positions using graduates from their own Thomas Aquinas teaching program without advertising these roles. This would mean that existing staff would not get a look-in on some job opportunities, and graduates from other teaching courses would be at an unfair disadvantage.

The IEU is now escalating its 'Two Years Too Long' campaign, after members turned out in force at events on the last day of Term 1 to demonstrate their frustration at the continued delay in reaching a deal.

Victoria

Member safety in our sights

The Victoria Tasmania Branch is making member safety in schools a key focus, having heard too many stories about the health and safety of staff being threatened or taken for granted.

The antiquated and dangerous attitude that abuse and harassment from students is 'part of the job' needs to be extinguished. It's time for potential dangers in schools to be assessed in the same way they are on a construction site – as urgent occupational, health and safety issues.

Dangerous student behaviour is a workplace hazard and must be assessed as such through properly maintained and disseminated behavioural management plans. Employers who ignore this are reminded that new psychosocial regulations coming into force to protect the wellbeing of workers require employers to take steps before dangerous incidents occur.

When staff who are the victims of threatening behaviour or physical violence end up on reportable conduct charges; when violence against staff is not met with immediate, firm action and made as important as the rights of children with serious behavioural issues; and when staff are improperly informed about what issues their students face because of flawed reporting systems – things need to change.

Western Australia

Holding employers to account

Term 2 is as busy as ever for the WA Branch. Earlier this year, the WA Catholic Teachers' Agreement was approved, but not without the IEU successfully arguing for some improvements in provisions for part-time teachers and the consultation clause.

Bargaining for Catholic school support staff has finally commenced. It's been nine years since the registration of their last agreement, and delays by the Catholic employers have not helped. The IEU bargaining team is pushing for long overdue improvements in conditions and classifications.

Meanwhile, bargaining continues with the Anglican Schools Commission. This is the second largest employer in the sector, covering 14 schools in WA. Unfortunately, the employer has committed to providing as little in the terms of the agreement as possible, preferring to deal with matters in policy rather than be held accountable through an enforceable agreement.

Here in WA, we intend to hold renegade employers to account and continue improving the working lives of members.



In Focus

Content warning: this article discusses themes including sexual assault and violence that may be distressing to some readers.

The woman behind the groundbreaking Teach Us Consent petition, Chanel Contos, talks to Emily Campbell about her experiences at school, acting collectively, and educational change to end gendered violence.

“Be ruthless with systems and kind with people”, are the words of wisdom that open Chanel Contos’s debut book, *Consent laid bare: Sex, entitlement & the distortion of desire*, published in September 2023.

Now in her mid-20s, Contos has already achieved so much, most notably spearheading the movement for mandatory consent and respectful relationships education in Australian schools through the Teach Us Consent campaign.

Contos was awarded the Australian Human Rights Commissions Young People’s Medal in 2021; is listed among the BBC’s annual ‘100 Women’ series of inspiring and influential women, and in 2023 was named NSW Young Woman of the Year. Contos’s dream is to become a school principal.

Attending Kambala

Kambala Church of England Girls’ School in Rose Bay overlooks picturesque Sydney Harbour and welcomes day and boarding students from preparation to Year 12.

Contos attended Kambala from Year 5 on, and has fond memories of her time there – particularly of late-night study sessions in the library with friends.

“Attending Kambala massively shaped me as a person – I had the best time at school and loved it,” Contos says.

“I met so many amazing friends who remain my friends today, and I had such a good year group who weren’t cliquey.”

Contos says the school staff at Kambala instilled confidence in its young women students and encouraged critical thinking, integrity and feminism.

“I feel like it was ingrained in us from a young age that we could be the best versions of ourselves in various ways,” she says.

“Ms [Jennifer] Crossman was our head of senior school, and she was instrumental in motivating us to be confident and to be feminists.

“When girls were presented with an award at a school assembly, she would make sure every girl went up on stage and shook her hand.

“At the time, it felt awkward and formal, but she said so many men walk into rooms and shake people’s hands, and we should also have the confidence to do that.

“I think even small things like that have gone a long way to helping me feel comfortable as I work in male-dominated spaces like politics.”

Dr Kate Narev and Mr Curtis are also among the memorable teachers who inspired and supported Contos during school. Dr Narev has gone on to work in the gender equality field.

“School is so important in shaping a person, which is why I spend so much time advocating for schools to improve their consent education, because it has the potential to change the whole culture of a country,” Contos says.

Teach Us Consent campaign

In 2021, while she was living and studying in London, Contos posted a poll on Instagram asking followers: “Have you or has anyone close to you ever been sexually assaulted by someone who went to an all-boys school in Sydney?”

Within 24 hours, 200 people had responded ‘yes’. Contos was shocked but not surprised by these responses.

The next day, she created a petition calling for holistic, earlier consent education for school students. The petition attracted 45,000 signatures.

Contos then launched *teachusconsent.com*, a platform through which victim-survivors could anonymously share their experiences. It has since received 6700 testimonials and submissions.

The Teach Us Consent petition and testimonies were presented to Members of Parliament throughout Australia, with Contos calling for age-appropriate consent education to be mandated in the national Australian Curriculum.

“It was obviously really devastating to read all those stories, but it also felt validating in a weird way because I knew that they existed,” Contos says.

“I found it heartwarming that people were willing to share their experiences with me and the public.”

Seismic shift in reporting sexual assault

Contos’s fierce advocacy sparked an ongoing national conversation about sex education in schools and shone a spotlight on the devastating consequences resulting from the lack of explicit teaching of consent.

Since the inception of Teach Us Consent, monumental changes have been made to the legal and education systems.

In March 2021, Contos helped NSW police launch Operation Vest, which provided an informal avenue for victim-survivors to report sexual assault.

This saw an unprecedented 54 per

cent month-on-month increase in the reporting of sexual assault in NSW, as reported on the Teach Us Consent website.

More recently, Contos’s unwavering advocacy has directly led to Queensland and South Australia passing laws to criminalise ‘stealthing’. This means removing a condom without consent, a form of sexual assault which is not widely known.

“Teach Us Consent’s mission is fundamentally about putting consent, empathy and respect at the heart of sex education,” Contos says.

“Petitions, protest and unionising allow people who don’t traditionally hold significant power in their own daily experiences to band together.”

Consent education in the curriculum

In April 2021, Teach Us Consent began work with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to update and incorporate consent education nationwide.

Shortly after, the Victorian government announced a statewide mandate of consent education, and the NSW and Queensland governments quickly followed suit.

Later that same year, Contos hosted a roundtable event to discuss the need for compulsory consent education on a national scale. The event was attended by politicians, influential human rights and education stakeholders, and young victim-survivors of sexual assault.

By February 2022, Contos had accomplished her goal. At a meeting of the Ministers of Education, Teach Us Consent was again presented to policymakers, who unanimously agreed to mandate consent education in the Australian Curriculum from 2023.

Collective power for change

Contos says the Teach Us Consent campaign’s success was made possible through people power, with tens of thousands of voices supporting the movement, along with the countless hours of volunteer support.

It’s one way Contos’s personal values

and work intersect with the union movement’s core values. “Collective action is so important because it is the fundamental way we redistribute power,” she says.

“By signing petitions, attending a walkout or protest and unionising, it allows people who don’t traditionally hold significant power in their own daily experiences to band together.

“Through strength in numbers, we can create policy changes that people want.”

In 2023, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard appointed Contos as Chair of the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership’s (GIWL) Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). This opportunity has given her valuable insights into how young people engage with politics and activism.

“The point of the YAC is to create a two-way relationship between young people and the research, policy and advocacy that GIWL does,” Contos says.

“We hosted a Youth Summit at the end of 2023, which was attended by a group of phenomenal young people with incredible experience across many fields.

“Traditionally, political engagement would’ve been thought of as running for a seat, whereas for young people, the way they engage with politics is much more about petitions and protests and collective action, which is interesting,” she says.

Education alters attitudes

In the years since Contos launched her petition, the need for high-quality consent and respectful relationships education is more pressing than ever.

“The rates of sexual violence and family and domestic violence in Australia are some of the most shameful issues for our country, because it is preventable and we haven’t managed to achieve that yet,” Contos says.

“Education is the largest transformative tool that we have, and we need all hands on deck, especially the education institutions that have so much power in creating culture and, therefore, norms.”

Contos says it is vital for all schools to do their part and she believes that there are many delivery models and approaches that could be impactful.

“My absolute ideal scenario would be an expert consent educator who would come into schools to deliver this content explicitly, but also that all teachers are adequately trained and equipped to have these conversations in an ongoing manner, even if not explicitly,” Contos says.

Contos says humanities subjects present numerous opportunities to teach students about respectful relationships and consent.

“For example, I always think that the History and English curriculums are some of the best ways to teach these topics in a non-sexual way,” she says.



Protesters at the March4Justice in Sydney, 2021, one of numerous rallies nationwide calling for better consent education and an end to gendered violence following Chanel Contos's Teach Us Consent petition and Brittany Higgins's allegations of assault in Parliament House.

"History – what a wonderful way to discuss power dynamics and evolving trends, gendered norms and expectations and changes in those."

"In Year 9, my English class studied Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* – we could have had a one-sentence explanation about the age gap between a 16-year-old and a 13-year-old, and discuss the power dynamics in that.

"We also studied *Atonement* [by Ian McEwan] in Year 11, which is literally about a rape, yet we never had a single conversation about anything to do with consent or sexual assault whilst reading a book which revolves around an act of a violation of consent.

"There needs to be explicit, holistic consent education in an age-appropriate way at all levels as part of the curriculum, but also we should see where else in the curriculum we can embed these concepts so it becomes commonplace."

Combating misogyny

With teachers concerned about the rising impact of toxic, misogynistic social media influencers such as British-American former kickboxer Andrew Tate, Contos says it is more important than ever to counter the messaging and ideologies that are brainwashing and harming impressionable young men and women (see *The influencer infiltrating classrooms*, p22).

"These are tough conversations to have," she says.

"It's not enough to simply tell students not to watch it. We need to be able to embed empathy in boys and to effectively explain the underlying concepts and consequences of this messaging and how it harms people, including the women and girls in their life.

"History – what a wonderful way to discuss power dynamics and evolving trends, gendered norms and expectations."

"I'm an expert in this field and even I sometimes struggle, because when you're speaking to a 14-year-old boy, it's not enough to know it yourself – you need to be able to communicate it in a way that lands with them, which is why we need so much teacher support, training and education," she says.

Government funding expands

In the 2023 federal budget, Teach Us Consent was allocated \$3.5 million to expand its work in reducing sexual violence among young people.

This crucial funding, Contos says, was part of a broader package of measures to eliminate gendered violence, and she aims for more breakthroughs for sexual violence prevention and consent education.

"I'm excited to be able to amplify the work of experts and educators to build on the positive messages around consent and sexual violence that young people will receive in more formal settings," Contos says.

"Teach Us Consent has always been about bringing the voices of youth to the desks of policymakers, so creating a youth-led, expert advisory group will take this aspect of our work to the next level.

"It means there will be a direct line between the government and young people interested in making a difference," she says.

Contos says young people must have their voices heard and reflected in the messages they receive about what consent means and what behaviour is acceptable, particularly on social media.

"The resources and content we are developing target people aged 16 years and above, and hopefully will be able



Chanel Contos at a book signing for *Consent laid bare*.
Photo supplied by Chanel Contos

to counter some of that Andrew Tate messaging,” Contos says.

Game-changing work

Contos is now a published author, with her debut book, *Consent laid bare: Sex, entitlement & the distortion of desire* published in September 2023.

The work is an adaptation of Contos’s research dissertation, which she completed as part of her Master’s degree in Gender, Education and International Development at University College London, where she graduated with distinction.

Consent laid bare has been lauded as a game-changing work that explores whether consent is possible in a world in which female sexuality has been hijacked by forces such as pornography, patriarchy and male entitlement.

“When I was writing my thesis, I knew it was going to be a book at the end,” Contos says.

“It’s honestly been the biggest privilege of my life to write this book, and I think these topics require so much depth and nuance that a book is the only medium through which you can truly communicate the message,” she says.

In *Consent laid bare*, Contos uses colloquial language to ensure the academic research and complex concepts in her thesis are digestible, captivating and widely accessible.

“I wanted *Consent laid bare* to be a tool people can use to educate themselves or to give to someone else if they can’t articulate these things or find them too emotive to discuss.

“I wanted a 15-year-old girl and a 40-year-old woman to both be able to pick it up to read and gain something valuable from the book,” she says.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with responses from all kinds of people demonstrating its relevance and practicality.

“Readers have said many of the concepts and situations in the book are instinctively felt, particularly by women, but they have never had the language to describe them before,” Contos says.

“Quite a few men have also read it, with many saying it has really opened their eyes to things that they or their friends have done.

“The book’s final chapter is called ‘Dear boys and men’. It’s adapted from a speech I gave at Sydney Grammar School which got positive feedback from the boys and their teachers.

“The tone is deliberately very approachable for young men and the point of the chapter is because when you read this book, you want all the men in your life to read it too.

“If they won’t, just ask them to read this single chapter, which hopefully has an impact,” she says.

Ambitious and inspiring

A diligent and industrious Contos has big plans for Teach Us Consent and hopes to eventually share her work overseas.

“Australia now has a world-leading consent education curriculum which I think should be expanded to other Western countries that are culturally similar to us,” she says.

“I have big ambitions, and you never know what’s going to happen, but we’re aiming high.”

With her lifelong love of learning, Contos is about to embark on yet another round of postgraduate study – this time, a Master of Public Policy at Oxford University.

“Then, hopefully, my next degree after that will be teaching,” she says. “My dream job is to be a school principal, I’ve always said it.

“I want to be a principal who teaches as well, because I think the opportunity to lead and shape a school would be incredible.”

References

Teach Us Consent: teachusconsent.com



Win a copy of **Consent laid bare** Sex, entitlement & the distortion of desire by Chanel Contos

We have one copy of Chanel Contos’s game-changing book about sex and consent to give away. How and why is sexual assault still happening in an era of growing equality? Contos argues we’re still working with an outdated social contract. In this book, she challenges lingering inequality and advocates for practical solutions. Published by Pan MacMillan.

To enter, email giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the book’s title in the subject line by Thursday 15 August, and your postal address and membership number in the body of the email.

Closing the Gap Ideas for education



Aboriginal Elder Lois Peeler leads a cultural procession in her former position as Principal at Worawa Aboriginal College, a boarding school for Aboriginal girls in Years 7–12 from across Australia.

Closing the Gap in education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an ongoing challenge. Four experts talk to Sue Osborne about ways forward.

Each year the federal government reports on progress on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap on numerous outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Measures include housing, health, justice, equality and education.

Recent outcomes show much more work is needed to close the gap in education. Progress on *Education Outcome 4: Children thrive in their early years* is “worsening, not on track”, according to the 2023 federal government *Closing the Gap* report.

Education Outcome 5: Students achieve their full learning potential, is listed as showing “improvement but is not on track”.

Only *Education Outcome 3: Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years*, is a success story, reported as having “good improvement and on track”.

In February, a Productivity Commission review on Closing the Gap said, “governments have largely not fulfilled their commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap”.

Partnership and power sharing

The Productivity Commission review made four recommendations to government:

- share power
- recognise and support Indigenous data sovereignty
- fundamentally rethink mainstream government systems and culture
- implement stronger accountability.

“We need to be informed by the community whose children we are teaching.”

“Sharing power with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make decisions about their communities lies at the heart of what governments committed to,” Djugun man and then Productivity Commissioner Romlie Mokak says.

“But the Commission found evidence of a failure to relinquish power and the persistence of ‘government knows best’ thinking.

“Efforts to improve outcomes are far more likely to succeed when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lead their design and implementation. Nothing will change until this model of partnership, based on genuine power sharing, becomes the rule and not the exception.”

Local support, local teachers

Mokak’s sentiments are echoed by Professor Rhonda Oliver, Director of Research in the School of Education at Curtin University.

Her extensive research investigates methods to assist in school engagement and education delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote communities.

“For me, Priority Reform 1 – Formal partnerships and shared decision-making – is key and is especially true for education,” Professor Oliver says. “We need to be informed by the community whose children we are teaching.”

Professor Oliver was the lead researcher on a recent study, *Researching School Engagement of Aboriginal Students and their Families from Regional and Remote Areas*.

The study concludes: “The evidence (or the lack of evidence) for attendance strategies points to them not working. Despite over \$200 million of investment, the Remote School Attendance Strategy [a federal government program] has not resulted in higher school attendance, let alone its intended 95 per cent aspirational goal.”

“The evidence from school level data, as well as from our research participants, points to the importance of a well-trained local workforce.

“It also points to the need for more personalised approaches to teaching and learning that takes account of students’ individual needs – and is facilitated by smaller class sizes.”

Professor Oliver believes we need to adapt our curriculum and pedagogy to better suit not only the needs of students, but also their learning style and interests.

“For remote and very remote Aboriginal students, in particular, there is a need to teach using a two-way approach, and also giving strong support to home language as a foundation for English language learning,” she says.

“Such practices promote a strong cultural identity, which in turn supports the wellbeing of students.

“We also need greater support and involvement of community in the governance of schools. And, most importantly, we need more local Aboriginal teachers and educators in schools – particularly remote and very remote schools. Governments need to invest in this.”

ABSTUDY issues

Dr Lois Peeler, Elder in Residence at Victoria’s only registered Aboriginal school, Worawa Aboriginal College, says funding is an issue.

Worawa caters for Aboriginal girls in Years 7–12 from communities across the country.

She says the holistic nature of Worawa’s education, culture and wellbeing approach enables the school to address the social and emotional wellbeing needs of students and tackle Closing the Gap priorities.

“A key challenge facing the college however is reliance on government funding,” Dr Peeler says. “The socio-economic status of many Aboriginal families is such that families of students are means tested to meet eligibility requirements of ABSTUDY based on home conditions.

“This criterion, while designed to support Indigenous students, unintentionally creates barriers to entry for students from NSW and Victoria, who are deemed eligible to attend their local public school without consideration for their desire for cultural connection and safety.”

Dr Peeler says recent government changes making it more difficult to access ABSTUDY, which provides financial support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and apprentices, was a step in the wrong direction.

“The changes require ABSTUDY applications to be done online with no walk-in or face-to-face process anymore. There’s an assumption that everybody has access to it, whether in urban or remote communities where Aboriginal language is used,” she says.

“It doesn’t suit our community. It’s going to make it even more difficult for Aboriginal families who choose to send their child to a boarding school, to deal with the application process.”

Education as protection

Dr Peeler, who also works with the Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria, says education is a “protective factor” in keeping young people out of the justice system.

“There is still a lot of racism and if our kids are experiencing racism at school, they become disengaged and may end up

encountering the justice system, and across the country there are concerns at the high incarceration rates of Aboriginal youth,” she says.

“As the Productivity Commission review stated, we need systemic change.”

Challenging teacher perceptions

A South Australian study found preservice teachers may need to re-examine their cultural views before they go to teach in remote and regional schools.

“Teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators in Australia are predominately European Australian with a small minority of First Nations people,” says University of South Australia Associate Professor in educating for sustainability Kathryn Paige.

“What this means is that their knowledge of Australian histories and living cultures is limited by what they’ve been exposed to,” Professor Paige says.

“In this study, we challenged preservice teachers to explore their own attachments to place, identity and belonging as a

stepping-stone towards engaging with First Nations cultures, histories, Country, and identities.

“They then engaged in a range of authentic learning practices that helped reframe deficit views of Aboriginal students, parents, and communities as intractable problems to be overcome, to people who are capable, intelligent and valuable. This is vital for professional teachers.”

Embedding culture

Professor Paige says that despite the professional and ethical responsibility




to embed Australian histories and living cultures into schools, most preservice teachers have limited first-hand experiences and understanding of First Nations ways of knowing, which can make the process difficult for some.

“As passionate, experienced educators, we intentionally push the boundaries to ensure our teaching graduates have a sense of self-regulation to determine what they need to do to upskill and build confidence to locate and embed authentic First Nations voices, experiences, and knowledges across the curriculum,” Professor Paige says.

“Empowering preservice teachers to take on this responsibility, and understand the importance of doing so, is critical for a strengthened and more just Australian identity for all Australian students.”

References

- bit.ly/remotengagementstudy
- pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/closing-the-gap-review/report
- bit.ly/Closingthegapreport
- bit.ly/unisaresearch

Progress		
Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years (<i>Outcome 3</i>)	Good improvement and on track	
Children thrive in their early years (<i>Outcome 4</i>)	Worsening, not on track	
Students achieve their full learning potential (<i>Outcome 5</i>)	Improvement but not on track	

A snapshot from Closing the Gap: Commonwealth 2023 Annual Report, page 18



Libraries' role in reconciliation

When IEU member and teacher-librarian Janelle Hamling undertook a non-fiction stocktake at her school, it led to a collaborative project highlighting the vital role of school libraries in meaningful reconciliation, writes Emily Campbell.

Janelle Hamling works in the junior library at St Paul's School in Bald Hills, north of Brisbane.

In late 2022, upon realising her school's non-fiction book collection was starting to date, with some items published in the 1980s, Hamling put a call out to her colleagues.

She asked for suggestions from parents and community members with particular expertise and an interest in assisting with the First Nations elements of the library's cultural stocktake.

Hamling was determined to honour and respect First Nations people and not to perpetuate past injustices.

"Two families agreed to support this process," Hamling says. "One family took a box of books home to review, and I met with the other volunteer, Alison Quin."

Quin is a descendant of the Tagalak people of the Gulf Country of far north Queensland. Her children attended St Paul's.

At the time, Quin was a Senior Curriculum and Learning Adviser at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

"Alison offered to take the remaining books to the preservice teachers she tutored, a class of approximately 35 students who were completing an Indigenous Education Unit as part of their initial teacher education," Hamling says.

"She used these books in a critical literacy activity to help the students evaluate the cultural appropriateness of the resources.

"This began a fantastic partnership," she says.

Selecting First Nations texts

Quin is now the Curriculum Adviser for Indigenous Education at Brisbane Catholic Education. She says it is vitally important that teachers learn to evaluate the cultural appropriateness of First Nations texts.

This is a two-part process: selecting texts and evaluating them.

"The Australian Curriculum (v9) emphasises showcasing First Nations voices and expressions of knowledge – which requires selecting texts by First Nations authors or resources by First Nations creators," Quin says.

"This provides an opportunity for students to learn directly from First Nations people through the resources they've created.

"Teachers need to have the skill to select resources by First Nations creators – which sounds simple, and generally is, and can usually be solved by an internet search."

In cases where there is collaboration with a non-First Nations author, however, Quin says there are important considerations to keep in mind.

"It is important to determine that First Nations people have been involved in sharing their knowledge in a transparent relationship and giving informed consent," she says.

"There has been a history of non-Indigenous people taking and reworking First Nations people's knowledge, especially in the form of knowledge stories – Dreaming stories."

Abundant resources

Selecting appropriate resources also involves considering the intent of learning, so resources must be evaluated for what they bring to the learning experience.

Quin says that with an abundance of resources available about First Nations people, culture, histories and

knowledges, the evaluation phase helps determine if they will be useful for student learning.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) *Guide to Evaluating and Selecting Education Resources* includes a useful graphic for navigating content about First Nations people, Quin says.

"It moves from resources that have destructive impacts on First Nations people, through to being about First Nations people without their input, through to resources created by First people," she says.

"There are some learning instances where a teacher might want to put a problematic text in front of students for the learning that arises, for example, identifying racist depictions of First Nations people in order to develop skills in countering such depictions."

Quin says this needs to be handled extremely carefully to ensure a safe learning environment for any First Nations students. It's also about students developing the critical analytical skills to see how such racist depictions are a product of power.

"Evaluation is also needed to consider images, words used – terminology, and the resource itself," Quin says.

"Older texts may contain offensive words or present a homogenous view of diverse First Nations people, for example, images may be stereotypes of 'traditional activities in 'the bush'."

"First Nations knowledge is most often conveyed in narrative, people-connected and place-connected ways, while teachers in the Anglo-Australian education system are often looking for resources in a factual, depersonalised, generalised mode," she says.

The preservice teachers Quin has taught appreciated the opportunity to complete the text-evaluation activity and develop their skills in a supported space.

FUTURE LIBRARIES CONFERENCE



Alison Quin, left, and Janelle Hamling accept the Queensland School Library Association's Brian Banisch Special Commendation Award 2023.

Quin says that for many of the preservice teachers who had limited classroom experience, it was an opportunity to begin the planning cycle.

"Developing critical analysis skills with real texts and having the responsibility of selecting texts for intended learning makes what can feel theoretical, real," she says.

Creating a masterclass

Quin and Hamling decided to take the next step and develop a masterclass to empower library staff and teachers with the skills and tools to undertake their own cultural stocktakes and text evaluations.

As part of this, Quin created the *Evaluating text for First Nations curriculum inclusion guide*. It gives participants a straightforward framework to assist their evaluation decisions.

"Unsurprisingly, so many teacher librarians are grappling with the subject as there are significant gaps in the literature in this area," Hamling says.

Since the initial masterclass, Quin and Hamling have hosted several more sessions, with demand among the

education profession surging.

So far, staff from a variety of libraries and schools at local, national and international levels have completed the masterclass, in a bid to reflect on and improve their professional practice.

Quin and Hamling have also presented to the North Brisbane Teacher Librarian Network Group, the National Education Summit 2023 in Brisbane and the Australian School Library Association Conference in 2023.

The masterclass sessions are an opportunity for self-identified professional development addressing the following Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the Proficient level:

- 2.4** Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- 3.4** Select and use resources
- 6.2** Engage in professional learning and improve practice
- 6.4** Apply professional learning and improve student learning

Well-deserved recognition

In recognition of their outstanding contribution to First Nations representation in school libraries, Quin and Hamling were honoured by the Queensland School Library Association with a prestigious Brian Banisch Special Commendation Award 2023.

Conversations are now underway to consider developing a formal research project, with Quin and Hamling investigating potential grants.

"We intend to further investigate an online space to identify authentic resources for teaching and learning, particularly given the introduction of the Australian Curriculum Version 9," Hamling says.

"This would guide teachers and teacher-librarians on how to evaluate resources, navigating appropriate language and terminology whilst sharing and creating best practice."

Libraries central to reconciliation

Like many educators from a non-First Nations background, Hamling acknowledges the importance of reconciliation and believes it is the business and responsibility of all people in Australia.

"Libraries have the privilege and responsibility to ensure the resources they are providing do not continue to perpetuate the injustices of the past and support First Nations Australians to tell their authentic stories to staff, students and the wider school community," Hamling says.

"Excellent, authentic resources that help support teachers can have the power to give them confidence to begin the journey of First Nations discovery."

Hamling says Quin has been incredibly generous with sharing her expertise and knowledge of First Nations perspectives and evaluations of texts.

"It has been a privilege and an honour working with Alison, and the knowledge and wisdom she has given is amazing," Hamling says.



When 'wellness' becomes toxic

New research has found that wellbeing programs for teachers can do more harm than good, writes Lucy Meyer.

When your workload is more than any teacher could manage, you're balancing the needs of your employer and your students, and you're so stressed you don't know whether you can keep teaching, you can't meditate your way to wellbeing. That's the key takeaway from new research out of Curtin University.

According to education academics Dr Saul Karnovsky and Dr Brad Gobby, the stress that overworked teachers are experiencing is being compounded by a harmful approach to wellbeing in Australian schools.

Instead of addressing the workplace issues that cause burnout, employers often provide professional development and wellbeing programs that put the onus on teachers to manage the problem. These self-focused techniques include mindfulness, deep breathing, positive thinking, and exercise.

"Teachers are telling us that, 'hang on a minute, that's not fair, this is a structural problem here – this is an issue with how my workload is managed,'" Dr Karnovsky says.

While the researcher recognises the value of mindfulness and other wellbeing practices, he argues that these are personal self-care tools, not professional strategies to resolve systemic issues such as staff shortages. The personal and the professional are being conflated, he says.

Cruel wellbeing

Dr Karnovsky and his co-author coined the term 'cruel wellbeing' in their new paper. It's used to describe the "cruelty of expecting teachers to be positive and make themselves well in difficult circumstances of others' making".

The research is based on a deep analysis of social media posts by Australian teachers on Reddit. Dr Karnovsky and Dr Gobby found that teachers could speak freely online, challenging dominant discourses around wellbeing.

Many were very cynical of wellbeing programs in their

workplaces. Dr Karnovsky believes that part of the problem is that too often, corporate wellness programs are shoehorned into the education sector by private companies with no understanding of the reality teachers are grappling with.

Teachers "want to just put their guard up" and are left feeling misunderstood by school leadership, who booked the programs, and that can widen the divide between them.

To Dr Karnovsky, the emphasis on wellbeing in schools didn't happen in a vacuum. "We can't forget that the wellness industry is a multibillion-dollar industry," he says. He worries that advantage can be taken of teachers who may be experiencing poor mental health.



Curtin University academic Dr Saul Karnovsky.

Staff struggles

The latest data from Safe Work Australia shows that staff working in education and training are struggling with psychological health and safety. According to a February report, the sector ranked equal first in the number of serious claims for mental stress caused by work pressure.

To Dr Karnovsky, one of the contributors to poor mental health in school staff is 'toxic positivity'. "A good way to describe toxic positivity is this notion of happiness at all costs," he says.

In schools with a culture of toxic positivity, teachers feel they can't

express negative emotions or criticisms. It's the idea that a good teacher is a happy teacher. But when teachers hold everything in, it can harm their mental health, Dr Karnovsky says.

The academic argues that teachers need spaces where it's OK to critique problems in their workplaces, and unions play an important role in this.

He wants to see a cultural shift in schools. Speaking about mental health "should be something that is not stigmatised or demonised or people roll their eyes and think 'gosh, they're not going to be a good teacher because they can't cope'."

While the IEU is not opposed to 'wellness' programs, the union is constantly pressing employers for practical measures to ease workload pressures and prevent work intensification.

Pacific educators unite over shared challenges



Ongoing teacher shortages, disrespect for the profession and the impact of workload intensification were just some of the professional issues discussed at the Council of Pacific Education (COPE) conference held earlier this year, writes Katie Fotheringham.

COPE is a regional organisation of education unions based in the South Pacific, with delegates from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Vanuatu and Australia.

IEUA Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall, IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke and organiser Lee Cunningham (from the NSW/ACT Branch) attended the conference in Fiji in March to discuss quality education, social equity, and climate justice.

Common struggles

Affiliates shared their challenges in delivering quality education to students through presentations and group workshops.

"While there are differences in capacity and resourcing around the Pacific, the ongoing teacher shortage, disrespect for teachers as professionals and the impact of workload intensification on recruitment and retention of teachers were recurring themes," Yewdall says.

"Delegates from around the Pacific consistently conveyed frustration with the inequities in education and expressed unequivocal support for 100 per cent funding of public schools, more equitable distribution of funds in

the non-government education sector and the prioritisation of appropriate and timely funding for disability and equity cohorts."

Panel discussions focused on equity and inclusion initiatives underway in different unions. There were also panel discussions on proposed or emerging government actions in the region "that are likely to impact members of the education community, either for better or worse," Yewdall says.

Urgent action on climate needed

Reflection on the horrifying impact of climate change in the Pacific was a key focus of the conference, in particular the devastation currently playing out in the low-lying nations of Kiribati and Tuvalu.

"All affiliates recognised the need for urgent action to address issues of health and safety, displacement of families and communities, severance of connection to culture and place, and both the immediate and long-term impacts on education for teachers and students," says Yewdall.

Conference participants worked in teams to write a resolution that will be delivered at the Education International (EI) Congress in Buenos Aires in July 2024.

"The COPE Conference resolution to EI focuses on meaningful action to protect the lives and livelihoods of those most impacted by climate change in the Pacific and guarantee stable and quality education for all students," Yewdall says.

Recognising women's achievements

The conference attendees paused to recognise International Women's Day.

"The importance of investing in women to advance progress was highlighted, along with the incredible contribution and leadership of women unionists in the region," Yewdall says.

"Plans to encourage greater participation of female and youth workers engaged in education formed the basis of discussions on the final day, with sharing of successful strategies and hopes for the future a key feature of action plans developed and delivered by affiliates".

Union solidarity across borders

Yewdall found that interactions over the three days were characterised by a strong spirit of solidarity and a clear commitment to shared union values in finding solutions to problems.

"Many of the action plans indicated possibilities for strengthening connections between affiliates, with a particular focus on the opportunity to extend and cement relationships through the COPE Women's Network, led by Nanise Kamikamicka of the Fijian Teachers Association," she says.

"Engagement with COPE is a natural extension of the IEU's commitment to solidarity and social justice.

"It is also key to developing a strong network of education unions in the Pacific, collaborating to improve the working lives of teachers and ensure equitable education outcomes for all."



Schooling in a climate crisis Inside a Kiribati classroom

The walk to school at Sunrise Primary School. Photo: Mwarikina Kaikai, teacher in Kiribati

A teacher in Kiribati contends with climate change and calls on unions everywhere to act, writes Lucy Meyer.

“Our country is losing its people,” says Tinia James, a teacher in the Pacific Island nation of Kiribati. The 32-year-old mother of three is witnessing an exodus from her home country.

The low-lying nation, located halfway between Australia and Hawaii, is on the front lines of climate change.

According to a report from the World Bank, Kiribati is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the climate crisis.

Scientists have long predicted that many – if not all – of Kiribati’s citizens will become climate refugees. It remains to be seen which generation will be the last to live out their lives on their island home.

James’s students are only in their first year of high school, but climate change is already part of their daily existence, regularly keeping many of them from the classroom.

The young teacher has a class of 40 at Animwarao Junior Secondary School on Kiribati’s main atoll, Tarawa. But when it rains heavily – which it does often these days, even in the dry season – only a dozen students make it to school. In the weeks before *IE* went to press, “it’s been happening constantly”.

Endless hurdles

Like lots of schools in Kiribati, Animwarao Junior Secondary School can be reached only by a very narrow, muddy path, says James. Heavy rain and high tides can cut off access, and her students often need to stay home to help protect their houses from floodwaters.

Even when it’s not raining, the waters don’t recede, she says.

To get to school, students need to walk through stagnant, polluted water. Some are barefoot, others are in sandals, and James says that walking through the contaminated water can lead to infections. It’s not the only health issue her students are facing. Most have scabies, and some teachers do too, but the hospital doesn’t

have enough medication, James says.

At a nearby school, students must walk past a broken substation with exposed wires, James says. The heavy rain and high tides mean that the electrical wires are often underneath the water. James sits on the executive at the Kiribati Union of Teachers (KUT) and members tell her that a few people have already been electrocuted, including a pupil. She says that there’s pressure on teachers to monitor students and protect them from electrocution.

“It is truly a calamity on our doorstep.”



Damaged classroom balcony at Animwarao Junior Secondary School. Photo: Tinia James



Tinia James, teacher, on Kiribati Union of Teachers Executive.



Holes in the balcony at Tebwanimwaneka Primary School. Photo: Tinia James

Unions act on climate

The story of Kiribati's teachers is one James feels needs to be told. In March, she spoke to teachers, support staff, and union delegates from across the Pacific at a Council of Pacific Education conference in Nadi, Fiji.

It was her first time addressing an overseas crowd. "I was really nervous," she says. But as the Youth President of the KUT, James knew she needed to explain what is happening in Kiribati.

Veronica Yewdall, Assistant Federal Secretary of the Independent Education Union of Australia (see *All about your federal union*, p18) was deeply moved by James's presentation. "It is truly a calamity on our doorstep," she says.

Yewdall, together with QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke and an organiser in the NSW/ACT Branch, Lee Cunningham, represented the IEU at the conference. Attendees finalised a motion to support action on climate change. It will be put to a vote at the Education International world congress in July in Buenos Aires, where delegates from the IEU will join education unions from across the globe.

Buenos Aires is a chance "to help Kiribati be heard", says James. She hopes union leaders will be moved by the plight of Pacific Island countries and come together to act. Yewdall believes unions have a responsibility to do so, by providing "practical care and support to all those unfairly impacted by changes in the climate".

Against the elements

Back on Kiribati, James's students and community need help now. In most schools in Kiribati, the classrooms are in very poor condition, she says. "They are very dangerous", with holes in the balconies of school buildings, and some students have got their legs trapped inside.

"When we report it to the Ministry of Education, they just come in, they put on some board to cover the holes," James

says. But the patchy work doesn't last, she says, especially with rising sea levels and high tides.

Water regularly comes inside classrooms, and it's up to the teachers and their students to mop it up. Often, she says, it can be hours before class can begin. Her students don't complain because they have already "experienced the same at home. They know. They know what it's like."

The KUT is doing everything it can to support members struggling with the effects of climate change, James says. Teachers on the outer islands have been worst hit. Some schools have shut or relocated, and many teachers' homes have collapsed, she says. According to James, the KUT has been negotiating with the Ministry of Education, but most teachers don't contact the union because they fear for their jobs.

Throughout Kiribati, intense and worsened heat makes being in the classroom even harder. At James's school, some rooms have ceiling fans. When students perform well, "we reward them with fans".

Five years ago, a student played with the school's switchboard, James remembers, and power has been tricky ever since. She says that despite complaints to the Ministry of Education the switchboard remains broken, so only some classrooms have power.

Despite it all, James loves teaching. You can hear the excitement in her voice when she talks about being in the classroom. "It's a very tiring job but it's fun. You get to enjoy every moment of it with your students."

James understands why people are fleeing Kiribati, but once they've left, they lose their sense of belonging, she says. "As for me, leaving is not the solution."

James wants to help her nation and her people survive. "I think it's better to stay and fight for your country." After all, James says, no matter where she goes, there's no escaping climate change.

Amplifying advocacy

All about your federal union

IEU members belong to their state or territory's branch, but did you know we also have a federal union? Here's just some of the vast breadth of issues they act on, writes Monica Crouch.

The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) is the federally registered industry union that represents members in non-government schools and education institutions across Australia. We have a nationwide membership of 75,000.

The federal union represents, advocates for and acts on behalf of members in the federal arena in matters of industrial relations, education policy and workplace laws that impact members throughout Australia.

Our federal union also represents members in international forums such as the Council of Pacific Education which brings together education unions from across the Pacific region (see *Pacific educators unite*, p15), and Education International, the global federation of 380 teachers' unions.

Who we are

The federal union comprises Secretary Brad Hayes, who comes from the Queensland/Northern Territory Branch of the IEU; Federal Assistant Secretary Veronica Yewdall, from the NSW/ACT Branch; and Federal Assistant Secretary Anthony Odgers, from the Victoria/Tasmania Branch. The President is Carol Matthews, from the NSW/ACT Branch. They are supported by Research, Advocacy and Policy Officer Christine Regan.

The federal union meets four-to-five times a year with the secretaries of each

state branch to discuss policy, priorities and direction.

Advocating for your industrial rights

During the past 18 months, the federal Labor government has passed some of the biggest changes to workplace laws in almost 20 years following concerted campaigns by union members across the country. "These include some really important changes for IEU members – changes that can empower members to win crucial improvements to wages and working conditions across our sector," IEUA Secretary Brad Hayes says.

"Our union aims to seize the opportunity provided by these reforms to deliver a new era of workplace rights, better working conditions and respect for our education professions."

But winning these federal laws was just the first step. "Now we need to put them into action," Hayes says. "Our union aims to seize the opportunity provided by these reforms to deliver a new era

of workplace rights, better working conditions and respect for our education professions."

This year the federal union is focusing on:

- **Winning better wages and conditions:**

"We can use these new laws where bargaining has previously failed at the individual enterprise level to now unite and bargain together as a group – for example, across 64 employers in the long day care sector," Hayes says.

- **Fairer bargaining timeframes:**

"We need to explore how fairer bargaining laws, combined with other improvements like new delegates' rights, can help improve bargaining timeframes and outcomes when employers deliberately delay and frustrate the process," Hayes says.

- **Fully repairing the bargaining system:**

"The limits on taking industrial action are incredibly onerous and still stacked in favour of employers," Hayes says. "We are campaigning for further changes to level the playing field for members seeking to take lawful protected action."

To win meaningful change, the union needs an active and growing membership to back our campaigns – there is real strength in numbers. "The federal union will be working with our state branches to develop a plan for building union membership at a time of high staff turnover in schools," Hayes says.

"Many of our experienced members and delegates are approaching retirement age, we need to engage the next generation of union leaders if we are to continue the proud legacy and achievements of the IEU."



From left: Assistant Federal Secretary Anthony Odgers, Federal Secretary Brad Hayes and Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall.

The more members the union has, the greater our bargaining power.

Advancing your professional interests

The IEUA advocates for members' professional interests through actively engaging with federal education authorities, providing submissions and giving evidence at parliamentary and senate inquiries, and representing the concerns of teachers and support staff in taskforces and working groups on education policy.

Addressing workload intensification is a key priority. "Everyone who works in schools understands the real impacts of teacher shortages, and that unsustainable workloads are a key reason early career teachers leave the profession in their first few years and experienced teachers leave years earlier than they intended," says Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall.

"The teacher shortage is both the result of unmanageable workloads and the cause of ongoing teacher burnout for those who remain in the profession."

To tackle excessive workload at its source and find meaningful solutions, the federal union has engaged with members to identify pressing concerns and clarify misunderstandings about the origin of workload drivers.

"One of our key professional engagement priorities this year is to secure official advice that clarifies what is, and is not, required for compliance," Yewdall says.

"The deluge of additional workload requirements over the last decade or so, particularly with regards to documentation, has been so intense that teachers have not had the time to identify the source of the request. Clarifying compliance requirements empowers

teachers to start a professional dialogue in their schools and address workloads that have evolved over time and are duplicative or excessive."

The IEU also represents teachers in the early childhood education and care sector, who are struggling with the same staff shortages and professional issues as teachers in schools.

"The IEU is lobbying for urgent relief from the burden of compliance tasks, for comparable pay with teachers in schools, and for better resources and support through the Early Years Strategy and through engagement with the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

There is an urgent need to attract, train and retain people in the profession. "The union's aim in clarifying compliance and identifying unnecessary practices and processes is to empower members and restore time for teachers to devote to their core work – teaching."

The federal union constantly presses to eliminate unnecessary and duplicative compliance tasks.

See these helpful fact sheets on:

- NCCD: bit.ly/4bmbczw
- NESA compliance: bit.ly/ieunesacompliance
- AITSL Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework: bit.ly/AITSL-ATPDFfactsheet.

Campaigning for fairer laws

The wages and conditions of most IEU members are set by a combination of federal legislation, enterprise bargaining agreements and individual contracts.

"So our federal union campaigns to improve federal legislation," Assistant Federal Secretary Anthony Odgers says.

"We also aim to improve federal awards that contain the minimum

standards for wages and conditions should employers refuse to bargain."

Here are some important new gains and this year's priorities:

- **Right to disconnect:** From 26 August (and a year later for workplaces with fewer than 15 employees), members will have the right not to read emails, take phone calls, or respond to text messages from their employer, students or their parents outside working hours.
- **Stronger rights for union reps:** From 30 June, barriers in awards that block IEU reps from conducting reasonable union business will be removed. This means reps can now use employer facilities such as email to contact members and potential members, and have access to paid time off for union training. Reps will also gain strong new protections from any employer harassment.
- **Ending discrimination in schools:** Religious schools have relied on exemptions in anti-discrimination legislation to discipline and dismiss members who are divorced or separated, who are members of the LGBTIQ+ community, or who access IVF treatments. "At the last election, the federal government promised to scrap these unfair and outdated exemptions," Odgers says. "We are campaigning for them to meet this commitment."
- **Wage rises to reduce gender inequality:** Through a case being made by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), as part of the annual wage review, unions are seeking separate and additional wage increases of 4% for feminised sectors, and this includes classroom support staff.

Getting girls switched on to trades

Unless many more girls are encouraged into electrical trades, Australia has no chance of meeting its commitment to net zero by 2050, writes Sue Osborne.

Australia needs an additional 32,000 electricians by 2030 to work in the renewable energy sector, and another 85,000 by 2050, according to Jobs and Skills Australia.

And Electrical Trades Union (ETU) Affirmative Action Officer and electrician Raven Maris is determined to encourage more girls into this trade.

Not only is it necessary to save the climate, she says, but it also provides women with well-paid work and good job security.

Maris began her career in Canada as a chef. She got married, had children and became a stay-at-home mum.

When she emigrated to Australia 16 years ago, she decided to retrain as an electrician, becoming a "mature-age apprentice" with Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW.

She juggled her apprenticeship with being a mum of a four-year-old and a seven-year-old.

"I liked working with my hands as a chef and applying for an electrical apprenticeship seemed like the logical thing to do," Maris says.

"In hospitality you're overworked, underpaid, underappreciated. You deal with cranky customers on a constant basis. It's not conducive to a good work life balance."

Maris was not the only woman taking on an apprenticeship – she says Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW have a high intake of female apprentices.

"Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW are large service providers and government organisations, so they tend to hire a lot more females," she says.

Treated as equals

"There was a job that we did at Hornsby in the maintenance yard with an overhead wire modernisation project with seven women," Maris says.

"We're treated like equals because we have the trade and it's one of the most empowering things as a female. You aren't judged on your gender, you are judged by the quality of your work.

"There is a great deal of security in having a trade. You know you can take it anywhere and you can stop, raise a family, and then come back to it. The qualification never disappears once you've got it."

Maris says her pay and conditions are superior compared with her hospitality role. Many trades considered traditionally female such as those in hospitality, retail and cleaning are often low paid and casualised.





Electrician and ETU member Raven Maris.



Christine Wilkinson, member of the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Executive and vocational education and training teacher at St Joseph's Catholic College, East Gosford, NSW.

Yet female students are still not considering the trades as a career in big enough numbers.

"There's still a bit of a stigma," Maris says. "There is the thought that you have to lose a significant portion of your femininity when you move into a trade.

"I still wear perfume and I put on mascara at work. There's a certain level of my own femininity that I just refuse to set aside."

Maris says she wanted to raise awareness among girls that the trades are available to them as strong career prospects.

"I think it's just mostly around bringing that awareness – you don't know what you don't know, right? You don't know that it's even an option initially."

Maris says it took her quite a while to realise this could be a career for her, but when she did it was an 'a-ha' moment.

"It's just knowing that there are other women out there who already do it and thrive in that area," she says. "There are female chippies. I've come across several female plumbers as well."

Size doesn't matter

Physical strength is no longer a barrier to women, with work health and safety rules preventing anyone, male or female, lifting more than 20 kilograms

"We have mechanical aids for everything these days," Maris says. "No one should have to over-exert themselves or put themselves in any physical risk. So no, you don't have to be big. I am only 5ft 4" (162.5 centimetres) and I weigh 50kg. I am not a large human being."

Elected to her role with the ETU last year, the aim of her committee is to get more women into the trades.

"I would always encourage someone to never, ever be afraid to step outside their comfort zone and try something. It's in those places where we feel most discomfort or fear or trepidation that we have our greatest growth," Maris says.

"You know, over the four years of my apprenticeship I have come away with a qualification and confidence and new skills that I didn't know were even possible for me."

Genuine interest

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Executive member Christine Wilkinson is a vocational education and training (VET) teacher at St Joseph's Catholic College at East Gosford on the NSW Central Coast.

"Over the past few years, I've witnessed a genuine interest from girls to undertake study that involves time out of regular school to attend TAFE colleges or private providers," Wilkinson says.

"They aim to complete a Certificate II or III in courses such as construction, motor mechanics, plumbing and electrical," she says.

"TAFE NSW offers senior high school students who may struggle with traditional schooling an alternative education.

"You aren't judged on your gender, you are judged by the quality of your work."

"These programs enable students to explore and pursue non-traditional pathways through apprenticeships and traineeships.

"Year 10 students are given the opportunity to attend the Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) program that helps students identify potential career pathways through vocational tasters in a wide range of industries," Wilkinson says.

This program is helping young people, especially girls, decide what kind of career they'd like to pursue and providing them with the skills and pathways to kickstart that career. The courses run for one day per week for 10 weeks.

'Try a Trade', a NSW Government initiative, is also aimed at Year 10 students and gives them insights into what the non-traditional courses can offer, and the pattern of study for Years 11 and 12.

The Department of Education delivers a range of Try a Trade initiatives for students under the Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) program. The RIEP program connects employers with schools to support student career development and transitions to employment. The program enables students to directly connect with employers and engage in experiential learning activities.

"If girls undertake study in a non-traditional subject, such as plumbing or construction, they are still eligible to gain their Higher School Certificate (HSC) as well as achieving a Certificate II or III, which is a huge advantage when they enter the workforce and become an apprentice in their chosen field.

"With the shortage of tradespeople at the moment and the urgency to build homes as a result of the housing shortage, what better time for our girls to step up to the challenge?

"The theme for this year's International Women's Day really says it all: 'Count Her In: Invest in a Woman. Accelerate Progress'. Girls have a future in the trades, so we need to educate and encourage them," Wilkinson says.

Resources and references

Raven Maris is available to visit schools: contact Electrical Trades Union National Communications Coordinator Jo Sutton on 0410 101 902 or email jo.sutton@etuaustralia.org.au

NSW Government Trade Pathways for Women: bit.ly/3QsDyQc

Advancing Women in Trades: bit.ly/4bcfl8K

Jobs and Skills Australia, Skills Priority List Findings: Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers: bit.ly/3WqBIDO

Try a Trade: nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/vocational/vet-programs/regional-schools-industry



Sexism in schools

The influencer infiltrating classrooms

An alarming number of Australian schoolboys are being radicalised by misogynistic online content, and it's causing some women teachers to leave the profession, writes Lucy Meyer.

Caroline* had never heard of influencer Andrew Tate until her 10-year-old students created a slideshow in honour of the self-described misogynist, who is currently awaiting trial for rape and human trafficking in Romania.

The Year 5 boys interspersed clips of Tate saying derogatory things about women with photos they had taken of their female classmates to body-shame the girls.

"I was horrified," says Caroline, a principal at a primary school in NSW and an IEU member.

After a distressed teacher reported the incident, Caroline googled Tate and began watching his content. What she saw made her angry.

Tate is a British-American former professional kickboxer and reality contestant known for his violent rhetoric against women. He preaches a particular brand of 'masculinity' centred on wealth, fast cars, cigar smoking, physical strength, male supremacy, and the denigration of women. At one point, he was the eighth most-googled person in the world.

His influence is now permeating Australian classrooms. The Man Cave, a mental health charity, surveyed 1300 Australian schoolboys and found that a

quarter look up to Tate as a role model. And that's having a devastating impact on many of the women who teach them.

New research from Monash University academics Stephanie Wescott and Steven Roberts has found a "widespread experience of sexual harassment, sexism, and misogyny perpetrated by boys towards women teachers, and the ominous presence of Andrew Tate shaping their behaviour".

They describe schoolboys undergoing a process of radicalisation. Their findings point to a pattern of behaviour that includes physical intimidation, gaslighting, belittling, and an attitude of entitlement.

"Teachers are the ones who always try to mend the social fabric."

Leaving the profession

For some teachers, going to work can be like "going into battle", Wescott says. The academics interviewed women teachers from across the country, who spoke of work environments that felt so unsafe that some went part-time, moved to an all-girls school or left teaching altogether.

The research is touching a nerve, with teachers reaching out to Wescott. "I get a lot of messages that say things like 'thank

you so much for talking about this' or 'this is why I left teaching' or 'it's so bad, you have no idea'."

Rebecca* can understand why the rise of misogynist influencers is causing teachers to quit. "Absolutely, in a heartbeat," says Rebecca, who is an IEU member and head teacher at a co-educational secondary school in NSW. "Why would you subject yourself to that every day?"

Disrupting learning

A group of Year 11 boys passionately defended Tate in Rebecca's class, arguing he had been framed, a claim Tate himself makes. The students saw Tate's arrest "as a real injustice", she says.

Tate's messaging has disrupted learning in other classes at Rebecca's school. It can be hard for women teachers to combat, she says. "Even if you're a strong female teacher, that just plays into what Tate says about women." If a female teacher responds assertively, she can be disparaged for not behaving in the docile way Tate says women should.

Caroline has seen how difficult it can be to bring students back from the brink. Her students' behaviour didn't end with their slideshow. "I think by then, the damage had been done in terms of the boys, because some of those misogynistic comments continued throughout the year. So, it was almost like the seed had been planted."



Monash University researchers
Stephanie Wescott and Steven Roberts.

Enduring impact

When female teachers at Vanessa's* school challenged the Tate narrative their students parroted, the boys doubled down, dismissing their teachers with misogynistic language, the IEU member says.

A house leader, Vanessa intervened in three different classes last year after boys inserted Tate into classroom activities. She has seen the impact on her colleagues. "They felt undermined. They felt disrespected. And in some ways, I would say it was abusive," she says.

As Wescott and Roberts found, such incidents are also leaving a mark on female students. At Caroline's school, two boys who made the slideshow continued to body-shame a girl for the rest of the year. "That student needed counselling and a lot of extra support through the family and through teachers' aides and other teachers," Caroline says.

Seeing the impact on their female students can cause more distress for teachers when they feel powerless to change it, say Wescott and Roberts.

The researchers found that too often, when teachers report these issues, they aren't taken seriously or believed by their school leaders and male colleagues. Many are told, "you don't have the skin for it", says Wescott.

Change is possible

If schools are going to address the radicalisation of some of their male pupils, Wescott and Roberts say they need to start by believing teachers, naming the problem, and recording incidents.

Too many schools use online systems that have no option for reporting sexism,

and "you can't make a solution for something that hasn't been measured", says Roberts.

Some schools engage organisations such as the Man Cave to facilitate workshops, but Roberts says these interventions are too sporadic to create lasting behavioural change.

Earlier this year, the federal government announced a \$3.5 million Healthy Masculinities project to counter harmful messages from social media for school-aged boys.

Caroline, Rebecca and Vanessa tried various approaches to tackle incidents in their schools – with differing degrees of success – including talking to students and teachers and sending letters home to parents. Vanessa found that showing parents examples of disturbing things Tate had said had a positive impact, but she acknowledges that not all parents are so receptive.

"Teachers are the ones who always try to mend the social fabric of society," says Rebecca. "But they can't do it without parents."

Wescott believes change is possible. "We've had broad behavioural and attitudinal change in schools before, like we've got a zero-tolerance approach to bullying now," she says.

Wescott sees no reason a similar campaign on gendered violence in schools can't foster "a system-wide cultural shift".

These boys will soon grow into men, she says. In the midst of a national crisis of men's violence, she and Roberts believe the radicalisation of Australia's schoolboys cannot be ignored.

**Names have been changed.*

How we can help Support on offer

If you are experiencing sexual harassment or misogyny in your workplace, your union can help, writes IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Assistant Secretary Lyn Caton.

- The IEU holds employers to account on their legal responsibility to prevent discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. The positive duty reforms to the *Sex Discrimination Act*, introduced in December 2022 as the result of pressure from unions including the IEU, impose a legal obligation on organisations and businesses to take proactive and meaningful action to prevent relevant unlawful conduct from occurring in the workplace or in connection with work.
- The IEU supports members should they become victims of misogyny. We urge you to call your organiser.
- The IEU is pushing for clearer community guidelines, stronger moderation, and more effective mechanisms for reporting and removing misogynistic content, by improving regulation of social media platforms.
- The IEU was part of the 'We won't wait!' campaign for 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave a year for all employees, including full-time, part-time and casual employees, now included in the National Employment Standards.

EMBRACING DIFFERENCE

Welcoming neurodivergent teachers

Schools now better accommodate the needs of neurodivergent students – those whose brains work differently from the average or 'neurotypical' person, writes Will Brodie. But what about neurodivergent staff?

IEU member and neurodivergent teacher Natanya Thrift says we could do much better.

Thrift was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in 2014 and with level 2 autism in January.

After years of struggle, Thrift had left education and was off work for three months before she found the professional evaluation she needed. She's back teaching, but it's been a tough journey.

Thrift spoke to the union because she wanted to help colleagues who are neurodivergent, or think they may be, to avoid such an arduous process.

She says anyone who feels they may be neurodivergent should go to their GP and get a referral to a psychiatrist. She also recommends joining the Neurodivergent Educators Australia Facebook group, 2900 members strong, which offers priceless "solutions, suggestions, and peer support".

It's advice that has resonated, because it is estimated that as many as one in five people are neurodivergent.

This means every educator is working with colleagues whose brains are wired differently. Often the staff members themselves

don't understand their conditions; others 'mask' their diagnoses, at great personal cost, for fear of ridicule or alienation.

But it is schools, staff and students who miss out if neurodivergent educators are sidelined.

A strength, not a weakness

Kristy Forbes is an autism and neurodiversity support specialist with extensive professional experience as a teacher, integration aide and childhood behavioural and family support specialist. Though she holds multiple degrees, she says her most valuable insights come from lived experience being "formally identified" (diagnosed) with autism, ADHD and pathological demand avoidance (PDA) plus being a parent to four neurodivergent children.

Forbes says we must avoid "othering" neurodivergent staff. "Education systems can do better to accommodate neurodivergent staff by treating us as human beings, not as lesser or 'other,'" she says. "It's important to approach our skills with curiosity and a willingness to explore, recognising that while they may seem out of the box or challenging, they are incredibly valuable."

Forbes says asking what colleagues could do to assist neurodivergent staff misses the point.

"In my field, I'm a leader in advocacy, sought after for my lived



experience, alongside my academic qualifications. I believe I could stand in a classroom and educate my neurotypical colleagues," she says.

"So, the idea that our neurodivergent staff need assistance to excel from neurotypical colleagues perpetuates an oppressive narrative that we need to be taught the right way to be in the world, which I disagree with. Instead, recognising and valuing the unique contributions of neurodivergent individuals should be the focus."

In the UK, researcher, former teacher, and autism educator Dr Rebecca Wood PhD says neurodivergent staff bring valuable strengths and insights to schools.

Wood has also found that neurodivergent educators often have a unique "tenacity".

One of her study participants said: "I never gave up on a child because I think probably too many people gave up on me. I could see myself in a lot of the children."

The 2022 book Wood edited, *Learning from autistic teachers: How to be a neurodiversity-inclusive school*, reports that a third of neurodivergent survey participants felt they'd been "effectively driven out of the profession".

"Education systems can do better to accommodate neurodivergent staff by treating us as human beings, not as lesser or 'other'."

In July 2023, Wood's study of 12 autistic former school staff revealed that five of the participants in the study didn't know they were autistic when they had their teaching jobs.

Some neurodivergent staff were asked by leadership to hide their condition from parents, thereby making them complicit in "the negative narratives about autism in school". Wood also found that if neurodivergent staff hear autism being discussed in a stigmatising way, they

feel they can't be open about their conditions or ask for the support they need.

Thrift's lived experience backs this up: she found it distressing when a fellow teacher sniggered about a comment from a staff member who "clearly thinks in a different way".

However, enlightened schools that properly engage with their neurodivergent staff reap the benefits. To reduce her cognitive load, Thrift undertakes a "detailed, step-by-step routine" each workday and conducts all her classes in the same room rather than at three locations.

Wood concluded that autistic-led training was essential to improving support for autistic school staff. School leaders should identify "the role that suits the person", rather than forcing an autistic school staff member to "be in a role that doesn't fit".

Schools truly committed to diversity must create "an atmosphere where staff are comfortable disclosing disabilities".

Thrift believes this should include professional development for all staff. "We're in education, after all; it's all about things being brought to your awareness," she says. "We could start by encouraging teachers to embrace difference."

Forbes says instead of focusing only on the supports neurodivergent staff require, we need to ask "what stresses create a need for support and how we can eliminate those stresses".

"Historically, neurodivergent people have been expected to adapt to neurotypical norms. Yet when we ask neurotypical individuals to extend even a little understanding, curiosity, or exploration toward neurodivergent ways, it often seems too challenging or too much effort, which is both insulting and offensive."

Schools must actively engage with neurodivergent staff, Forbes says. She calls on schools to ask for neurodivergent teachers' insights when working with neurodivergent students.

"Reject the idea that our viewpoints are less valid because society labels us as having a disorder – it's essential not to buy into societal stereotypes about who we are," she says.

"Remember, every neurodivergent individual has a unique set of skills, and collectively we offer a wide array of perspectives. We are human, fundamentally, and inherently diverse."



Natanya Thrift.

Unique assets of neurodivergent educators

1. Unconventional thinking

Neurodivergent teachers often have alternative ways of thinking, perceiving, and problem-solving. This distinct perspective can be instrumental in challenging the status quo and promoting innovative teaching methods.

2. Empathy and sensitivity

Neurodivergent teachers often possess a heightened sense of empathy and sensitivity towards students' emotional needs.

3. Advocacy and understanding

Frequently, neurodivergent teachers have first-hand knowledge of the support and adjustments that neurodivergent individuals need to unlock their full potential. They understand exclusion, and can more effectively include and empower pupils who were marginalised and at risk of exclusion themselves.

4. Shattering stereotypes and stigmas

By being visible in the education system, neurodivergent teachers challenge stereotypes and diminish stigmas associated with neurological differences. Their presence alone helps to dispel misconceptions about the capabilities of neurodivergent individuals.

Resources

- Neurodiverse Educators Australia Facebook group: facebook.com/groups/neurodivergenteducatorsaustralia
- The Autistic School Staff Project, co-convened by Dr Rebecca Wood, has published *Amazing Autistic Teachers* – how to learn from them: autisticschoolstaffproject.com
- Kristy Forbes' inTune pathways: positive autistic identity, culture and family lifestyle: kristyforbes.com.au/



MENTORING

New teachers need strong support

When teacher shortages bite, fast-tracking trainees may seem logical. But any use of teachers who are not yet fully qualified requires properly resourced mentorships, writes Will Brodie.

The General Secretary of the IEU's Victoria Tasmania Branch, David Brear, is thankful that the days when graduate teachers were thrown into the classroom "without any form of structured support" are mostly gone.

And yet, he says, there are still significant issues with the way mentorship is provided in Victoria.

"Prior to the establishment of the Victorian Institute of Teachers and the introduction of provisional registration, teachers in non-government schools were fully registered when they completed their initial teacher training," Brear says.

"Provisional registration created an additional hurdle new teachers had to negotiate before they could be fully registered. Of course, what went with that was a greater call on schools to provide mentorship and support.

"There was not, however, an accompanying increase in resourcing to free experienced staff up to provide that support, so those same teachers who had always dug deep into their own time to mentor and supervise preservice teachers were called on to mentor graduates, again in their own time."

In schools before study finished

Over the past few years, as the impacts of teacher shortages have played out to devastating effect in schools, there has been a big increase in graduate teachers conditionally accredited, or provided with permission to teach, before they complete their formal qualification, says IEUA Federal Assistant Secretary Veronica Yewdall.

"While this option has been available for some time, it was rarely accessed, and usually when a student teacher was in the final semester of their course," Yewdall says.

"Teacher shortage pressures have, perhaps understandably, resulted in this provision being invoked earlier than intended, such as during the third year of a four-year degree, but the impact

“Early career teachers, while no doubt gratified to secure early employment, can face the additional burden of juggling study requirements with the demands of a classroom full of students.”

on both the graduate teacher and their school colleagues needs to be considered and addressed.”

In addition, Yewdall says, when early career teachers take on responsibilities for a class, sometimes before finishing the final practicum or professional experience placement, the expectation remains that they must complete their qualification.

“Early career teachers in this position, while no doubt gratified to secure early employment, can face the considerable additional burden of juggling study requirements with the demands of a classroom full of students,” she says.

Structures crumbling

Experienced teachers have always provided professional support to early career and preservice teachers, whether in a formal role related to accreditation at Proficient Teacher level, or as part of a team of experienced teachers who guide and direct those just commencing their careers.

But when experienced teachers are themselves drowning in administrative and compliance tasks, it is difficult for them to support early career teachers.

This direct link between workload intensification and the failure to retain experienced teachers is undeniable. “It has led to a crumbling of even informal mentoring and supervisory structures in schools, with many dedicated teachers having no option other than to refuse to take on this additional service to protect their own health and wellbeing,” Yewdall says.

Most mentoring has now come to depend on the goodwill of experienced teachers. “It has blurred the lines between formal and informal supervisory and mentoring roles and placed even more pressure on experienced teachers.”

Union action, AITSL resources

In December 2023, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) published Induction Guidelines for Early Career Teachers and Induction Guidelines for New School Leaders (see *References*).

The guidelines emphasise the importance of a comprehensive, quality

induction process to support teachers at varying stages of their careers. They also underline the necessity of engagement with systems and sectors, principals and other education leaders and unions, to implement appropriate support.

“The IEU is committed to playing our part in this shared professional responsibility,” Yewdall says. “We’re working with education authorities and agencies to develop structures that offer meaningful support to teachers and that utilise the valuable skills of seasoned professionals in a formal and effective way, for the benefit of the entire profession.”

The IEU welcomed the opportunity to participate in the 2023 Review of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) undertaken by the federal government’s Teacher Education Expert Panel.

However, the union believes moves to incorporate accelerated pathways to teaching qualifications need to be carefully managed to protect the integrity and rigour of teacher education.

Welcome news on paid practicums

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes says trainee teachers must be paid for practical placements.

“It’s a no brainer – no one expects to work for free,” Hayes says. “The cost of living is at a near 30-year high. Unsurprisingly, student teachers tell us that ‘placement poverty’ is a major reason so many are forced to drop out of their studies.”

Students on unpaid full-time placements are required to keep up with assignments and juggle paid employment (with many having to forego much-needed casual work), and it’s not sustainable.

Students and unions, including the IEU, who represent staff in essential services such as teaching and nursing, have long lobbied government for financial support during practicums.

On 6 May this year, this campaigning led to welcome news. The federal government announced a new Commonwealth Prac Payment of \$319.50 a week for students in nursing, teaching and social work from mid-2025.

Mentoring in motion

In Queensland and the Northern Territory, since 2018, the IEU has offered its own mentoring program for members, which connects teachers in their first five years with experienced teacher mentors.

Experienced teacher and IEU member Heather Grundy, who supports the mentoring program, says mentoring is particularly important in the early years.

“Beginning teachers need to have the support of an impartial, professional classroom practitioner, who is tasked solely with supporting them,” Grundy says.

“Mentors provide a superb professional buddy role.

“They are colleagues who are experienced in the day-to-day life of a busy classroom, they’ve managed the juggling act of assessing, recording, reporting, they have hopefully found successful ways to manage their time and can listen to the beginning teacher and give them support,” she said.

Grundy says every mentoring relationship would be unique depending on the mentee’s requirements and the mentor’s availability.

“It can be a fortnightly planned hour in a far corner of the staffroom where the mentee can discuss what’s going well, what’s not going well, next steps on an assessment task or ask for a second set of eyes on a marked task.

“It can also be a text message to check in on a mentee, or an email if the mentee is absent from school.

“It could be a nod and a smile, on a difficult day. In the best cases, once the mentoring role is completed, it can look like a professional two-way collegial relationship.

“One where the two colleagues remain supportive for many years following the program,” Grundy says.

References

AITSL Guidelines for the induction of early career teachers in Australia: bit.ly/AITSLearlycareer

AITSL Guidelines for the induction of new school leaders in Australia: bit.ly/AITSLschoolleaders

Teacher Education Expert Panel: bit.ly/TeacherEdPanel



School refusal

Time for a rethink

Amid record levels of teacher burnout and declining student engagement, revitalising the foundational bonds of schooling demands a fresh perspective, Katie Fotheringham writes.

New findings from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reinforce the growing trend of prolonged student absences from school.

Among the reasons for this, 'boredom' ranks as the third most cited cause for students refusing to attend.

Since the onset of COVID-19, dropout rates have surged in several countries. Yet, the question remains: Why are Australian students choosing to distance themselves from the classroom?

Teacher burnout remains critical issue

Dr Pamela Patrick is a lecturer in the School of Educational Psychology and Counselling at Monash University.

She has worked as a school psychologist supporting adolescents and the school community with a range of mental health concerns, including school non-attendance. Her research involves teacher burnout, compassion fatigue and school non-attendance.

"The growing complexity of students' needs and the ongoing demands on teachers' time are some key factors contributing to teacher burnout," Dr Patrick says.

"Teachers often feel like they must provide more without

anything being taken off their plate in return, which often leads to higher workloads, stress, and burnout.

"Teachers also feel underappreciated by students, parents and society at large," she says.

Dr Patrick says her experiences as a school psychologist have shaped her understanding of teacher burnout and student disconnection.

"My experiences as a school psychologist have been that teachers, particularly middle level leaders or year level coordinators, are inundated with having to manage staff and student concerns," she says.

"The added administrative tasks put on teachers also mean there is less time for them to do the things they enjoy – being in the classroom."

Disconnect between reality and curriculum

Dr Patrick says emerging data from a study of teens with school non-attendance concerns has revealed that a disconnect between reality and curriculum taught in classrooms is a major reason for the rise in school non-attendance rates.

"This study has not been published yet; however, from a small sample of interviews conducted with young people, there seems to be a common thread of students feeling that what they are studying at school seems irrelevant to the real world," Dr Patrick says.

“Students report feeling disconnected with teachers, and teacher burnout rates are at an all-time high.”



“Students have asked for more practical utility in what they are studying and for teachers to highlight how certain aspects of the curriculum can be applied or translated into the real-world,” she says.

Bullying another key issue

Dr Patrick says her ongoing research revealed bullying was also a key factor in school non-attendance rates.

“This is further heightened when students perceive schools as not taking a proactive measure to address bullying-related concerns,” she says.

“Whether this is in part due to teachers being overworked and overloaded, thus not having enough time or resources to address these social issues, is an area that needs to be further explored.

“It is also worth noting that students who are identified as school non-attenders often reported social difficulties prior to COVID-19 lockdowns and following an extended period of home-based learning, the transition back to school has proven more challenging for this subset of students,” she says.

Dr Patrick says addressing bullying required addressing teacher burnout.

“I think it is important to firstly consider a review of teacher workloads,” Dr Patrick says.

“Some suggestions include streamlining administrative tasks, reducing the frequency of meetings or having a dedicated team of administrative staff to monitor and address issues around school non-attendance.

“In doing so, it is possible that teachers will have more time, capacity and resources to address issues around bullying and working on initiatives that promote supportive and inclusive environments.

“As part of this, it might also be worth getting student advocates to champion various inclusive initiatives.

“Inviting external speakers who may have lived experience in topics that the school is looking to raise awareness on is another way to create more safe and supportive schools,” she says.

Schooling in a post-pandemic world

Dr Patrick says the pandemic had impacted schooling preferences, classroom dynamics and teacher-student relationships.

“Our research (with a small sample of teens) has shown some students preferred home-based learning,” she says.

“Furthermore, having had some success with home-based learning, some students, particularly those who experience more social difficulties, prefer to turn to other modalities of school other than face-to-face.

“Many found a new way of schooling that suited them fine during the pandemic, bringing into question the need to change.

“This inevitably has consequences for teacher-student relationships from an academic and social standpoint.

“It is more likely that these students will fall behind on their school curriculum, and it puts extra onus on teachers to ensure these students are getting the necessary instruction or content when they are away from school.

“Not being present at school can inhibit the rapport and connection that teachers and students are able to form with each other, which poses further challenges to classroom dynamics,” Dr Patrick says.

More pressure on educators

Dr Patrick says there were continuously evolving demands being placed on educators – school refusal, vaping in schools, and the increasing prevalence of artificial intelligence.

“These added pressures, with little to no relief, have resulted in an increasing number of educators preferring to leave the profession altogether,” Dr Patrick says.

“Students report feeling disconnected with teachers, and teacher burnout rates are at an all-time high.

“At a time when the appeal of school is fast dwindling, it is time we started reimagining our schools.”

Trauma-informed approaches

Towards health and healing

Workload is the key driver of teacher shortages and burnout, but many experts believe the impact of complex emotional labour is being underestimated, Will Brodie writes.

Emotional labour was defined as “managing one’s own feelings in order to manage others” by sociology professor Arlie Russell Hochschild in her 1983 book *The Managed Heart*.

For teachers, a major source of emotional labour is dealing with students’ trauma – their “physiological and psychological response to any deeply upsetting or threatening situation,” writes education author Trynia Kaufman on Understood.org

Causes of trauma include physical or sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, living with a parent with a mental illness or substance-abuse issues, war and refugee trauma, discrimination, poverty, or community violence and loss. It can be a reaction to a single event or an ongoing response.

Enhancing safety, minimising harm

It is a major health problem: in Australia, 5 million adults have been affected by childhood trauma, and it is frequently “unrecognised, unacknowledged, and unaddressed”.

Little wonder that a recent Monash University study found more than 80 per cent of teachers had supported at least one student during their career who had been exposed to trauma.

The academics who carried out the survey recommended trauma-informed teacher training for Australian educators.

Trauma-informed training is about “enhancing safety, prioritising relationships, working towards healing, and minimising harm”, says Megan Corcoran, a former special needs teacher and IEU member who is now a university lecturer and founder of the Wagtail Institute.

She uses ‘wellbeing science’ to prevent burnout and improve outcomes for students and teachers.

“It’s not just there for extreme situations, but it is a way of being with each other. When we embrace

trauma-informed approaches, we are more compassionate, supportive, and responsive to the needs of those in our communities,” Corcoran told *IE*.

Using a trauma-informed approach, teachers can understand why students may be behaving in certain ways and what they might need.

“This not only supports the student in these moments, but it improves our wellbeing too.

“We must acknowledge that this is not easy work and that it takes conscious effort to look after ourselves while we are doing it. The first step is to recognise and understand our own stress responses and explore ways we can effectively regulate ourselves.”

That self-regulation is different for each of us, but Corcoran says it often involves using both proactive strategies (what helps us bring our best selves to work each day) and responsive strategies (what can I do for myself in those really high-stress moments).

“We know there are so many compassionate teachers making positive change in their classrooms, but we need the system to work with them, not against them.”

Take a breath

Her own proactive strategies include exercise, meditation and swimming and her responsive strategies include patterned breathing, taking a physiological sigh (a deep breath consisting of two inhales and one long exhale), and walking slowly around the classroom.

“There is a lot of talk about compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout. So, educators must be aware of the risks, stay engaged in activities they enjoy outside of work, and prioritise their important relationships and connections.

“That takes care of the initial physiological responses to trauma, but we must have ways to emotionally process trauma exposure as well. Schools must consider ways to effectively debrief, and provide access to things like counselling or supervision too.”

When ex-teacher and education writer Emily Kaplan sought similar tips from Professor Hochschild, she was surprised by the response.

“She explained that teachers who, apart from students and parents, tend to be the furthest from the centre of school power, are the ‘shock absorbers’ of an overwhelmed system.

Picking up the slack

Teachers are expected to pick up the slack when students “fail to get what they need from their families, from schools, from society as a whole”, Professor Hochschild says. She was speaking about the US education system, but Australian teachers will be familiar with the sentiment.

When teachers inevitably fail to solve the problems of the world for a student, they feel “personal and professional guilt”, which they suppress.

“Emotional labour begets more emotional labour.”

Professor Hochschild says because emotional labour is systemic, the answers also need to be systemic.

We need to stop lumping teachers with “disproportionate ownership over their students’ emotional lives” and create “an atmosphere in which teachers have a voice and feel respected”, she says.

A functioning care system makes emotional labour “gratifying rather than burdensome”.

Teachers must feel like they’re part of a larger team with proper emotional and psychological support structures available.



Wagtail Institute founder Megan Corcoran.

When teachers' expertise is respected, they can "assess their strengths and weaknesses, manage their wellbeing more proactively, and pursue their professional growth".

Number one priority

Corcoran agrees the priorities of the education system are most important.

"There is so much research to show that strong wellbeing results in academic performance, while low wellbeing results in a reduced capacity to learn," Corcoran says. "So, why isn't wellbeing the number one priority for students, for staff, and entire school communities?"

"If it was the priority, then teachers would be supported to learn wellbeing science and trauma-informed practice at university, school policies and procedures would be appropriately informed, and the curriculum would also look different to how it is now.

"We know there are so many compassionate teachers making positive change in their classrooms and wider school communities, but we need the system to work with them, not against them."

Unique education solutions

Some schools offer token 'off-the-shelf' wellbeing advice, imported from the corporate sector, which lacks understanding of education's unique stresses. Teachers have criticised some of these as 'toxic positivity' and 'cruel wellbeing' (see *When wellness becomes toxic*, p14).

To avoid such negative outcomes, staff need to be consulted when wellbeing measures are proposed.

Rose Hackman, author of *Emotional Labor: The Invisible Work Shaping Our Lives and How to Claim Our Power*, says to create an environment that accurately rewards emotional labour, we also need practical reforms: paid parental leave, universal child care and laws to address gendered poverty and pay inequality.

"In white-collar settings, visibility and reward for emotional labour at all levels of the hierarchy through pay, status and promotion would foster high performance and workplace stability, and confront double standards faced by marginalised workers."

Hackman says such policies are vital as workplaces evolve and emotional labour proves the essential human skill in "otherwise digitised, AI-dominant, impersonal environments".

"Rewarding such labour is not only just — it is, quite simply, common sense," Hackman says.

Corcoran says positive psychology concentrates on "strengths and enhancing wellbeing rather than on deficits and responding to challenges".

"Schools adopting wellbeing science see improvements in staff and student wellbeing, which then results in increased academic achievements, too," she says.

Emotional labour is at the centre of education. Corcoran wants that to be where staff wellbeing is situated.

"We need to stop lying to teachers about what the profession is all about,

acknowledge that young people are complex beings who aren't meant to sit in classrooms quietly for hours each day," she says.

"We need to move away from compliance and control and get a little more human-centred in the design of the system. I'd like to ask us all to consider what we want the next generation to be and then map out what it would take to get them there."

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The art of teaching

Why it's not an exact science

First came the generally accepted science of reading, now there's the science of learning. Teacher Learning Network executive officer Michael Victory asks if a science of teaching is next.

Scientific method is described as “a fixed procedure starting from observations and description of a phenomenon, progressing to formulation of a hypothesis, designing and conducting experiments to test the hypothesis, analysing the results, and ending with a conclusion”.

I doubt that those who are interested in a science of teaching really want to implement that scientific method in the classroom.

I suspect that the elements of the scientific method that are of interest are the certainty, repetition and guaranteed outcomes that come once the process has been completed; people want the conclusion after the testing of the hypothesis and analysis of the results. This is understandable.

No specific formula

Governments want to know that an investment of X dollars will bring Y results (in NAPLAN, PISA or similar). Employers want to know that students who have attended X years of schooling will have Y skills for the workplace.

Parents want the certainty that they will get Y results because there is an agreed way to reach the curriculum goals for the child.

For teachers who are struggling with workload and complex student needs, the idea of getting a predictable result, each and every time, is enormously appealing.

Repetition and guaranteed outcomes are tantalising enticements for following the scientific method.

However, the outcomes of the scientific method, let alone the process itself, are not achievable in education.

This is not an argument against science. Science has brought significant advances in our understanding of the world, and to our ability to live healthy and productive lives.

However, I agree with US educational researcher Robert Marzano, who says “there can be no formula for teaching”. What science has done for medicine it cannot do for education.

Functions of teaching

Teaching, as we understand it today, as an accredited profession, is not essential to all learning. People learn all the time, with and without formally qualified teachers, in and out of schools and structured education. For thousands of years, people have learned complex concepts without the benefit of trained and registered teachers. So what is the function of a teacher if people can learn without us?

I want to focus on two aspects. Firstly, teachers are asked to create an environment in which people can come together to learn with and from each other. Secondly, teachers are asked to bring to that learning community knowledge, concepts, ideas and material from outside the experience of the group.

That begins what many have called the art of teaching – a creative process that draws on the teacher's judgement about the group.

Purpose of education

Purpose is defined by government, the wider community and employers, systemic authorities – and sometimes by a particular ideology or philosophy.

One of the best thinkers on purpose of education is Dutch education philosopher, Gert Biesta. He has summarised the three interrelated purposes of education (2013):

- qualification – equipping people with the knowledge skills and dispositions that enable them to do things in their world, for example learning to read, gaining access to university or higher education
- socialisation – how people ‘become part of existing social, cultural and political practices and traditions’, for example what do students need to know to engage with the world in which they live, or how to be a citizen in the world
- subjectification – essentially, how a person is encouraged to exist fully as a free and independent person.

Another source for thinking about the purpose of education is the *Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) – Belonging, Being and Becoming*.

The document aims for children to have a strong sense of identity, to relate to and contribute to their world, to have a strong sense of wellbeing, and to be confident and involved learners and effective communicators.

If I was to draw some common ideas from Biesta and the EYLF, it is that formal education occurs in a community to which people belong, and that learning is a social activity that occurs within that community.

If learning in schools or early childhood settings is a communal (or social) activity, it logically follows that teaching is also a social encounter.

Teachers teach people, we do not teach rocks or trees or inanimate objects. We teach people as part of a social encounter; we communicate with them and they with us. Teachers are in a relationship with students. At that point, certainty and guaranteed outcomes break down.

First Nations’ knowledge

If we retreat to the earliest examples of formal education in the western world, we find schools where mentors like Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and Paul of Tarsus gathered people into communities to learn together about a new way to live. The essential element of these education settings was bringing people into relationship.

For tens of thousands of years, First Nations people have gathered to learn with and from each other. We are beginning to learn more about the sophisticated pedagogy of First Nations teachers, who had no access to the scientific method. Our 21st century schools reflect their heritage.

Social encounters and communication

Education occurs in social encounters between people who have been brought into a relationship, with communication moving back and forward between teacher and student.

It is not certain, it is not guaranteed and it cannot be repeated. We know from research how a child can be impacted each day by immediate or intergenerational trauma.

We know from the relationship-based education work by John Hendry (former IEU representative at Geelong Grammar School) of the daily impact of the relational quotient and attachment theory on the capacity for students to learn.

The research and the anecdotal observations of teachers are in accord: people learn most effectively from those with whom they have a positive relationship.

All about relationships

Teachers can and should learn from science, but in that moment of encounter between teacher and student, the one that occurs thousands of times in a teaching day, science cannot provide the answer about the best way to teach an idea, a concept or a formula to that person at that time. It requires judgment, it requires creativity, it requires a commitment to the ‘other’.

The art of teaching is about making a judgement on what I can do in that moment, on that day, with that student, in that classroom, that can make a positive difference.

This is the teaching encounter. As teachers, we should claim this knowledge, be proud of our skill, but keep learning to be more effective in each encounter.

For our profession, science can be a helpful guide, but our work will always call from us the art of building teaching relationships.

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Annual principal survey **Leadership's emotional load**

The shocking results of the annual Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey highlight the urgent need for action to address the health and wellbeing of school leaders, writes Emily Campbell.

Australian schools are continuing to experience a major crisis in principal recruitment and retention, driven by stress, burnout, workload and work intensification.

Invisible element of work

A new Monash University study seeks to explore the invisible demands and emotional labour experienced by Australian principals, to better understand how these additional pressures are impacting the nature of their work.

Professor Jane Wilkinson from Monash University's Faculty of Education, who is leading the research project, says the emotional intensity of principals' work has often been an invisible element of their work and was not easily quantified or measured.

"It's a tough time to be a principal – it's a rewarding job but does have its challenges," Professor Wilkinson says.

"One of the things that hasn't been explored in research is the emotional

demands and intensities of the work, particularly in the more challenging social times we face nowadays,” she says.

Professor Wilkinson says managing one’s emotions and navigating those of others is a crucial aspect of principals’ work, although little is known about it.

“Research needs to address not only the impact of excessive workload in terms of long hours, crucial though that is, but also the increased emotional intensity of this work,” Professor Wilkinson says.

“It’s the emotionally draining nature of the work, the hard hours where principals are dealing with more and more demanding, emotionally intense situations as they support troubled staff, students and parents.

“The invisible element of a principal’s work plays a significant role in increasing the stressors that impact their health and wellbeing,” she says.

Sharing stories

Funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant, the research project will occur between 2023 and 2025.

The first phase of the project began in 2023 and involves a survey that is open to public school principals throughout the country.

The research team says respondents will be asked to share at least one story about a critical incident they have experienced on the job.

Principals will detail their professional response to the incident, their personal response and what they learned from it.

A publicly available website curated by the research team will share a diverse selection of extracts from the principals’ stories gathered via survey, while protecting privacy by deidentifying principal respondents and schools.

It is hoped the published stories will build public awareness about the complexity and importance of principals’ work and begin an urgent public and media conversation about what needs to change and how.

Supporting school leaders

Professor Wilkinson says the goal is to build a picture of what life is like emotionally for principals working in Australian schools today.

“They need to be supported to do the best possible job they can because their role is crucial for making a difference in the lives of children and young people,” she says.

“Public schools in Australia overwhelmingly enrol the majority of students from disadvantaged and equity backgrounds, so this gives the emotional demands of public school principals a particular distinctive edge,” Professor Wilkinson says.

A range of principals’ associations and the Australian Education Union (AEU) are supporters of the project, which aims to generate new knowledge about principal workforce development and create a framework for policymakers that identifies the knowledge and practices necessary to develop leaders’ emotional skills and build bridges across diverse communities.

The research team hope their work will lead to reduced principal turnover, improved teacher retention, enhanced student outcomes and greater social cohesion.

“We want to support public school principals in every way we can, to make a difference in the conditions of their work,” Professor Wilkinson says.

Wellbeing on radar

Although public school principals are being surveyed for this study, the learnings about principals’ emotional labour and recommendations for supporting them to better deal with this aspect of their work will be directly relevant to the non-government education sector.

It comes as Federal Education Minister Jason Clare recently announced the government would commit to national action to support school principals.

At the time of writing, the details as to what exactly that national action looks like are vague, with no concrete outcomes or proposals arising from the most recent education ministers meeting on 26 April 2024.

However, minutes of the meeting indicate the ministers received a presentation from the Presidents of the Australian Secondary Principals Association and the Australian Primary Principals Association on the topic of school leaders’ wellbeing.

The ministers expressed their continued support for principals and school leaders and acknowledged the work already underway across jurisdictions to promote their wellbeing.

The wellbeing of principals and school leader will be discussed further at the next meeting of education ministers, who have asked officials to work with stakeholders and provide advice on further action to support school leaders.

Union membership matters

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes says branches of the IEU continue to highlight the significant workload pressures being imposed on school leaders.

“Regardless of their sector, location or state jurisdiction, principals nationwide are dealing with increasing workloads and further intensifying their work duties,” Hayes says.

“Our union is advocating a twofold response targeting the key drivers behind escalating work demands, developing new wellbeing measures in collective agreements that cover school principals.

“The working conditions for principals vary by their respective collective agreements; however, safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing and health of our school leaders is a priority in every negotiation.

“Members have for years raised concerns that many wellbeing measures available to leaders are left to policy rather than being explicit in their agreement.

“It’s essential that these protections are reviewed and updated through the collective bargaining process.

“We need to know where they are working or not working and how they might be improved. They are too important to be left to unregulated or vague policies,” he says.

Some segments of membership have successfully won the inclusion of wellbeing provisions like sabbatical leave and renewal leave in their agreements, which is significant.

“These successes can only be achieved through member strength and collective action,” Hayes says.

“Our union looks forward to the findings from the Monash University research project about the impact of emotional labour on school principals, and how we can use this to the benefit of our IEU member principals,” he says.

QNT principal member priorities

Queensland Catholic Diocesan school principals are in negotiations for a new collective agreement. The log of claims includes

- a new category of leave for maintaining wellbeing
- increased professional renewal leave provisions
- establishment of a plenary symposium of principals in each diocese to discuss workload and work intensification issues and report on strategies to combat them
- a right to disconnect clause
- further staffing and support in recognition of the increasing and expanded role of the principal.

NSW Catholic systemic principals

In mid-March, Principals in NSW Catholic systemic schools voted in favour of new enterprise agreements bringing a range of benefits, not least an 8% pay increase. For full details, see: ieu.asn.au/principals-major-wins



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