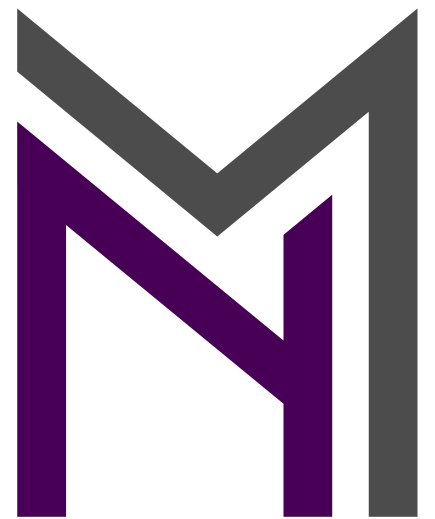




news month

The newspaper of the
Independent Education Union
of Australia NSW/ACT Branch
(vol 44 #2) March 2024

PP 100000871 ISSN No: 0728-4845



Restoring balance



‘Right to disconnect’ and stronger rights for union reps

IEU members welcome transformative changes to industrial relations laws that aim to reduce stress and burnout and enhance union representation in the workplace.

In a landmark overhaul of workplace laws, the federal Labor government has introduced reforms granting the ‘right to disconnect’ from unreasonable work-related communications outside of standard working hours.

This move is part of the federal government’s broader “Closing Loopholes” legislation aimed at enhancing workers’ rights through the *Fair Work Act*.

After persistent advocacy by unions and their members for fair pay, job security, and improved working conditions, these changes mark a victory for teachers and support staff. They set a precedent for workers’ rights in Australia.

IEU members have been active, engaging with politicians, participating in Senate hearings and appearing in the media and social media to emphasise the necessity of these reforms in educational settings, including primary and secondary schools, preschools and long day care centres.

Understanding the ‘right to disconnect’

Passed in February 2024, as part of the ‘Closing Loopholes #2’ changes to industrial relations laws, the right to disconnect delivers important gains for working people across many industries, but is especially relevant to school staff who

are drowning under unrelenting workloads. It empowers employees to decline work-related contact after hours unless it is deemed unreasonable to do so.

This new right comes into force on 26 August 2024; for businesses with fewer than 15 employees, it commences on 26 August 2025.

IEU members, in collaboration with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), have highlighted the undue pressure of extended work hours and the encroachment of work obligations into personal time. The government has acknowledged these concerns and enacted legislation to address them.

Refusing, responding and “reasonable”

Imagine wrapping up a busy day and sitting down to dinner with family or friends. Your phone buzzes and it’s an email from your principal, asking you to send details about a class you took earlier in the week. How should you respond?

Under the new legislation commencing in August, if you receive work-related messages or calls from your school or employer outside your working hours, you can refuse to respond, unless that refusal is unreasonable. This right extends beyond your employer to include third-

party work-related communications, such as those from parents or students.

Whether a refusal is unreasonable will depend on several factors, including the reason for the contact, how the contact is made and the level of disruption it causes, whether the employee is paid to be available outside normal working hours, the nature of the employee’s role and responsibility and the employee’s personal circumstances.

While the practical application of this right will be clarified through future legal interpretations, we anticipate exceptions may apply in urgent health and safety situations or when employees are compensated for their availability.

Protection from retaliation

The reforms also introduce protections against employer retaliation for employees exercising their right to disconnect, ensuring staff can maintain a healthy work-life balance without fear of adverse consequences.

If an employer seeks to penalise you for exercising your right to disconnect, talk to other members and see if it’s happening to them too, and contact the union so we can help. This right is a vital step towards safeguarding the wellbeing of school staff.

The reforms also include a dispute-resolution process so employees and employers can resolve issues around the right to disconnect.

The Fair Work Commission plans to implement ‘right to disconnect’ terms in all modern awards by 23 August 2024.

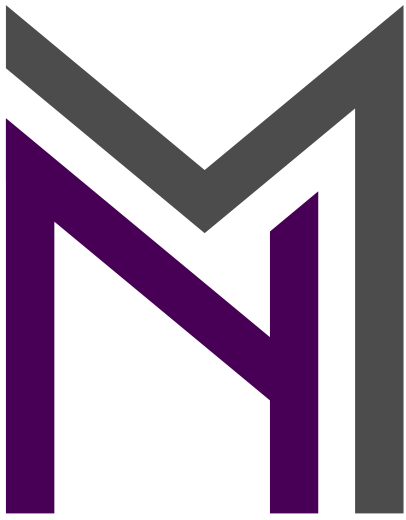
Stronger rights for union reps

Imagine you’re an IEU rep at your school where an important issue has arisen regarding how staff are paid, but you are concerned about using the school’s email system to understand the extent of the issue and organise a meeting.

As a result of the new tranche of changes that are now in place, reps now have the right to reasonable access to communication tools, making it easier to organise meetings with your colleagues to discuss important workplace matters during work hours. For union reps, these changes translate into more accessible and effective representation.

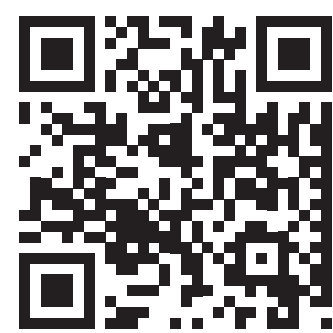
These legislative changes strengthen the rights of union reps (referred to as delegates in the legislation) to advocate for the industrial interests of their members. Key rights for union reps under the updated legislation include:

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Newsmonth is published eight times a year (two issues per term) by the Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch.

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This publication was produced on the unceded lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the lands where we live, learn and work, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



This year marks an important milestone for the IEU: our 70-year anniversary. And we need you to tell us your stories.

But first, a little history. On 24 September 1954 a group of male teachers held a meeting at Sydney Grammar School. They adopted a draft constitution of the Assistant Masters' Association (AMA) and elected an interim committee of eight men to "conduct the AMA's affairs". A full election for office bearers was to be conducted in March 1955.

By mid-November 1954, membership of the AMA stood at 51. The committee thought the AMA needed a minimum of 150 members to be viable. In April 1955 there were 157 members; but numbers fell below 150 later that year.

While women could join the AMA, they were not inclined to as they generally weren't employed in independent boys' schools. In 1965, a Mrs Martin from Queenwood accepted an invitation to attend AMA Council along with 20 other representatives from seven other independent girls' schools.

In 1966, in what was to be a pivotal year for our union, the AMA's Annual General Meeting agreed to admit women teachers from girls'

schools by a vote of 21 to 8. A vote to change the name of the union to the Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association (AMMA) was subsequently carried 18 to 3. It would remain the AMMA until 1972 when it became the NSW Independent Teachers' Association (ITA).

In 1994 the ITA became the Independent Education Union, to reflect coverage of support staff in non-government schools.

From these humble beginnings, in 2024 the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch enjoys a collective strength of more than 32,000 members supported by 80 staff across five offices.

As we approach our 70-year anniversary, we're planning to share our history in the pages of *Newsmonth*, with the help of former office holders from the Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association (AMMA), the Independent Teachers' Association (ITA) and the current IEU.

But we need to hear from our members too. If you have any stories, articles or memorabilia that may be of interest to our IEU history project, please email us: history@ieu.asn.au



Tell us what you think

What's the funniest thing a student said to you in 2023?

We asked you to share some amusing anecdotes, and you shared plenty.

Love how the little ones have no concept of age. I've never 'admitted' how old I am, but they know I have adult kids. When they saw a picture of me in the yearbook holding my '3-0' balloons for 30 years of teaching at my school, they were ecstatic to discover "She's 30!!!"

A kindergarten student was looking out the window with me when there was a freak hailstorm and asked me: "Is it snowing?"

After asking what nicknames the kids had for me, one said "We don't have a nickname for you, Miss, because we like you." It took a huge effort not to laugh, and I had a quick word about not swearing at teachers, even for nicknames.

When mentioning I had been ill for a few days with stomach issues, I was asked if I had gonorrhea.

"Where have you been? Thank God you're back." This was after I returned for a few casual days post retirement.

Context: I work with my husband. Student: "You mean Sir isn't your brother?"

While on the bus taking students to the beach for a surfing day, one student asked: "Miss, how do the sharks know not to swim between the flags?" That was Year 9!

Marking Religious Education essays, on the rite of marriage, a student wrote: "They exchange vowels."

Teaching medieval history to Year 8. "OK, there were two types of soldiers in the Middle Ages. Infantry and ... ?" Student: "Adultery." [Correct answer: Cavalry.]

A kindergarten student asked, "How old are you?" to which I always reply, "How old do you think I am?" Several students answered with various ages. One student says, "50." Another student pipes up: "Nah, if she was 50, she'd be dead!"

Kindergarten student dressing up for "100 days of school" celebration pointed to an adviser who wasn't dressed up while all the other kindergarten teachers were. "She doesn't need to dress up, she already looks 100."

Conversation with Year 9 after teaching about climate change. Me: "Sorry class, my generation mucked things up and it will be your generation of scientists who will come up with the solutions to fix it." Student: "Oh, we're stuffed". Me: "No [you're not], my generation came up with Wi-Fi and computers, the generation before that came up with flight, I know you can do it!" Student: "Have you met the kids today?"

Kindergarten child: "Wow Miss, you can grow white hairs!" I replied: "It's my superpower!"

A student told my partner he needed to get out of the dead-end job he was stuck in - doing the same thing, year in year out, and lose some weight. That "dead-end job" was teaching the very student who said this to him.

During a lesson, I mentioned, "When I was your age ...", and a child responded with, "I thought this was a maths lesson, not a history lesson."



Carol Matthews
Secretary



The IEU anticipates that bargaining for new multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) will commence with the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) in coming weeks.

The IEU was anticipating the first meeting would be held on Wednesday 27 March, but this meeting has now been deferred. When we do meet, the AIS should give the union the list of schools involved in the bargaining. If your school is participating, the AIS has advised that you will receive a Notice of Employee Representational Rights (NERR).

Teacher pay

Rates of pay are clearly a major problem. Teacher pay rates in all MEAs have either dropped below other school sectors or lost the traditional premium when compared with pay

rates in other school sectors. Four years with increases totalling 8% is simply not enough!

The MEAs were negotiated in the period when inflation was much lower than now, the public sector pay cap restricted pay rises, and schools were recovering from the disruption of COVID. In addition, bargaining rights for employees were more limited than those under the current Fair Work Act provisions.

Now it's time for a major realignment!

Teachers under the Hybrid Model MEA are paid below NSW government and Catholic systemic teacher rates at all steps on the incremental scale. The starting rate for new graduates is \$3000 below the government and Catholic systemic rate and the top rate for a teacher accredited as Proficient is \$7000 below the comparable rate – and it takes longer to reach it.

The Independent Schools (Steps) Model MEA has similar problems to the Hybrid Model MEA.

The Standards MEA was historically touted as having the highest teacher pay rates in Australia.

The top rate for a Proficient teacher is now a whopping \$15,000 below the top Proficient rate in a NSW government school. Even the Band 3 rate only just scrapes in above the government and Catholic rate by \$600 per annum.

Of course, this disparity will get worse in October this year, when NSW government and Catholic systemic teacher pay rates are expected to increase further.

Support staff pay

Rates of pay are again a problem. IEU analysis shows support and professional staff under the Support and Operational Staff MEA are paid below their colleagues in NSW government and Catholic systemic schools.

School assistants are typically paid \$8000 per annum less in independent schools and administrative staff can be paid about \$10,000 less. Registered psychologists are an extreme example, paid \$30,000 less per annum than their colleagues in government schools. Other classifications are also disadvantaged.

Conditions

We will be consulting with members to ensure conditions match those in other school sectors, including paid parental leave for primary care givers and their partners in particular.

Next steps

IEU organisers will be visiting schools in coming weeks to discuss the elements of our claim.

Please encourage all your colleagues to join the IEU, and make sure there is a union rep and chapter committee in your school. Our ability to bargain for the best possible pay and conditions across independent schools depends on our strength in each workplace.

Let's use the new delegates' rights and other recent improvements to industrial relations laws (see p1) to make sure this campaign really delivers for our members.



David Towson
Deputy Secretary



The IEU is in the final stages of bargaining with Christian Schools Australia (CSA) on behalf of members in 35 Christian Schools across NSW.

While the current draft agreements provide for pay increases for both teachers and support staff as well as graduated improvements to parental leave, CSA is proposing a pay freeze for teachers in 2025.

While the rate of inflation is receding, cost-of-living pressures are still taking a toll on our members, who are acutely aware that a pay freeze is in effect a cut to real wages over time.

Members are also highly aware of the impact of the former NSW government's 12-year wages cap on teacher salaries across the board and its subsequent impact on students choosing to pursue careers other than teaching.

So members are perplexed as to how a 0% pay offer in 2025 could be on the table in the midst of a teacher shortage crisis.

Teacher offer falls behind

Teacher pay rates in these Christian schools are lagging behind those in government and Catholic systemic schools from anywhere between 10.3% (-\$7980) at the starting level and 6.8% (-\$7840) at the top of the scale.

The IEU is deeply concerned that when NSW government and Catholic systemic schools receive their anticipated salary increases in October 2024 and October 2025, teachers in CSA schools will fall even further behind.

When you consider that the superannuation guarantee payments are made on ordinary time earnings, the retirement savings of our members in CSA schools are also being negatively impacted. (Note: The superannuation guarantee rate is due to move from 11% to 11.5% on 1 July 2024.)

Support staff pay rises

The IEU and CSA have agreed in-principle to a proposed agreement for support staff that includes a 4% salary increase for each year of the next four years commencing from 1 February 2024. We also acknowledge the offer to improve personal leave and paid parental leave for our support staff members.

Reasonable and sustainable claim

Staff in the relevant schools will have received an IEU *NewsExtra* detailing the current offer and details of the negotiations. It is also available on our website (ieu.asn.au).

The IEU's claim is not excessive. It is also sustainable, as evidenced by information we have received from a handful of these schools that are already paying their teachers salaries in line with Catholic systemic schools.

IEU organisers have been visiting CSA schools and talking

with members and principals about our concerns. Members in Christian schools tell us they are committed to their work and enjoy serving their communities. But this does not mean teachers in Christian schools should be paid less than those in government schools or Catholic systemic schools.

Teacher classification changes

The proposed classification restructure to match NSW government schools in July 2026 means that from then, teachers will progress faster through the scales, accessing higher salary steps in line with their counterparts in government schools. The IEU welcomes this proposal.

Yet regrettably, CSA refuses to assure us that rates will not be lower than equivalent NSW government school rates at that time.

Standing together

Collectively we must continue to promote our profession and attract worthy and committed candidates to teach in Christian schools. We call on the Christian school employers to join us in this endeavour.

Busting the maternal myth

Why women become teachers

Tina Ruello
President



I'm writing this report on the eve of International Women's Day and while it will be read after the event, I trust its sentiments do not have a use-by date or are anachronistic.

Sometimes, it's difficult being female and a teacher. Currently the teaching profession is female-dominant, and it is no surprise that it is still the lowest paid of many professions (recent pay rises in government and non-government schools have helped in some respects), but it continues to flounder as a choice career path for both females and males. The status is low relative to other money-making, illustrious professions. You don't enter teaching for the money!

While teaching may be attractive to women ("Is this a stereotype?" you may be thinking, look at the patriarchy for an answer) think parental leave, personal leave, job flexibility, all those wonderful school holidays being with kids, parents, elderly aunts ... it has become increasingly difficult balancing work and family life. For some, we have our own children, then have the responsibility of another group of parents' and carers' children.

Caring for, nurturing and teaching children is not innate or "natural" for women. We don't possess special genes or maternal skills; nor are we more comfortable with children in our midst.

We are learned, intelligent, highly functioning individuals, with bachelor's degrees and master's

degrees, specialists in our fields of physics, economics, mathematics, STEM, TAS, English etc.

Primary school teachers and teachers in the early childhood education and care sector are not imbued with extra doses of "love" for other people's children. We are teachers because we genuinely believe that making a difference to the lives of students is an important, fundamental job in society. We have the power, in our respective classrooms, to create the citizens of tomorrow. That's one hell of a job!

I became a teacher by default – a fall-back position, you may say. It was in my early years at university that I realised that teaching children was transformative. A metamorphosis occurs when darkness becomes light, when words become practice, when knowledge becomes understanding.

In the ensuing years, I have helped shape (teaching is a collaborative process) students' adult lives: a political speechwriter; a flight attendant; an intensive-care nurse; a beauty pageant winner; a commercial, legal strategist; an architect; a nun; a Rhodes scholar and a smattering of teachers. Not bad.

In those moments of cynicism and defeat, when the piles of marking are seemingly self-propagating or mindless, useless paperwork has a life of its own, and someone just has to adjust the thermostat in the staffroom, I remember why I entered teaching – not because I'm a woman who looked for a cushy job feeding my maternal desires, but because I am great at what I do, and society is all the better for it.

Happy belated International Women's Day!



Celebrating pay gap transparency

Lyn Caton
Assistant Secretary



After celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) only weeks ago (8 March), it's the perfect time to acknowledge the landmark publication of the gender pay gap at companies and organisations around Australia with over 100 employees. It's especially fitting given the theme of this year's IWD – invest in women and accelerate progress.

We've marked IWD for more than a century, with the first held in March 1911. It's a day of collective global activism and celebration that belongs to all those committed to forging women's equality. As feminist, journalist and activist Gloria Steinem reportedly said, "The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist, not to any one organisation, but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights."

IWD is a significant day for women in unions, as members celebrate their campaigns that delivered fairer laws that better support women and equality in the workplace.

Unions have campaigned for equal pay and workplaces free of discrimination. Publicising the ongoing gender pay gap between male and female workers is an important tool for change.

The gender pay gap is not the same as equal pay, which is where women and men are paid the same for doing the same work or different work of equal or comparable value. This has been a legal requirement since 1969.

The gender pay gap is the difference between the average pay of women and men across organisations, industries and the workforce as a whole. It arises from social and economic factors

that combine to reduce women's earning capacity over their lifetime.

The new transparency of pay rates at nearly 5000 employers is the result of important reforms passed by the federal government in 2023. The pay gaps of companies with more than 100 employees are available online on the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) website.

“Women with less security and less bargaining power are more likely to be subject to challenging work practices.”

This year, the overall national gender pay gap between male and female workers was reduced to 19% as a result of union victories for women workers, including historic increases to the minimum wage and improvements in wages in female-dominated industries. But this gap is still too wide.

As a union with a membership comprising 72% women, the IEU played a critical role in securing stronger rights to flexible work as well as access to multi-employer bargaining in feminised sectors such as early childhood education.

New limits on the use of fixed-term contracts were particularly important for IEU members with thousands of women working in schools stuck on insecure short-term contracts. These members now have a clear pathway to job security and union support will embed these important gains.

There have been important changes to existing workplace laws which put the focus on gender equality. The *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022* included long overdue action on measures to reduce the pay gap and prohibit pay secrecy. The Fair Work Commission will also help scrutinise the pay gap, including through a review of about 1.1 million workers in female-dominated occupations under award conditions.

The IEU notes that more than 50% of the workplaces that have reported their figures have a pay gap of over 9%. While the gender pay gap shows some improvement, especially in education, lower earnings by women is still a national shame. On average, across all industries, women earn \$26,393 less per annum.

The new (WGEA) reporting requirements show positive overall trends in the education sector, while at the same time highlighting embarrassing failings by many school employers.

For the most part, less than 50% of education and training employers have an equal remuneration policy, have conducted a gender pay gap analysis or taken action as a result of a pay gap analysis.

Improving the pay and conditions of working women is good for equality, good for economic policy, and good for our society. The pay gap is symptomatic of work done mainly by women being undervalued. Women with less job security and less bargaining power are more likely to be subject to challenging work practices.

The IEU will continue to be a voice for women and girls in education and the wider community, as we collectively strive to invest in women and accelerate progress in our schools and other workplaces.



Ringing endorsement

Catholic independent members vote yes to new MEAs

Teachers and support staff in Catholic independent schools Models A, B and C have voted overwhelmingly to endorse new multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs). It's been a long road, with the victory following almost three years of bargaining.

Through a formal voting process, between 90%-100% of teachers and support staff in all three models approved the agreements.

"We were able to achieve this outstanding result because of the many members who were prepared to turn up at meetings at their schools and make clear their support for our claims," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "This support was essential for our success."

This big win means pay rises and improved parental leave for teachers and support staff in all three groups of Catholic independent schools, referred to as Models A, B and C schools. The agreements will bring positive changes for teachers and support staff in about 40 schools.

The MEAs for Model A will be in place for two years; and the Models B and C MEAs will be in place for three years.

For an MEA to be legally binding on an employer, it must be endorsed by a vote of employees of that employer and lodged

with the Fair Work Commission for approval, and we anticipate this will occur by the end of April. Once approved, we will post the full agreements on our website.

Better pay and conditions

The newly endorsed agreements include significant pay rises which reflect the increases seen in government and Catholic schools in NSW. There are additional pay rises for Models A and B, which are maintaining their premiums.

The new MEAs also provide for several improved conditions, including more detailed rights to request flexible working arrangements, a more flexible requirement for the evidence needed for personal/carer's leave, plus a number of boosts to parental leave.

How we got here

To secure the new agreements, the IEU defeated a last-minute obstacle posed by the employers. Last year, following in-principle agreements, the IEU presented a draft of the MEAs to Catholic Employment Relations (CER), who inserted provisions stipulating that an employee who left prior to the formal commencement of the MEAs would not be entitled to back pay.

While most schools had commenced paying the new rates and the back pay in accordance with the in-principle agreements late in 2023, not all schools did this, so the right to back pay was jeopardised.

The union pushed back – back pay was a key component of the deal and we insisted the employers honour it.

After CER refused to withdraw this provision, the IEU lodged a bargaining dispute with the Fair Work Commission in early December 2023. The commission scheduled a conference to resolve the dispute, but just days before it was to go ahead, CER returned to the negotiating table, on 18 January 2024. They agreed to remove the provision that would have prevented employees who leave from receiving back pay.

By standing firm, the IEU reached agreement with the employers on the terms of all the MEAs. We are always stronger when we stand together.

The IEU congratulates members on their substantially improved pay and conditions, and we thank you for your support and determination through this lengthy process.

Continued from page 1

Restoring balance

'Right to disconnect' and stronger rights for union reps

- **Representation:** Delegates can now represent both union members and potential members, especially in disputes with employers.
- **Communication:** There is a provision for reasonable communication with members and potential members regarding industrial interests.
- **Workplace access:** Delegates are entitled to reasonable access to the workplace and its facilities to represent industrial interests effectively.
- **Training time:** Delegates can access reasonable paid time during normal working hours for union-related training, with an exception for small businesses.

The term 'reasonable' in these contexts will be evaluated based on various factors, including the employer's size, nature, and the resources available at the workplace.

What employers cannot do

Employers are now prohibited from:

- unreasonably refusing to engage with workplace reps

- making false or misleading statements to a workplace rep, and
- hindering or obstructing the exercise of a rep's rights.

Should an employer infringe upon these prohibitions, there is a civil remedy provision. The burden of proof lies with the employer to demonstrate that their actions were reasonable.

Union communication

Moreover, the reforms enable reps to communicate union-related information to all staff, including non-members, and to invite them to union meetings. This broader reach is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and informed union environment.

By July 2024, all new enterprise agreements and modern awards must include specific clauses that outline these rights for delegates, further cementing their role and the protections afforded to them.

These legislative enhancements are a significant stride forward in supporting the rights of union representatives, ensuring they

can serve the best interests of their members with greater authority and security. This makes crystal clear your right to talk union business at work.

What the reforms mean in practice

The recent reforms in workplace laws are a game-changer for teachers and support staff. They are not just about legal rights; they're about improving quality of life, respecting personal time and strengthening union representation in the workplace. Here are some of the key gains:

Control over personal time: With the 'right to disconnect', the obligation to check and respond to work-related messages after hours is gone. This means your time outside work is yours to enjoy, uninterrupted by the demands of the workplace.

Stronger representation: Union reps have been granted more robust tools to share union information and advocacy. These enhanced rights ensure reps can organise, communicate, and advocate effectively for the collective interests of staff without unnecessary barriers.

Reminder of your rights: These new rights serve as a protective shield, allowing you to disconnect from work without the worry of repercussions.

For union reps: The reforms are a call to action. They provide you with a stronger platform to support and represent your colleagues, ensuring your voices are heard and your rights are upheld.

These changes foster a supportive and sustainable work environment in which the wellbeing of teachers and support staff is a priority.

The IEU is proud to have played a part in the passage of these important new laws. We urge you to enjoy your well-deserved personal time and embrace the enhanced ability to advocate for a better workplace.

Neal Bent Industrial Officer

See also IE magazine, 'Big wins in new IR laws', p25, packaged with this edition of *Newsmonth*.

Fighting on two fronts: **Goodstart and KU**

On 28 February, the IEU, along with delegates from two other unions, travelled to Canberra to meet with federal ministers and other politicians to press for better pay and conditions for teachers at Goodstart Early Learning centres.

The IEU is calling for any government-funded pay increases that come from the multi-employer Supported Bargaining Agreement for long day care centres to be passed on to teachers at Goodstart long day care centres.

Talking to MPs

IEU organiser Kate Damo and industrial officer Verena Heron, together with IEU member Kylie Clewett and representatives from Goodstart Early Learning met with Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly and Federal Minister for Education Jason Clare about the need for professional recognition for early childhood teachers through a pay rise.

Teachers and educators also had the opportunity to share their stories with Labor politicians Sally Sitou MP (Member for Reid), Lisa Chesters MP (Member for Bendigo), Senator Jess Walsh (Victoria), Senator Karen Grogan (South Australia) and Patrick Gorman MP (Member for Perth). Patrick Gorman shared that his mother

is a dedicated early childhood teacher who recently won a lifetime commitment award from Early Childhood Australia.

IEU member Kylie Clewett shared her personal story and advocated for teachers to be recognised and paid as professionals. Kylie said the sector is experiencing a staffing crisis and we need to act urgently and collectively for change. Kylie encouraged all early childhood teachers and educators to speak up for change.

Education Minister Jason Clare listened to our concerns and demonstrated an understanding of the staffing crisis in the early childhood education and care sector.

We look forward to the outcomes of the Supported Bargaining Agreement for long day care centres and we're hopeful of some positive news for the sector in the May federal budget.

Goodstart

Goodstart has said it will not commit to wage increases until the outcomes of the Supported Bargaining Agreement in long day care centres are known.

As the largest not-for-profit early learning provider, Goodstart has a big impact on the sector. It recently needed to shut some of its rooms due to staff shortages. A meaningful pay

increase could go a long way to attracting and retaining teachers, Damo says.

Bargaining for a new enterprise agreement for Goodstart teachers continued the day after the IEU's visit to Canberra. Unions and delegates heard the employer's response to our log of claims. Disappointingly, our claim for a 30-minute paid lunch break for teachers was rejected, as were our claims for an increase to non-contact time and personal leave. But we will not let this rest.

Our claim for a closedown period between Christmas and New Year was supported in principle, but only if Goodstart can successfully lobby the government to apply CCS funding during this time.

Goodstart supports our claim of developing a working party to review the amount of documentation and administrative work teachers are required to do.

Increases to pay and allowances will not be decided until a decision is made about the Supported Bargaining Agreement in the Fair Work Commission.

The next Goodstart bargaining meeting will be held in late March and we will update members at the time.

KU

Negotiations continue for better pay and conditions at KU Children's Services.

IEU organisers Lisa James and Kate Damo met with KU representatives on 6 March.

The current offer, which was rejected by 90 per cent of members who provided feedback, falls short in critical areas, including administration time for directors and time for Educational Leaders to fulfill their duties, such as reviewing the centre program and mentoring other teachers and educators.

As it stands, Educational Leaders are not allocated any time at KU centres and directors are expected to fit this into their administration time, which is taken up by compliance tasks.

Members at KU centres tell us they are regularly working 10-20 hours of unpaid overtime per week. The union is calling for a minimum of four hours per week for Educational Leaders and at least two days of non-contact time per week for directors.

Representatives from KU say they are listening to members' concerns. The union will continue to fight for a better deal for KU teachers.

KU is currently undertaking financial modelling.

Kate Damo and Lisa James, Organisers

Government schemes Supporting your professional skills

Michelle Thompson

Vice President Early Childhood Services



Health and Development Participation Grant Program

Once upon a time, families could easily access local early childhood health clinics that had an early childhood nurse on hand to support families with the health and development of their children, from birth to five years.

These clinics were an invaluable resource to parents – conducting health and development checks and tracking children's development.

Such drop-in services are harder to come by now, leaving us wondering who

supports these families and what the impact is down the track.

A new government scheme called the Health and Development Participation Program is for eligible services to support family access to these checks, to be conducted by health professionals. There is a dedicated team in each local health area who will implement the program to those services.

Applications for services close 31 March.

Paid Practicum Subsidy

The deadline is fast approaching for last applications to the Paid Practicum scheme and Professional Development subsidy scheme. Applications close on 10 May.

The schemes were designed to address an urgent need in supporting the training and skills of early childhood and care educators and teachers.

While this primarily targeted regional, remote and very remote communities,

First Nations educators and services are eligible, regardless of location.

Eligibility for the scheme is focused on services who receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS), and assist students with up to four weeks of subsidised funding to the service, based on students' practicum requirements for up to four weeks per semester.

We need you! Ambassadors wanted for preschool pay campaign

Preschools are in crisis. Teachers are leaving and workload is increasing while pay is stagnant. You deserve better.

To secure the sector and strive for a better future, we need the NSW Government to fund our community preschools properly. The IEU is taking the lead.

We are planning to use the new workplace laws to bring the sector together to campaign for better salaries and conditions.

How new laws offer a real opportunity

New industrial relations laws mean we can bargain for one multi-employer enterprise agreement to apply to almost all preschools across NSW.

We can also demand the NSW Government fund the pay rises and conditions you need in your preschool.

We need you!

We are calling for expressions of interest from our members to become ambassadors to champion our campaign.

You'll play a vital role in shaping the future of preschool education by participating in bargaining and campaigning efforts.

We will also be sponsoring some members to attend our campaign launch by assisting with travel costs and providing release support (please note, funded places are limited).

Even if you can't come to our campaign launch, let us know if you are interested in being involved in the campaign so we can keep in touch.

Campaign launch

When: 10am-3pm, Friday 5 April

Where: IEU Office, 485-501 Wattle Street, Ultimo

To express your interest in becoming an ambassador, email ieu@ieu.asn.com.au



Don't miss Bedrock, your early childhood education magazine

Our first edition of Bedrock for 2024 is packaged with this edition of Newsmonth.

Read about an incredible trio of women who run an early childhood education program for displaced children in refugee camps in Lebanon.

We talk to two Educational Leaders about the joys and challenges of their role, which varies widely throughout NSW.

Read about the wonderful Rachael Phillips at Birrelee Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Service, the winner of the 2023 HESTA award for Individual Leadership. She advances culturally appropriate teaching and thinking every day.

This edition is packed with a variety of topics, including encouraging inclusion, healthy body image and trauma-informed practice. Don't miss it!



Union power trebles at St Lucy's

Since late 2023, IEU membership at St Lucy's School in Wahroonga has trebled – from 18 members in August last year to 63 members in March 2024. St Lucy's, a Catholic independent school for students with disabilities, is now very much a 'union school' and the chapter is still growing.

Why the membership explosion?

For many years, St Lucy's was part of the Catholic independent schools Model C group, adopting its enterprise agreement. However, in September 2023, staff were surprised to hear from their employer that St Lucy's would move away from Model C and onto its own agreement. This was initially met with optimism as the employer said the change was to address the complexity and uniqueness of the work teachers and support staff engage in at the school. As bargaining commenced and initial offers came through to the IEU, it became clear the offer was inferior to similar schools in the area and to comparative sectors state-wide.

Staff at St Lucy's would be worse off than if they had stayed on the Model C agreement.

A disappointing offer for teachers
The first offer saw teachers set to take a significant pay-cut had they accepted it. Through grassroots action, union pressure and membership growth, a pay offer that matches other Catholic independent schools has now been agreed to in principle. However, the employer is still refusing to match improvements in parental leave conditions that the IEU has successfully won for members in Catholic systemic schools and Catholic independent schools. This issue was conveyed to members via the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) on International Women's Day – the timing could not have been more insulting.

An insulting offer for support staff
Despite feeling disappointed at not receiving improvements in parental leave, teachers at St Lucy's are generally satisfied with their pay

offer. But the same cannot be said for support staff, particularly teacher's aides.

St Lucy's employs twice as many teacher's aides as teachers, with two allocated to every class on a full-time basis. The current offer for teacher's aides is unacceptable; they would begin the new agreement period moderately worse off than they would have been under Model C. However, as the years go on, the differentials become even worse.

Members are fired up and feel undervalued. "It is just disrespectful! We are ready to walk," said one member. "We work so hard for these children. But we don't feel supported by the school at all."

Another member said: "I came from another Model C school and this offer is quite insulting."

Teachers stand by support staff
Recent Chapter meetings have been tense but rising numbers and increasing engagement show members united in supporting one another. Teacher's aides who are set to lose out are justifiably upset, but teachers at the school are

highly vocal, speaking up in support of their valued support staff colleagues.

"They are so important, we don't want to see good staff leave," said one.

"I've been a teacher at St Lucy's for many years and love the school, but I can't understand how our support staff can be so underpaid," said another member.

Unity and solidarity
The display of unity and solidarity at St Lucy's highlights exactly what it means to be union. Once a relatively small Chapter of 18 members, St Lucy's is now union strong, union proud and ready to fight for a fair deal for all staff at the school. The IEU will continue bargaining with the employer in the near future. We are committed to achieving just and fair outcomes that reflect the dedication and professionalism of all staff at St Lucy's.

Charles Wheeler Organiser
Katie Camarena Journalist

Cranbrook in the news for wrong reasons

The IEU is liaising with members at Cranbrook School following an ABC Four Corners current affairs program that aired serious allegations about the boys' school in Sydney's eastern suburbs.

The allegations concerned the school's internal culture for both students and staff, and suggested that Headmaster Nicholas Sampson had covered up abuse allegations at previous schools.

Mr Sampson resigned as Cranbrook principal on Friday 8 March, as the school further investigates the allegations.

"The IEU supports safe workplaces free from bullying and harassment," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "As a union, we provide advice and representation to members who experience work health and safety issues in the workplace."

Also on 8 March, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Federal Education Minister Jason Clare had asked his department "to investigate the issues raised in the media relating to Cranbrook and take any appropriate action".

The union will continue consulting with members at Cranbrook. We have previously assisted members at the school, and we had earlier raised concerns about the school's disciplinary processes.

We urge teachers and support staff at Cranbrook who share their colleagues' concerns to join the Chapter. The union is here to help.

Asbestos mulch in schools

What's happening and how the union can help

In the past few months, mulch contaminated with asbestos has been discovered at some 75 sites (and counting) in greater Sydney, including parks, hospitals, median strips, aged care facilities, and schools.

The far-reaching environmental health issue was first uncovered in the Rozelle parklands in Sydney's inner west in January. But with more locations still being found, the full extent of the contamination may not be known for some time.

Inhaling asbestos over a long period of time can cause chronic lung diseases, including asbestosis and mesothelioma, which is a type of cancer.

However, asbestos comes in two forms that pose different levels of risk. Non-friable asbestos is mixed with bonding materials, such as cement. Friable asbestos can be turned into a powder by hand, which poses a more serious risk to health due to airborne fibres.

The NSW Environment Protection Agency has established an asbestos taskforce to manage the outbreak. Information on impacted sites and whether they have been remediated is updated regularly and can be accessed by the public.

In conversations with our members and their employers, the IEU has become aware of instances where individual schools and

employers are taking a proactive approach to managing risk.

We commend these schools for undertaking additional testing and implementing safety measures. We support this cautious approach for staff, students, families and school communities, even when the risk of asbestos being present is low, as well as in cases where the NSW Environment Protection Agency has already undertaken asbestos testing.

A small number of Catholic and independent schools in Sydney have been named in media coverage as confirmed or potential sites of asbestos contamination. Some schools made the decision to close temporarily for testing and, if necessary, remediation. Both Domremy College in Five Dock and St Luke's Catholic College in Marsden Park closed for brief periods.

The union appreciates that schools will take action based on their specific circumstances and the needs of students and staff.

As always, the IEU is here for members who may have workplace healthy and safety (WHS) issues.

"If you have concerns about asbestos or other WHS issues impacting your school, please contact the IEU for advice and support," said IEU Organiser Lee Cunningham.

Independent Education Union of Australia
New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory Branch
ELECTION NOTICE - E2024/34

Scheduled Election

Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009

Nominations are called for:

Sub-Branch Delegate to Council from the following Sub-branches:

- Central Coast (6)
- Central Metropolitan (6)
- Central West (6)
- Cumberland (6)
- Hunter Valley (6)
- Ku-Ring-Gai (6)
- Lansdowne (6)
- Metropolitan East (6)
- Mid North Coast (6)
- Monaro (6)
- North Coast (6)
- North West (5)
- Northern Beaches (5)
- Northern Suburbs (6)
- Penrith/Blue Mountains (6)
- Principals (4)
- Riverina (6)
- South Coast (6)
- South East (5)
- Southern Suburbs (6)

Nominations, which must be in writing and comply with the registered rules of the Organisation, may be made at any time from 27/03/2024.

Additional forms are available from the Returning Officer.

Prospective candidates and nominators should verify their financial status and any other qualifications required by the Organisation's rules prior to lodging nominations.

Nominations must reach the Returning Officer via the lodgement method(s) stipulated below **not later than 4:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) on 24/04/2024.**

How to lodge nominations, nominations must be lodged via the following method(s):

By Email: A properly completed nomination form including all necessary signatures and attachments may be scanned and submitted as a pdf file to IEBnominations@aec.gov.au

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Emails to the AEC inbox that appear to be spam may be blocked. It is the responsibility of senders to ensure that their email reaches the AEC before the deadline for nominations.
2. In order to be able to be received by the AEC, emails (including attachments) should be no greater than 6 MB in size.
3. You may call 03 9285 7111 to enquire about the status of your nomination.
4. The subject line of your email should read: **"ANCAZ – E2024/34 IEUA NSW/ACT Branch – Nomination [insert name]"**

Withdrawing Nominations

Nominations cannot be withdrawn after 4:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) on 01/05/2024.

Candidate Statements

Candidates may include with their nomination form a statement not exceeding 200 words containing only the candidate's personal history and/or policy statement and/or a passport-sized photograph.

Only statements which comply with the Rules and are received by the Returning Officer by 4:00pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST)) on 24/04/2024 can be accepted.

Voting Period

The ballot, if required, will open on 08/05/2024 and close at 12:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) on 05/06/2024.

Scrutineers

A form is available from the Returning Officer for the purposes of appointing Scrutineers.

Other Information

Changed Address? Advise the Organisation now.

Please Note: A copy of the AEC's election report can be obtained from the Organisation or from the Returning Officer after the completion of the election.

Jacqueline McHenry
Returning Officer
Telephone: 03 9285 7111
Email: IEBEvents@aec.gov.au



How your union works **IEU Council**

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has commenced the process for the 2024 election of delegates to IEU NSW/ACT Branch Council. Nominations open from Wednesday 27 March 2024 for a four-week period, and close at 4pm on Wednesday 24 April (all details are on this page, at left)

Council is the governing body of the NSW/ACT Branch of the Independent Education Union of Australia. It brings together up to 115 delegates from our 20 sub branches and 22 elected members of IEU Executive. IEU officers also attend Council but do not have voting rights.

The IEU is made up of chapters that meet at the school level. Reps and chapter committees are elected at each workplace by members of the chapter.

Reps and active members are encouraged to attend their local sub branch meeting. These sub branches meet once per term to exchange information and ideas with their fellow members and with union officers. There are 19 geographical sub branches and the Principals' sub branch (see: Sub branch reports, ppl6-17).

Each sub branch is entitled to elect delegates to Council. The number of delegates is determined by the size of the sub branch. Most sub branches are entitled to elect six delegates to Council; and each sub branch is entitled to elect at least four delegates. Elections are held every two years.

If there are more candidates than the required number of delegates, elections are conducted through a postal ballot of all members in their sub branch. Elections are conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

Council meets four times a year in Sydney, on a Saturday, with an AGM in October, at which the IEU's Annual Report is presented. Council meetings are an opportunity for delegates and union officials to exchange information and ideas and to consider and decide the business of the Branch in the interests of members.

Attending chapter and sub branch meetings and becoming a Council delegate are great ways to get more involved in the IEU's mission to advance the professional and industrial interests of teachers and support staff.

MEMBERSHIP news

Update your details

As we near the end of Term 1 we urge you to ensure the contact details we have for you are correct.

Our annual membership update is in full swing so you may have already updated your details with the rep in your workplace. If not please go to www.ieu.asn.au/member-portal then click the "My Account" tab to check and update your details if needed.

It is essential we have up-to-date information for you, so we can stay connected with bargaining and campaign information that relates to your sector, as well as information about voting in union elections.

Calling all reps

This year we offer reps of chapters that have five or more members a thank you gift of a technology pouch, security tag holder and pen (pictured).

We urge all reps to return your chapter update so you don't miss out – stocks are limited. Updating is easy – just click on the link in the email we've already sent you.

We know how busy you are, and we thank all reps and members for your support in keeping your details up to date.

Accurate information is vital so we can keep you informed about how your union is working for you.

We look forward to working with you in 2024.

Membership Team



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Bronwyn Brown OAM

Bronwyn Brown is proud to be a role model showing students they can combine a career in maths and science with a passion for music.

Awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2024 Australia Day Honours list for services to the community through music, Brown said her first job at school was in Year 5 when she was asked to accompany the class while they were singing.

She had started learning piano at age five, even though her passion was for the organ.

"Mum said I was too small for the organ, but eventually I got to play it," Brown said.

While studying for her science degree, she played the organ at weddings to pay her way through university. Her first 'proper job' was at Fairfield High School as a science teacher.

"This was probably the only school where I didn't play the piano," she said.

Starting at Roseville College Sydney in 1978 as a science teacher, Brown became Head of Mathematics for the final five of her 17 years there.

"People find out you can play and next thing you're accompanying the national anthem, the choir, assemblies, musicals, chapel," she said.

Brown then moved to Brisbane where she continued to combine maths and music, also becoming Head of Mathematics at St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School in Brisbane.

Her husband, Graeme, was working at Brisbane Boys' College. For each of the last 10 years they were in Brisbane, he produced musicals for the students from both their schools, with Brown as rehearsal pianist.

"After a while, we decided Brisbane was too hot and we were looking for somewhere to retire. Canberra was supposed to be the



Long-term IEU member Bronwyn Brown, awarded an OAM for services to the community through music. Photo: Alan Lee

retirement place, but it didn't last long. We both got jobs at Radford College, me teaching maths, him teaching science.

"Then when we said we didn't want to be in the classroom anymore, the principal, who was a pretty resourceful fellow, suggested we job share the role of music administrator for the college's extensive co-curricular program.

"So, since then, I've mostly been involved with music and just a little bit of maths on the side."

Now 76, Brown is still playing for choirs and

school chapel services, and helping kids with recitals and exams.

Her honours listing refers to her work as official accompanist for the Eisteddfods in Sydney and Canberra, a rehearsal pianist for Australian Opera principals, an accompanist for Sydney Male Choir and Willoughby Choral Society, Brisbane Concert Choir and Sing Australia.

She's been an organist at Wesley Canberra Uniting Church, Christian Science Church in Canberra, Roseville Methodist/Uniting Church

and St Andrew's Uniting Church in Brisbane. "As long as the fingers still work, I'll keep playing," she said.

Brown believes there is something to the theory that people who are good at maths are also good at music.

"I think there's a lot in it, for sure," she said. "I think the symbols that are used in both appeal to people with certain sorts of brains that can handle that kind of thinking. Music has its own order, rules and structure which you can analyse, similar to problem solving in maths."

"If in secondary school, kids can see you are able to be academic and also keep musical interests going, these ideas stick a long time.

"I think teachers have a huge influence, so opportunities that you get while you're at school are absolutely vital."

Brown's son, a science teacher, is also a very good brass player, and uses his music for several co-curricular activities at his school.

Both Bronwyn and Graeme are long-time union members. Graeme was an IEU rep at New England Girls' School in Armidale in regional NSW, and Brown first joined a union in the 1970s.

"When I was at university, I was influenced by the Vietnam demonstrations and took part in the teacher strikes at that time," she said.

"Feminism was on the rise, and I became very angry at the establishment with the business about women in the public system not being given permanent positions if they got married. So, I developed this attitude that you never trust an employer."

Sue Osborne Journalist

Elizabeth O'Callaghan OAM

Elizabeth O'Callaghan was awarded an OAM for Services to Education in the 2024 Australia Day Honours List for her long career mentoring students, teachers and principals.

Starting her teaching career in 1969, O'Callaghan was one of the earliest graduates of the Catholic Teachers College (in the grounds of the University of Sydney, now part of the Faculty of Education) and went on to lecture there for many years.

Around the same time, she was involved in demonstrating the Initial Teaching Alphabet with the first primary school class ever to visit a university (Macquarie University School of Education) in the southern hemisphere.

A Blue Mountains resident, O'Callaghan has taught at various schools in the Parramatta Diocese, including St Michael's Primary School Baulkham Hills, St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, Springwood, and St Mary MacKillop Primary School, South Penrith, where she was principal from 1995 to 2007.

O'Callaghan has frequently combined teaching with mentoring other teachers and principals. At one point, she was seconded to the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese to assist principals as they implemented new educational policies for students in rural and remote areas of NSW.

"I'm a great believer in matching learner and learning, which means we need to be conscious of all the dimensions and needs of the child," O'Callaghan said. "A prime consideration is how teachers form relationships with each child."

Early in her career, O'Callaghan undertook consultancy work focused on children with higher needs or disadvantage. She aimed to ensure they were taught in a way that gave them the most opportunities.

When the Gonski Report was released in 2010, O'Callaghan helped schools move children closer to literacy benchmarks. The report, written by businessman David Gonski, was a Rudd government inquiry into school funding. Its aim was to create an equitable school funding system and thereby boost the performance of Australian students.

Acting skills to the fore

O'Callaghan also trained as an actor and director. She was a television anchor for Catholic Communications and has used these skills and qualifications to help students. She was a Creative Arts Advisor to the Parramatta Diocese from 1988-89. While a member of the NSW Board of Studies, O'Callaghan contributed to the creative arts curriculum, which welcomed dance back into the curriculum.

During the International Year of Peace in 1986, one of her students, Eamon Burke, wrote to the leader of the then Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, about world peace and expressing his fear of nuclear war. Later that year, Eamon was invited to visit Moscow to talk with students and political leaders.

"We need to be conscious of all the dimensions and needs of the child."

Liz O'Callaghan directing Let's Paint Our Rainbow at Parramatta Stadium in 1988 for the Bicentennial Celebrations

Following extensive international news coverage, a Film Australia production crew visited St Michael's Primary School to interview Eamon and some of his classmates. The film 'Mum, how do you spell Gorbachof?' was released the following year.

In 1988, together with a skilled team, O'Callaghan was the artistic director and compere of "Let's Paint Our Rainbow", the Bicentenary event for the Parramatta Diocesan primary schools. About 20,000 students and teachers took part in this celebration.

From 2003, O'Callaghan was the Co-Executive Director of Restorative Practices and Listening Circles, described as "a non-punitive approach which accepts that we all make mistakes and have the ability to 'fix' the problem together and learn from our experiences". It is about inclusivity and concerned with maintaining and building connectedness between students, parents, teachers and the community.

Maintaining healthy relationships

O'Callaghan was a trainer/facilitator, visiting schools to help develop and maintain healthy relationships between teachers and students. The aim was to help students with self-regulating and improve learning outcomes.

In 2003, St Mary MacKillop Catholic Primary School at South Penrith was the first school in Australia to integrate restorative practices into teaching and learning.

"It is not simply about teachers being able to deal with a difficult situation, but it is a way of being," O'Callaghan said. "It is a change of culture so that relationships may be mended."

Outside of education, O'Callaghan was a founding member of Springwood East Timor Support Group which has been active since 1996. She is also a supporter of the Western Sydney Jesuit Refugee Support Group.

"I've never wanted to be far from students," she said.

Whatever she's doing, whether teaching the teacher, opening up the world of literacy, the arts, or restorative practices for her students, O'Callaghan's goal has always been to support staff and parents for the benefit of the student.

O'Callaghan was a proud member of the IEU for more than 30 years. She said it was important to be in the union and for all of the school's staff to know she was a member.

Sue Osborne Journalist

Women’s rights are union business

On International Women’s Day on 8 March, the IEU celebrated many union gains for women. With a membership comprising 76 per cent women, the IEU is proud to have achieved substantial pay rises in the Catholic systemic sector in 2023, including:

- NSW teacher salary increases in NSW of 8% to 12%
- ACT teacher salary increases of 11% to 19%
- General employee (support staff) increases of 6.5% to 20%.

The IEU also welcomed the federal government’s announcement on 7 March that superannuation will now be paid on government-funded parental leave, a move designed to close the 25% gender gap in retirement savings.

The IEU also attended rallies, marches and events in Sydney, Newcastle, Bathurst and Wollongong throughout the week.

Strong unions need strong women, and in Sydney, the IEU was proud to march alongside the NSW Nurses and Midwives’ Association, the Australian Services Union, the Health Services Union NSW, Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA, the Electrical Trades Union NSW & ACT, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and one Ken – Barbie would be very proud!

In Newcastle, the IEU marched to an IWD-themed sea shanty with the chorus ‘hoo-ray and up she rises’ as women from the disability community led the march through Hamilton. Afterwards, attendees gathered at Gregson Park to hear speeches followed by rousing performances of Billie Eilish’s hit from the Barbie movie, *What Was I Made For?* and Vera Blue’s *Lady Powers* by IEU member, Arden Cassie.

In Wollongong, the IEU attended a letter-writing event hosted by the South Coast Labour Council’s Women’s Committee. From

a bustling table in Wollongong Mall, unionists invited passers-by to write to their local MP on issues affecting women such as family and domestic violence, poverty, the gender pay gap and paid parental leave.

In Bathurst, the IEU attended the annual International Women’s Day dinner hosted by Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst. Guest speaker Carla Gallwey spoke about her 12-year career in the Australian Army.

On International Women’s Day – and every day – the IEU supports its diverse membership as well as broader union and social efforts to deliver equity for women in salaries and conditions.

Katie Camarena Journalist
Monica Crouch Journalist



Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews and Deputy Secretary David Towson at the IWD rally and march in Sydney, Saturday 9 March



Writing letters to politicians at the IWD event in Wollongong Mall, hosted by the South Coast Labour Council Women’s Committee, Friday 8 March



IEU Organiser Therese Fitzgibbon, IEU member Arden Cassie, and IEU Organiser Peter Criticos at the IWD rally and march in Newcastle, Saturday 9 March



Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA at the IWD rally and march in Sydney, Saturday 9 March



IWD rally and march, Newcastle, Saturday 9 March



Women with disability lead the IWD rally and march in Newcastle, Saturday 9 March



IWD Sydney rally and march



IWD event in Bathurst on Friday 8 March: from left, IEU Vice President Support Staff Kylie Booth-Martinez, IEU members Tracy Steven and Dana Jarrett, IEU Organiser Donna Widdison and Assistant Secretary Lyn Caton, Thursday 7 March (pic: Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst)

Don't miss your IE magazine

Our first edition of *IE* magazine for 2024 is packaged with this edition of *Newsmonth*.

Read how education persists in war-torn Ukraine. Sometimes teaching can feel challenging in the face of heavy workloads and teacher shortages but imagine teaching students who are in a war zone. We interview an Australian teacher educating Ukrainian students via Zoom. The students are determined to study, despite the devastation around them.

Last year's widely publicised Hollywood writers' strike was just one example of a surge in union activism across the United States, from autoworkers to baristas, teachers and support staff, Amazon warehouse workers and journalists. Could Australia follow suit?

IE recognises the vital work of support staff and focuses on how their roles are changing. We also talk to a school maintenance officer about his daily life.

Meet poet, teacher, sociologist, administrator and social justice campaigner John Falzon, a former head of the St Vincent de Paul Society, who says he "just wants to be useful" to the union movement.

One Catholic school in Newcastle is setting the standard with period positivity, providing free tampons and pads for students. Is it time for other schools to follow this lead?

Other articles focus on unionism in the classroom, disruptive behaviour, and rise of artificial intelligence and what it means for education.



The push for free pads and tampons in schools

As basic as toilet paper



Left: Founder and Managing Director of Share the Dignity Rochelle Courtenay

Right: Inadequate support around menstruation can disadvantage girls in their education



A shift is under way on an issue of gender equity, and it could lead to meaningful changes in schools in NSW, the ACT and beyond.

In the last few years, every state and territory in Australia has introduced measures to provide free pads and tampons in government high schools. It's part of an effort to combat "period poverty" – a lack of access to period products and education about menstruation.

Almost 50 per cent of menstruating students regularly skip school due to their period, a 2020 national survey showed. Research by the University of Western Sydney has revealed that inadequate support around menstruation disadvantages Australian women and girls in their education, leading to outcomes including absenteeism, and poorer academic performance.

Last year, the ACT took the fight against period poverty even further, becoming the second jurisdiction in the world to pass legislation requiring free products in designated public spaces, including hospitals, universities and TAFEs.

The *Period Products and Facilities (Access) Act 2023* came into effect on 23 December 2023. It doesn't apply to non-government schools but Labor backbencher Suzanne Orr, who introduced the bill, told the IEU she hopes the legislation will inspire others, including Catholic and independent schools.

Not just for government schools

While there is no law requiring non-government schools to make pads and tampons freely available, some aren't waiting for policy to keep pace with social change and are simply choosing to provide the products.

One leading supplier of period product dispensers, Pixii, has installed 63 dispensers in non-government school bathrooms around the country, including two in the ACT and 32 in NSW. Another provider, Share the Dignity, has installed 19, one of which is at Indie School in Fairfield, NSW.

Just because "people can afford for their daughters or children to go to a private school, doesn't mean that they've got cash for everything",

"Like anything with shame, once you have conversations and you give it sunlight, you remove the shame, right?"

the Founder and Managing Director of women's charity Share the Dignity, Rochelle Courtenay, said.

A basic amenity

Having free pads and tampons in schools is about "ensuring that no girl misses out on a day of education because her family can't afford period products", said Courtenay.

Dr Michelle O'Shea, an academic at the University of Western Sydney who recently helped spearhead a period positivity program at St Paul's Catholic College, Booragul, says pads and tampons are a bathroom necessity like soap or toilet paper.

Both O'Shea and Courtenay believe free pads and tampons shouldn't just be for students – period poverty can affect teachers and support staff too. "I will never forget meeting a teacher's aide at a school who talked about having to cut a pad in half because her husband had lost his job," said Courtenay.

Think bigger

Schools also need to think beyond product provision, to broader policies and practices that can "enable women and girls' full participation in their education", O'Shea said.

For too long, periods have been a source of shame, she said, and that stigma can prevent students from asking for a pad if they need one or telling their teacher they are in pain.

Both O'Shea and Courtenay believe education can destigmatise periods, with teachers playing a critical role. Such lessons can't just be for girls, they argue. It only reinforces the idea that periods are something to hide.

"Like anything with shame, once you have conversations and you give it sunlight, you remove the shame, right?" said Courtenay.

Lucy Meyer Journalist

Period poverty: Resources

If you're interested in teaching students about period poverty, there are resources available.

Period Talk: A comprehensive education program for boys and girls in Years 5-8. Presented by Share the Dignity, it is for kids, by kids: bit.ly/period-talk-share-the-dignity

Libra Educators: The Complete School Resource Kit: Developed with teachers, this toolkit includes lesson plans and interactive resources from the brand Libra: bit.ly/libraschoolresourcekit

Partner with the University of Western Sydney: Researchers at the University of Western Sydney have invited educational institutions to partner with them to implement menstrual policy and meet institutional goals. More information can be found in their white paper, *What's the Big Deal? How Australian Workplaces and Educational Institutions Can Help Break the Menstrual Taboo*: bit.ly/wsu-white-paper

How one school did it

Read how a student-led initiative led a Catholic school in regional NSW to introduce a period positivity program that proved so successful, it's been rolled out to the entire diocese.

See "No more shame" in the new edition of *IE*, p12, packaged with this edition of *Newsmonth*.



Professional Engagement update

We still need to talk about workloads

Since the release of the NESA Curriculum Fact Sheets, employers have assured the IEU they do not require compliance documentation that exceeds the NESA recommendations.

Despite such assurances, we are still hearing about excessive workloads.

If your school or system still expects excessive documentation or detail with regards to programming, registration and/or duplication of records or data, we want to know about it.

Please contact your IEU organiser and tell them about it.

Future compliance efforts

The IEU is working with NESA to find ways of streamlining the compliance process for schools, thus reducing workloads for teachers.

One simple and effective approach we're pushing is to remove the over-reliance on teaching programs as evidence that a school is

meeting compliance requirements. A scope and sequence that meets syllabus requirements is sufficient to ensure a school is compliant.

This then leaves the programming component of a teacher's professional role up to the individual, as it rightly should be.

Marking: The new frontier

While excessive programming demands are still an issue, especially in primary schools, excessive marking processes in secondary schools has emerged as the new work-intensification battle ground.

Members are reporting a range of issues, including:

- requests to double mark all tasks, especially in Stage 6
- attempts to replicate the HSC marking processes for Stage 6, including pilot marking, benchmarking, check marking, and double marking

- attempts to replicate the HSC marking process in Stages 4 and 5 grading processes.

While the IEU will always support efforts to improve educational standards, it is difficult to see how robust marking processes, with appropriate support for less experienced teachers, would require wholesale double marking or replicating the HSC marking process in Stages 4 and 5.

Remember that teachers are required to report student achievement in Stages 4 and 5 against a common grade scale. Evidence should be derived from learning activities and observations collected over time. Excessive focus on a limited number of high-stakes "formal" assessment tasks runs counter to this objective.

Where required, schools should utilise existing faculty meeting time to ensure staff are allocating marks and grades consistently, including

engaging with the standards referenced assessment framework.

NESA provides face-to-face and online training in allocating grades consistently. There are also work samples on the NESA website, and many existing work samples that schools have previously compiled should remain relevant for the new syllabuses.

Now is the time for school leaders to show their trust in teacher judgement. Where students and parents have concerns about a particular mark or grade allocation, it might be in the interests of everyone to take them on a learning journey, rather than push additional workload onto already overworked teachers. Please let us know what is happening in your school: ieu@ieu.asn.au

Pat Devery Professional Engagement Coordinator

NESA fees due

If you have held off paying your annual \$100 NESA fee, you are running out of time.

At the start of Term 2 (Monday 29 April), any accredited teacher who is not financial with NESA will have their accreditation suspended and cannot be employed in a NSW school. We urge all members to avoid this.

SUPPORT STAFF

Talking to AITSL about their crucial, collaborative roles

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has heard from IEU members about the most effective use of teaching assistants.

In online forums on 19 and 20 February teachers and teaching assistants provided feedback to help AITSL develop guidelines to support the optimal deployment of teaching assistants as part of Action 21 of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP): Identify the most effective use of initial teacher education (ITE) students, teaching assistants and other non-teaching staff.

AITSL was keen to hear about what does and doesn't work for teaching assistants in order to be inclusive and collaborative as they establish the guidelines.

Teachers' ranks have grown by 62 per cent since 1990, the number of teacher assistants has risen by nearly 300 per cent and there are now more than 105,000 teacher assistants employed in Australian schools, most of them women aged in their mid-40s with a Certificate III or Certificate IV being the most common form of training reported.

AITSL sought input on training, work practices and work that reduces teacher workloads, details of timetabling and work tasks, clarity of teacher assistant roles and relevant training.

IEUA NSW/ACT members who responded to AITSL's survey indicated appropriate paid planning time to allow collaboration and effective feedback between teachers and teaching assistants would be highly beneficial, as the current ad hoc approach

reduces the effectiveness of in class support. The right timely professional learning that allows teaching assistants to develop specific skills or program knowledge was also seen as desirable.

Asked to contribute at short notice, IEU members made a strong impact in the online forum.

"IEU members are always so impressive in the way they understand and can articulate the issues," said IEUA Assistant Secretary Veronica Yewdall, in thanking participants for their involvement. "We are extremely grateful that you were able to share your expertise and give of your time to communicate such important messages so clearly."

The NTWAP was developed to address the national issue of teacher workforce shortages. It was developed following consultation with unions, principals' associations and other education stakeholders in 2022.

The IEU's Federal Branch consulted with state branches to ensure all relevant cohorts were well represented at the online forum.

The IEU will continue to ensure our members' voices are heard in such forums which will help shape education policy, and therefore working conditions for all employees long into the future.

Will Brodie Journalist IEU VicTas
Pat Devery Professional Engagement Coordinator

Professional development

The IEU offers free professional development for members.

My Accreditation My Career Part 2 (Targeting not-yet-proficient teachers and their mentors)
Wednesday 1 May, 4pm – 5pm, online; or
Monday 6 May, 4pm – 5pm, online

Behaviour management: Making it right
Monday 6 May, 6pm – 8pm, online

Behaviour management: Upholding the right
Monday 20 May, 6pm – 8pm, online

Managing difficult conversations in K to 6 schools: How to discuss what matters
Monday 3 June, 6pm – 8pm, online

with Professional Development and Reps Training
www.ieu.asn.au

COPE Conference

Power in education unions across the Pacific



Left: Solidarity Sisters! Women of the March 2024 COPE Conference.
Right (Left to right) Fuatino Fuimaono, Samoa National Teacher's Association; Petelo Nanai, Samoa National Teacher's Association; Esther Tony, Papua New Guinea Teacher's Association
Bottom left: (Left to right) Esther Tony, Papua New Guinea Teacher's Association; Veronica Yewdall, IEUA; Fuatino Fuimaono, Samoa National Teacher's Association; Rhonda Natapei, Vanuatu Teacher's Union.
Bottom right: COPE Women's Committee Meeting – collaboration of Women across COPE's jurisdiction



The recent Council of Pacific Education (COPE) Conference held in Nadi, Fiji, underscored the crucial and powerful role of unions in addressing pressing issues.

Bringing together union members and leaders from numerous Pacific nations from 1 to 3 March, the COPE conference served as a platform to strengthen capacities, strategise, and identify opportunities for collective action within the education sector throughout the Pacific region.

Shared values and challenges

Reflecting the diverse challenges school staff across the Pacific face, the agenda encompassed a wide range of topics, including union development, quality education, teaching status, and climate justice.

There was a strong spirit of solidarity among attendees. We may come from different nations, but we share common union values such as equity and justice.

In various sessions, we discussed shared challenges from teacher shortages to inadequate workplace health and safety measures, underscoring the urgent need for concerted action and advocacy within the education sector.

Impact of climate change

The conference shed light on the profound impact of climate change on Pacific Island nations, emphasising that climate change is not just an environmental issue but also a pressing concern for education systems and communities at large.

Discussions underscored the importance of integrating climate resilience into educational frameworks and advocating for policies that prioritise sustainability.

Draft resolution for global forum

A notable outcome of the conference was the draft resolution prepared by the COPE group, to be presented at Education International's 10th World Conference to be held in Argentina in July 2024 (EI is the global federation of teachers' unions; it has 383 member organisations from 178 countries).

The COPE resolution exemplifies the collective commitment of Pacific education unions to amplify their voices on the global stage and advocate for outcomes that uphold the rights and wellbeing of teachers and students alike.

Fostering collaboration

COPE is a testament to the power of collective action and solidarity in addressing the challenges the education sector in the Pacific region faces.

By fostering collaboration, dialogue, and strategic planning, the conference laid a strong foundation for advancing the interests of education unions and promoting access to free, quality education for all.

The IEU looks forward to continuing the work of building union power, highlighting climate injustice in the Pacific region and advocating for positive change in the wider education sector.

Lee Cunningham Organiser

Present tense

Immigration changes

Just before Christmas, the federal government announced a number of changes to immigration rules, in an attempt to draw the heat from an increasingly spiky immigration debate.

Over half a million arrivals entered Australia in 2023, more than double the historical average. While much of this surge was fuelled by post-pandemic catch-up, political pressure was always likely to force the government's hand.

A large proportion of arrivals are international students, so many of the government measures have been aimed at that cohort. While there is understandable scepticism of government campaigns to crack down on "dodgy colleges", early reports suggest that these latest efforts are having a real effect, with even reputable colleges indicating that student visas are being rejected at higher rates than ever before, while some colleges are effectively excluding entire countries to save themselves the hassle.

Late 2023 figures from the national peak body English Australia suggest that the heat was already coming out of the post-pandemic student boom, with ELICOS visa grants down 32 per cent in the year to October 2023, and new visa applications down 13 per cent.

Overall numbers remain healthy, of course, with

enrolments up by over 128 per cent in 2023, but the government needs to be careful about over-correcting a downward trend that was already apparent. There are indications that other markets like the US are capitalising on student crackdowns in Australia and other countries.

Legal changes

The federal government continues to be busy in the industrial relations sphere, with further changes to the *Fair Work Act* passing the parliament in February. Several of these changes will be of interest to workers in the post-secondary sector, including changes to the definition of "casual" work, and easier pathways for casual workers to convert to fixed-term and permanent employment.

Another important change is improved rights for workplace delegates (see p1). A workplace delegate (or rep) is someone elected by their colleagues (or otherwise appointed in accordance with union rules) in a particular workplace.

A delegate has a legal right to represent members' industrial interests (including in disputes), have reasonable communication with members and prospective members in relation to their industrial interests, and access to the workplace and facilities.

Delegates/ reps also have a legal right to paid time during normal working hours for union training, though this doesn't apply for "small" businesses, like many smaller ELICOS colleges. To see how these and other legislative changes might work in your workplace, join your union today!

Summer schools

In the northern hemisphere summer, many countries run English language summer schools, and these can be a great way to finance some overseas travel, perhaps as a stepping stone to working overseas for the next academic year. The United Kingdom has numerous such schools, and the demand is low enough that it can usually be simple enough to secure a position, often with accommodation and meals thrown in.

I have happy memories of working at similar schools when I was a teacher, working in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Brighton and Reading. Now is the time to be applying for such jobs, and these are usually offered in all the standard jobseeking websites. Teachers can also approach the schools directly, using the list of schools on the English UK (the British equivalent to English Australia) website.

Kendall Warren Organiser

IEU joins Union Pride

We can't change the past but we can change the future

At this year's Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, the Union Pride float was dedicated to the union movement's ongoing solidarity with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Union Pride collaborated with Birri Gubba woman Lara Watson, who was the artist behind "Wadya Gathering", the design adopted by the Yes campaign last year.

The IEU was represented by NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews and Organiser Peter Criticos. "The IEU was proud to join the Mardi Gras parade again this year as part of Union Pride," said Matthews. "We are always stronger for diversity."

Union Pride was joined by members of the First Nations Workers Alliance and unions represented included the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Unions NSW, Australian Services Union NSW/ACT, Australian Services Union SA and NT Branch, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union NSW & ACT Branch, Electrical Trades Union, Community and Public Sector Union, Flight Attendants' Association of Australia, Finance Sector Union of Australia, Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, Transport Workers Union, United Workers Union, United Services Union and the Public Service Association of NSW.

Katie Camarena Journalist



Clockwise from above: IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, Senator Tony Sheldon and Unions NSW Assistant Secretary Thomas Costa in the Union Pride float; the IEU flag flies on Oxford Street during the Mardi Gras Parade carried by IEU Organiser Peter Criticos; IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews in front of the Union Pride flag; and unionism sparkles in the Mardi Gras parade. (Picture credits: Robyn Fortescue)



Pilliga forest: Big victory for Gomeroi people

Unions NSW and the IEU welcome a legal victory won by the Gomeroi people who have been opposing Santos's plan to drill 850 gas wells into Gomeroi land in the Pilliga region in north-west NSW.

On 6 March 2024, the Federal Court ruled that the Native Title Tribunal made a legal error by dismissing the expert evidence of the late climate scientist Professor Will Steffen. Chief Justice Debra Mortimer said that the tribunal should have considered public interest in the mitigation of climate change and its impact on Native Title when making its decision.

In late 2022, the tribunal made a decision to permit the project despite the objections of the local Gomeroi people. It found that

the "public benefit" outweighed any environmental concerns. Climate change impacts were presented to the tribunal with the argument that if "public interest" was the test, then current and future impacts of climate change on local, regional, national, and international levels should be taken into account.

The fire-prone Pilliga Scrub is the largest remaining native forest west of the Great Dividing Range and sits above the Great Artesian Basin. The gas wells would clear 1000 hectares over a 95000-hectare area and emit over 100 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent gases over the 25-year lifespan of the project. The wells would also irreversibly damage the underground aquifers and disturb native wildlife.

The Gomeroi people see it as an obligation to protect Country. As local Gomeroi spokesperson Dorothy Tighe said, "We are trying to stop the mining companies desecrating our Mother Earth, which is Gunimaa in Gomeroi culture."

The 10-year Pilliga battle is not over, but this decision sets an important legal precedent on the climate change impacts of fossil fuel projects and the intersection with native title rights. For those in civil society who recognise the urgent need for climate action, this is a huge step in the right direction.

David Whitcombe Organiser



Principals

Major wins in Catholic systemic schools agreements



Principals in Catholic systemic schools have voted up their agreements.

In nine dioceses (excluding Sydney Catholic Schools and Catholic Schools Broken Bay), Principals have voted up their enterprise agreement. Of the 71.5% who voted, 99% voted in favour of the EA.

Voting in the Sydney Catholic Schools EA and Catholic Schools Broken Bay EA concluded on Friday 15 March.

The three new EAs bring a range of benefits to principals, not least an 8% pay increase. Below is an outline of the new pay and conditions.

Conditions for all dioceses

Revised personal/carer's leave evidence:

Evidence requirements for absences on personal/carer's leave will be less stringent than in previous wording of the EA.

The evidence need only satisfy a reasonable person rather than to the satisfaction of the employer. This wording reflects the requirements under the National Employment Standards.

Improved parental leave: The non-term time that falls within the period of 14 weeks of paid parental leave will no longer count as paid parental leave. In effect, under the new EA, principals will receive an additional two weeks of

paid parental leave. Eligible principals employed on temporary basis (at least three years) may also have access to paid parental leave.

Any personal/carer's leave taken in the four weeks prior to the expected date of birth will no longer be deducted from the 14 days of paid parental leave entitlement.

Additionally, the partner of the birthing parent will be entitled to 12 weeks of paid parental leave (inclusive of non-term time).

Compassionate leave: Access to compassionate leave under the EA will now include situations where the principal has experienced stillbirth or miscarriage.

Legislated changes: In addition to all the key changes outlined above, the EAs provide greater entitlements to principals introduced by the changes to the legislation. The changes include:

- right to request flexible work arrangements, and
- greater entitlements to paid family and domestic violence leave.

Expiry dates

The EA covering nine dioceses and the Sydney Catholic Schools EA expire on 9 October 2024, in line with agreements for teachers and support staff. The new Catholic Schools Broken Bay EA will have a nominal expiry date of 31 December 2025.

Catholic Schools Broken Bay

This is the first stand-alone EA for Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) principals.

Pay increase guarantee: The EA guarantees a pay increase of 3% per annum applying from the first full pay period of 1 July 2024 and 1 July 2025.

The increases will be applied to the adjusted rates paid from 9 October 2023 that incorporated the 8% general increase plus the additional 1.5% that CSBB offered to all their employees. There will be no changes to the classification structure for principals.

Annual salary review: In addition to the guarantee, the EA introduces an annual salary review which takes place prior to 1 July of each year. The annual salary review (applicable to all principals in the Broken Bay diocese) gives capacity for CSBB and the IEU to consider whether the pay increase guarantee should be raised taking into account:

- percentage increase received by principals in NSW government schools
- percentage increase received by principals in other Catholic systemic diocesan schools
- annual percentage movement in the Wage Price Index for NSW based on the immediate last quarter, and

- CSBB's financial performance for the previous 12 months and the forecast for the years ahead.

The IEU will have a key role in the annual salary review and be provided with the relevant information relied on by CSBB in determining the appropriate increase for that year. The EA recognises that the IEU will be entitled to make representations to CSBB in this process.

Stay in touch: Principals' Branch meetings

The IEU holds regular meetings for our principal members. They take place at the IEU's head office, 485-501 Wattle St, Ultimo or via Zoom. This year's meeting dates are as follows:

- Term 2: 11 May
- Term 3: 3 August
- Term 4: 9 November

Regular diocesan Principals Sub Branch meetings are organised throughout the year.

Lyn Caton Principals' Organiser

NEW STAFF: The IEU welcomes new members to the professional team

Lucy Meyer Journalist and digital communications



The IEU's new journalist Lucy Meyer is keen to communicate her passion for social justice through the union's publications.

Before joining the IEU in September, Lucy worked as a freelance journalist, researcher, and editor. She's written for publications in Australia and the US including the *Guardian US*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *High Country News*, and *The Week* magazine.

Last year, Lucy won three awards for a long-form investigative story for *Guardian US*, covering an epidemic of violence against Indigenous people in the United States.

When she was an undergraduate at the University of Sydney, Lucy went on study abroad at the University of California, Berkeley. She loved both the university and town so much that she returned for further studies, coming back to Australia only when COVID broke out.

Lucy finished her studies remotely, and was awarded a fellowship at the Human Rights Center (HRC) at the University of California, Berkeley. She then took on some consultancy work for the HRC.

Lucy was attracted to her role at the IEU because she is interested in equity issues. She believes in unions and the role they play in helping working people.

"Having done human rights work for a little while, the appeal of working in social justice was strong," she said.

She now works for the IEU three days a week on our various publications and communications. On other days, she freelances as a journalist, and also works for the School News Project, which helps primary students hone their journalism skills.

"We help kids write news stories and become little mini-journalists and create their own newspapers," Lucy said. Facilitating an interview with former AFL star Adam Goodes was a recent highlight.

Lucy has experience in education, having volunteered for Amnesty International's Schools Network Outreach Program, as well as the Sydney Story Factory, which helps run creative writing workshops for young people in under-resourced communities. She was a camp counsellor during her undergraduate days, and has also led historical walking tours of Sydney for large schools groups.

Lucy is enjoying her work at the IEU and looks forward to telling compelling stories that will resonate with members.

Sue Osborne Journalist



Max Furby Receptionist

As the union's new receptionist, Max Furby is on the frontline triaging members who call the union for help, finding the right officer to provide industrial or professional advice.

Max has previously worked on reception at a quarantine hotel during the height of COVID-19 pandemic, equipping him to deal with calls from people who are experiencing difficulties.

While he was studying for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney, Max worked part time at the Adina Apartment Hotel in Sydney.

"It started as a regular hotel reception job and then in no time, we had Australian Defence Force and police stationed in the lobby, and busloads of people coming from the airport and going straight into their rooms," Max said.

"You felt bad for people because everyone was confused. They were forced to stay in their room for two weeks and I was the only one they could talk to."

After graduation, Max travelled the world, backpacking around Europe, Africa and Asia, and working in hospitality until his finances ran out.

Max joined the IEU because he wants to be part of an ethical organisation that helps people.

On reception, Max sometimes hears stories of injustice and bullying from the members who call in. "You definitely hear people in very vulnerable moments," he said.

"I'm glad to be working alongside a team of people constantly fighting to make things better."

"Dad was in the Communist Party at one stage, so I always wanted to work in a place with a Labor ideology and with laid back, down-to-earth people."

Max's studies at university also gave him an interest in the union movement. "I majored in history and political economy. History is something I've always been passionate about."

Max is considering whether he would like to be a history teacher or a union organiser in the future.

And being an ex-St Mary's Cathedral College student, Max sometimes runs into his former teachers during the working day.

Sue Osborne Journalist

Sub Branch reports

The IEU has 19 geographical sub branches across NSW and the ACT, plus the Principals’ sub branch. Sub branches meet four times a year, usually in the first three or four weeks of each term.

Sub branch meetings are a way for Reps and members to provide feedback to the union about what’s happening on the ground in their workplaces. The meetings are also an opportunity for chapter reps and IEU members from each region to hear updates from IEU organisers.

Each sub branch sends four to six delegates to quarterly IEU Council meetings. Council is the union’s decision-making body, bringing together about 90 member delegates from throughout NSW and the ACT (see p8).

The IEU Executive of 22 members is elected every three years by members.

All chapter reps and any IEU members who’d like to increase their union activism are warmly invited to attend their region’s sub branch meeting.

Contact your rep or organiser if you’d like more information.

Central Coast

Upcoming meetings: 9 May, 4.30pm, Ourimbah RSL; 1 August, 4.30pm, Ourimbah RSL; 7 November, 4.30pm, Ourimbah RSL; and our next AGM will be held on 13 February 2025, 4.30pm, Ourimbah RSL.

Central Metropolitan

The Central Metropolitan Sub Branch includes central Sydney, Sydney’s inner-western suburbs and Rhodes, Concord and Meadowbank.

The AGM was held on Tuesday 20 February at Club Burwood.

We acknowledged our long-term IEU Organiser and sub branch Convenor Liam Griffiths, as he steps down and transitions to retirement. We will miss his wisdom and energy and we wish him all the best for the future.

The sub branch re-elected President Angela Bonfiglio, Deputy President Peter McHugh and Secretary Dylan (Yujian) Zhang. Together they will make a formidable team as we strive to improve the daily lives of our teacher and support staff members.

During 2024, the Central Metropolitan and Metropolitan East Sub Branches will try out joint meetings in the IEU’s Ultimo office. The aim is to strengthen union power as well as offer opportunities for IEU reps and activists across Sydney to come together with like-minded colleagues.

We look forward to welcoming you to our future joint Sydney Metro Sub Branch Meetings, on Tuesday 14 May, Wednesday 7 August and Thursday 14 November. Save the dates!

We will have light refreshments for those who can join us, and we look forward to meeting you.

Lee Cunningham Organiser

Central West

The Central West Sub Branch includes Dubbo, Bathurst, Orange and Lithgow, as well as Broken Hill, Cowra, Mudgee, Parkes, Forbes, Grenfell and Wilcannia.

The Central West Sub Branch AGM was held on Friday 16 February in Forbes and was well attended by delegates from across the Central West.

Committee election results include President: Louise Hughes, Dubbo; Deputy President: Peter Nunn, Forbes; and Secretary: Nicole Downey, Orange.

Additional Committee Members include Karen Andriske, Dubbo; Cassie Bennett, Cowra; Julian Stewart, Orange; and Geoff Hayward, Bathurst

Following Nicole Downey’s election to an IEU Executive position, the sub branch also filled a casual vacancy to Council with the election of Julian Stewart.

The following motions were unanimously supported:

- Central West Sub Branch would like to thank Bruce Paine for his involvement in the union for over 25 years and acknowledge his advocacy of the Central West at Council as both a delegate and an Executive member.
- Central West would like to thank and acknowledge Organiser Jackie Groom for her outstanding contribution to the life of the sub branch and advocacy on behalf of members as she now moves on to working with members within Canberra-Goulburn and the Riverina region.

Next meeting, please note change of date: Friday 24 May, Ambassador Hotel, Orange.

Donna Widdison Organiser

Cumberland

The Cumberland Sub Branch includes Parramatta, Mt Druitt, Castle Hill, Marsden Park, Blacktown and nearby suburbs.

The Cumberland Sub Branch AGM was held on 19 February 2024 at Club Blacktown.

While reps at the meeting represented the diverse sectors the IEU covers, including Catholic systemic schools, independent schools, Catholic independent schools and ELICOS, their issues were similar.

The meeting covered the range of enterprise agreements that were successfully settled and those upcoming in 2024 including Catholic systemic and independent schools. Reps

reported that members in their chapters were happy with the outcomes of the Hear our Voice campaign of 2022-23 and subsequent wins for Catholic independent schools (Models A, B, C).

Members discussed expectations around school meetings (number and type), face-to-face loads, extracurricular demands in independent schools, and possible restructuring at Western Sydney University’s Academic Pathways program. Other matters included leave portability clauses between Catholic systemic and Catholic independent schools.

We discussed new delegates rights under the *Fair Work Act* (see p1).

If you cannot attend a sub branch meeting, we encourage you to invite other members to attend, represent their chapters and connect with reps in other schools.

We thank and congratulate President Robert Paluzanno; Deputy President Anthony Leon Downs; Secretary Tina Ruello; and Committee Members Angelique Ockert and Elias Abi-Elias.

This year’s meetings will be held at Club Blacktown on Mondays 13 May, 29 July, and 4 November from 4.30pm to 6pm.

Lubna Haddad Organiser

Hunter Valley

The Hunter Valley Sub Branch includes Newcastle, Maitland, Singleton, Scone, Taree and surrounds.

On Monday 26 February, 27 members from Catholic systemic, independent, Catholic independent schools and early childhood centres attended the Hunter Valley Sub Branch AGM at the Blackbutt Hotel, Kotara.

We thank all the reps for making the effort to attend and represent their chapter, and congratulate members elected to their sub branch executive and committee, including: President Amanda Wood; Deputy President Sarah Gardiner and Secretary Kim Keating. The sub branch committee includes Dot Seamer, Matt Bower, Jarrod McGrath and Steven Newman.

Delegates to Hunter Workers: Sarah Gardiner, Mark Wilson, Amanda Wood, Steven Newman, Carlo Rendina (Hunter Workers Executive), Jim Hall (IEU Organiser) and Therese Fitzgibbon (IEU Organiser).

Please save the date for this year’s meetings: Term 2: Monday 6 May, Blackbutt Hotel Kotara; Term 3: Monday 29 July, Blackbutt Hotel Kotara; Term 4: Monday 25 November (venue to be confirmed, includes Christmas party); and AGM Monday 17 February 2025, Blackbutt Hotel Kotara.

Carlo Rendina Organiser

Ku-ring-gai

The Ku-ring-gai Sub Branch covers Sydney’s north shore, including Hornsby, Wahroonga, Waitara, Warrawee, Thornleigh, Pymble, Turramurra, Berowra and Asquith.

The Ku-ring-gai Sub Branch met for its AGM on 13 February at Hornsby RSL. Elections for sub branch executive were held and we congratulate President Judy Betts (re-elected); Secretary Grace Fowles; and committee members Kate Bedloe and Tony Darwell.

Members representing three different sectors covered by the IEU were present and we talked about enterprise bargaining: one sector recently completed with considerable gains; another ongoing; and one preparing for upcoming negotiations.

Workloads were a hot topic as members compared and contrasted the similarities and differences in the demands placed on teachers and support staff in their sector.

Further sub branch meetings this year will be held at Hornsby RSL at 4.30pm in Week 3 of each term: Monday 13 May; Monday 5 August; Monday 28 November; and 11 February 2025.

We encourage all Ku-ring-gai reps and Chapter committee members to come along and, even better, to come along with one or more union colleagues!

Our sub branch conversations are always lively, it’s a great chance to network, and the Hornsby RSL bistro provides top-notch fare.

Charles Wheeler Organiser

Lansdowne

The Lansdowne Sub Branch stretches from Lakemba to Liverpool and includes Bankstown, Fairfield, Auburn, Greenacre and Horsley Park.

The Lansdowne Sub Branch held its AGM on 29 February 2024 at Fairfield RSL; 11 reps from a variety of schools attended.

Election results: President James McFarlane (re-elected); Secretary Janina Kozak; and Deputy President Mohamad Elali.

The sub branch also elected Janina Kozak to fill a casual vacancy on Council, ensuring that Lansdowne remains fully represented with six Councillors (for more details, see p8).

Unsustainable workloads were the major topic of discussion, with several reps from nearby Sydney Catholic Schools commenting on different expectations to implement the same programs.

Discovering that some schools were being provided with more time to perform similar tasks has encouraged reps to raise this issue within their own workplace. We look forward to their report back to our sub branch in May.

We also discussed salaries being offered to staff in independent schools under the Association of Independent Schools (AIS), particularly in the lead-up to bargaining for a new enterprise agreement this year.

Save the dates: Lansdowne Sub Branch meetings will be held at Fairfield RSL at 4.30pm on Thursday 30 May; Thursday 22 August and Thursday 14 November.

If you can’t make it, please invite a colleague to attend so your school’s Chapter is represented; or bring another member with you – we’re stronger together.

Everyone is most welcome to stay for dinner.

Aidan Anderson Organiser

Metropolitan East

Upcoming meetings (jointly with Central Metropolitan Sub Branch): 14 May, 4.30pm, IEU office, 485 Wattle Street Ultimo; 7 August, 4.30pm, IEU office, 485 Wattle Street Ultimo; 14 November, 4.30pm, 485 Wattle Street Ultimo; and our next AGM will be held on 19 February 2025, 4.30pm, Randwick Club.

Mid North Coast

The Mid North Coast Sub Branch includes Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Bellingen, Nambucca Heads and surrounds.

The end of 2023 turned into a flurry after the Catholic Schools Office (CSO) issued a fee rise to parents, phrased in a way that disproportionately ‘blamed’ it on teachers’ salaries, setting up teachers as a potential target for distressed parents over the Christmas break.

While members accepted that a wage rise does increase school costs, our concern was how this was communicated. The CSO communicate did not recognise that real wage costs had declined for over 10 years while federal funding had risen.

What happened to these savings? Clearly they have not been reinvested into teacher and support staff salaries and neither have fees decreased over this period while real wages have declined.

Many chapters passed motions decrying how these fee rises were managed as it threatened the vital partnership between parents and teachers.

The CSO responded to these concerns but not in a way that satisfied members. We hope this episode will encourage the CSO to reflect on the implications of their pronouncements as this will result in better outcomes for all.

Our colleagues in independent schools are still awaiting progress on additional pay rises above their multi-enterprise agreements to better reflect changing economic circumstances. The campaign for this continues.

We wish Brett Bennett all the best as he takes leave and thank him for his years of service as Sub Branch Secretary; and we welcome Ngahine Munokoa as our new Secretary.

We look forward to another productive year championing the excellent contribution teachers and support staff make in our region. Our next meeting will be held at 6pm on Friday 10 May at the Westport Club, Port Macquarie. All Mid North Coast reps and IEU members are welcome.

Markus Muschal Sub Branch President

Monaro

The Monaro Sub Branch covers Canberra and the ACT.

The well-attended Monaro Sub Branch AGM was held on 29 February 2024 at the IEU’s office in Deakin.

We discussed the new ‘Right to Disconnect’ in and what it means for schools (see pl).

Members raised ongoing issues regarding school camps and how teacher shortages are contributing to already excessive workloads. Teacher shortages are still having a big impact and some schools are advertising for support staff and teaching positions but not getting any applicants.

Members were keenly interested in the new rights for delegates (see pl) and noted the contribution of Monaro member Eugene Lehmensich who shared his lived experience at the Senate inquiry into the Closing Loopholes Bill#1, passed in December 2023 (see also IE magazine, enclosed with this issue, p25).

Congratulations to members, newly elected in sub branch positions, including President Di Lefebvre; Deputy President Alex Thompson; Secretary Anne Barbic; and Committee Members Jacob Betts, Kate MacDonald, David Caton and Anne Leet.

We also welcome and congratulate new Council delegates David Caton and Alex Thompson.

Sub branch meetings will be held at the IEU Office in Deakin on Thursdays at 4.15pm on 23 May, 1 August and 14 November. All reps and members are welcome.

Angela McDonald Organiser

North Coast

The North Coast Sub Branch covers Lismore, Tweed Heads, Kingscliff, Pottsville, Murwillumbah, Mullumbimby, Kyogle, Ballina, Lismore, Casino, Coraki, Woodburn, Yamba and Maclean.

The North Coast Sub Branch held its AGM on 14 February at the Sherwood Hotel Lismore.

We were on the pub’s back deck with the temperature about 35 degrees and almost 100 per cent humidity, like a Bikram yoga class. We blame St Valentine.

We had hoped to hold our first meeting for the year in the IEU’s recently refurbished Lismore office, but we’re not quite there yet. Ten reps from the region attended, and we warmly welcomed IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

It was great to see the breadth of IEU membership at the meeting, with reps from Catholic systemic schools, Catholic independent schools, Anglican schools and Christian Schools.

Following elections, we congratulate President Kath Egan; Deputy President Michael Namrell and Stewart Grant; and Secretary Jennifer Allen.

- Members had many issues to discuss, including:
- frustration at independent schools (represented by the Association of Independent Schools) that have failed to pass on discretionary pay increases unlike others that have done so to help close the pay gap and address serious issues of staff recruitment and retention
 - timetabling and class sharing in colleges: teachers are being asked to teach out of subject area, leading to others taking on extra supervisory and programming loads
 - a lack of transparency around leave and pay scales
 - issues with Catholic systemic staff needing to log payroll enquiries that may or may not be dealt with in a triage system, which is slow for staff with urgent issues.

Save the dates: Our next meetings will be held on Wednesday 15 May at Ballina; Wednesday 7 August at Tweed Heads; Wednesday 6 November at the IEU office in Lismore; and Wednesday 12 Feb 2025 at the IEU office in Lismore.

Richard Ryan Organiser

Northern Beaches

Upcoming sub branch meetings: 8 May, 4pm; 31 July, 4pm, Collaroy Services Club; 6 November, 4pm; and our next AGM will be held on 12 February 2025, 4.30pm, Collaroy Services Club.

Northern Suburbs

The Northern Suburbs Sub Branch covers Atarmon, Chatswood, Cremorne, Gladesville, Gordon, Hunters Hill, Kirribilli, Lane Cove, Lindfield, Milson’s Point, Mosman, North Sydney, Roseville, Ryde, St Ives, St Leonards, Willoughby and Woolwich.

IEU Executive member Anna Luedi renominated as sub branch President.

This year’s meetings will be held on 7 May, 30 July, 5 November, and our next AGM will be held on 11 February 2025.

We encourage all reps within the sub branch to join us for the meetings.

James Jenkins-Flint Organiser

North West

The North West Sub Branch covers the New England region including Armidale, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Tenterfield, Inverell, Moree and Narrabri.

IEU reps from Tamworth, Armidale and as far afield as Warialda convened at the Tamworth Hotel on 16 February.

Our first item was to elect a new committee and the following were endorsed: President Fiona O’Neil; Deputy President Laura Hughes; Secretary Dale Cain; and committee members Harry Vella, Judy Miller, Kara Spicer and Sharon Draper.

All reps will see campaigning in their schools this year with the Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement and Work Practices Agreement set for renewal in October. The Multi-Enterprise Agreement that covers schools under the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) is set to get under way.

Workloads, release time and expectations emerging from complex timetabling are concerns across sectors, and in AIS schools this can be even more demanding with cross-campus travel in inadequate time frames.

The Armidale School and Calrossy chapters successfully achieved discretionary pay increases for 2024 but in an unprecedented turn, PLC Armidale teachers were not awarded the same 6% increase their counterparts in PLC Sydney received.

We talked about training for reps in Term 2, and we look forward to welcoming new reps.

Reps and committee members enjoyed a meal together afterwards and will reconvene again on May 10 at the Armidale Ex Services Memorial Club. All reps and members are welcome.

Sue McKay Organiser

Penrith/Blue Mountains

The Penrith/Blue Mountains Sub Branch covers Penrith to Glenbrook, Katoomba and Blackheath.

The Penrith/Blue Mountains Sub Branch AGM on Wednesday 21 February at the Nepean Rowing Club in Penrith was well attended by members, a great opportunity to reconnect after the break.

We began with elections of the sub branch committee: President Liz Heggart (re-elected) Deputy President Natalie Maddock (re-elected) and new Secretary Raquel Sheehy.

We acknowledge the incredible work and commitment of outgoing Secretary Margaret O’Donnell. Margaret has served in this role for many years, always attending meetings and diligently taking minutes to communicate members’ concerns to the union. Margaret remains a delegate to IEU Council and we deeply value her knowledge and experience. Margaret brought her enthusiasm to many stop-works and rallies, International Women’s Day events and social justice initiatives. She has a keen interest in helping members and society as a whole.

At the next IEU Council meeting on 23 March, we will welcome Joanne Neill as an observer, we thank her for this and hope she will join other delegates in the Council elections to be held from 27 March to 24 April (see p8).

IEU Organisers Peter Criticos, Donna Widdison and Jennifer Tait updated the sub branch on several matters. A reminder about the major changes in the Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreements and Work Practices Agreements, how bargaining will look for independent schools in 2024, and an update on matters involving Catholic independent schools (Models A, B and C). They also alerted us to a NESA update on implementing new

syllabuses. The sharing of issues between schools was enlightening and allowed for great discussion among the members as well as an opportunity to ask questions.

Liz Heggart President

Riverina

The Riverina Sub Branch covers Wagga Wagga, Albury, Griffith, West Wyalong, Leeton, Hay and Thurgoona.

The well-attended Riverina Sub Branch meeting was held in Wagga on 23 February. Reps from across the region attended and we welcomed IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

Long-term reps welcomed a number of new reps from schools across the region.

The meeting discussed a range of issues including the successful campaign in the Catholic systemic sector and the upcoming negotiations for new multi-enterprise agreements covering members in schools under the banner of the Association of Independent Schools (AIS).

We discussed workload issues and we urged members to revisit recent NESA factsheets as a tool for managing expectations.

This meeting was also our sub branch AGM and we congratulate: President Mercedes Goss, St Patrick’s Primary Albury; Deputy President Vanessa Geddes, Xavier Catholic High School Albury and Secretary Terri-Anne Scott, Xavier High School Albury. We also congratulate Committee Members Sean Michael, Narelle Ryall, Sharon Jennings and Sam Avo.

Save the date for our 2024 meetings: 29 May (Albury); 26 July (Griffith); 22 November (Wagga).

We thank all the reps who made the journey to Wagga as well as those who live locally and look forward to seeing you all again at future meetings.

Anthony Telford Organiser

South Coast

The South Coast Sub Branch covers the Macarthur region, the Southern Highlands, Wollongong and the Illawarra region and the northern end of the Shoalhaven region.

The South Coast Sub Branch held its AGM on Wednesday 21 February at City Diggers in Wollongong, with 17 members in attendance.

Sub branch election results: President Marco Cimino; Deputy President Glenn Lowe; Secretary Kane Soligo. We thank outgoing President Glenn Lowe for his six years of service and note he remains on the IEU Executive.

We warmly welcome fresh perspectives from new committee members Jodie Howards, Elizabeth Pellizzari and Meegan Knight.

The meeting discussed a range of matters including recent enterprise agreements (EAs) for both Catholic systemic and Catholic independent schools. It will be a busy year, with Association of Independent Schools multi-enterprise agreements and Catholic systemic EAs being negotiated this year.

Members raised concerns about ongoing challenges related to workloads and teacher shortages. We urge members to revisit the IEU pull-out poster ‘Facts about NESA compliance’ (downloadable from the IEU website).

We clarified expectations around staff meetings for our Catholic systemic members and informed the meeting of recent changes to the *Fair Work Act* and the right to disconnect (see pl). Payroll matters are still impacting members in Wollongong Diocese so we encourage you to check your payslip closely and contact your IEU organiser if necessary.

Our next meeting will held on Wednesday 15 May at City Diggers in Wollongong and all reps and interested IEU members are welcome to attend, and to join us for dinner after the meeting.

Luke Breen and Valerie Jones Organisers

South East

The South East Sub Branch covers Yass, Young, Broulee, Bega, Goulburn, Tumut, Pambula, Googong, Batehaven, Cooma, Queanbeyan and Batlow.

The AGM held at the Ramada Diplomat was well attended from far and wide, and welcomed IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

Results of sub branch elections include: President Linda Swadling, Mount Carmel Primary School Yass; Deputy President Margaret Findlay, St Peter’s Anglican College Broulee; and Secretary Leonne Challe, St Mary’s Primary School, Young.

Committee members include Simon Fraser; Stephanie Brown; Terrianne Ryan and Andrew Bigwood.

The meeting thanked outgoing President Beth Worthy for her vital contribution to the sub branch.

Discussion at the meeting focused on workloads and health and wellbeing:

- lack of consultation by school administrations when major changes are introduced that increase teacher workloads
- lack of support and inadequate training for staff when new processes are introduced
- unrealistic expectations for teachers to cover staff shortages, including split classes in excess of mandated class sizes, minimal supervision, first aid in classrooms, additional before-school and after-school supervision, recording professional goals and personalised learning pathways, and
- lack of support for early career teachers and those seeking proficiency.

Jackie Groom Organiser

Southern Suburbs

The Southern Suburbs Sub Branch covers the St George area and the Sutherland Shire.

At our recent AGM, we welcomed two new reps, Mick Maroney from Aquinas Catholic College, Menai; and Simon Mclean from Bethany College, Hurstville.

The sub branch re-elected President Gerard McMullen from De La Salle Catholic College, Caringbah; and Deputy President Paul O’Brien of Marist Catholic College, Kogarah. Committee members: Stuart Jones, Sharon Robinson, Angelo Scali and Mick Maroney.

There was a general positivity across all sectors with the recently endorsed enterprise agreements (EA), pay rises and improvements to parental leave. The IEU will push for pay rises to flow on to schools covered by the Association of Independent Schools multi-enterprise agreements when these come to be renegotiated this year. We note that many independent schools are already answering chapter calls for discretionary pay rises in the interim.

One issue that arose was what we might call ‘bell creep’; that is, sounding the bell after recess or lunch three-to-five minutes before the start of class. Over the course of a year, three minutes a day adds up to 10 hours. We urge members to monitor this issue.

Remember that employers are required to consult with employees when introducing significant changes likely to have an impact on them.

The offsetting of attendance at camps and retreats was raised as a particular area of concern within the Catholic systemic sector and those present agreed to complete a survey to fully understand what is happening in this area.

Our next meeting is at 4.30pm on Wednesday 15 May at Tradies GyMEA. All Southern Suburbs Reps and IEU activists are welcome to join us. Light refreshments will be provided.

Josef Dabbs Organiser

Principals

See p 15 for a full update.

Around the Globe

Myanmar: Three years of resistance

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military staged a brutal coup, arresting leaders of the democratically elected government. The world watched in horror as the military commenced a war against its own people.

Over the past three years, widespread violence has caused a humanitarian and refugee crisis, with 18.6 million people in Myanmar currently in need of humanitarian assistance.

Yet the people of Myanmar continue to organise and oppose military rule. Resistance is growing, not just from ethnic minority groups who have been fighting the military regime for 70 years, but from the Burman ethnic majority, who are also rising up.

Since the coup, a civilian government made up of ethnic representatives and elected officials – many who were ousted in the coup – has formed. The National Unity Government (NUG) is gaining international recognition as a legitimate alternative to the military junta and offers a beacon of hope for a future federated and democratic Myanmar.

From Myanmar to Melbourne: International solidarity
In early March, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) gathered in Melbourne for the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit.

To coincide with the ASEAN meeting, the Myanmar People’s Summit was held, co-sponsored by the NUG Representative to Australia Office, Myanmar Campaign Network, Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and SEARCH Foundation.

Guest speakers included NUG representatives, the Prime Minister of Timor Leste, Xanana Gusmão, Reverend Tim Costello and Director of Economic & Social Policy at the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Alison Tate, among others.

Opening the Summit, ACTU Assistant Secretary Joseph Mitchell acknowledged the Australian union movement’s long support of Myanmar. “We stand with the people of Myanmar in calling on the Australian government to take strong action against the military,” Mitchell said. “We call on



People in Myanmar march as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement following the 2021 coup

ASEAN leaders to take a strong stance against the regime at the ASEAN Australia Special Summit.”

After its own fight for democracy, Timor Leste understands the suffering the people of Myanmar face and offered its unwavering support. “We know from experience, the importance of international solidarity,” Prime Minister Gusmão said. “The people of Myanmar are not alone.”

Alison Tate added to the ACTU’s call for Australia to take action. “Australia has the capacity to engage in honest and direct conversations with ASEAN member countries,” she said. “What is needed now is real action and sanctions [to stop revenues to the military regime]. 2024 is a year for change!”

Reverend Tim Costello extended his support to Burmese people in Australia. “There are 10,000 Burmese in Australia who are Baptists,” he said. “I am very glad to raise Baptist voices. We’ve got work to do and I commit my support.”

The NUG’s Dr Tun Aung Shwe offered a glimpse of hope for the future. “There’s economic and political instability after 70 years of civil war. The military cannot bring peace to Myanmar. But today, Burmese majority and ethnic minority groups, the NUG and leaders of the Spring Revolution have formulated a Federal Democracy Charter; the basic principle to establish a new Federal Democratic Union of Myanmar in the future.”

The IEU thanks Myanmar Campaign Network for their assistance. For more information: www.myanmarcampaignnetwork.org

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Katie Camarena Journalist

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James Kemp
Lending Specialist



When I first started working in superannuation in 1999, I was astonished to learn of the wide gap between men and women’s superannuation account balances at retirement.

In a study conducted by KPMG it was noted that the super balance for men aged 60-64 is \$204,107; for women in the same age group it is \$146,900 – a gap of at least 25%.

The causes of this unfair and unsatisfactory result were many as the design of the Super Guarantee (SG) was based on regular, full-time work over a lifetime.

What are the causes?

The first and most obvious cause for the difference is Australia’s national pay gap between men and women which currently sits at 21.7%.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) notes that for every \$1 on average a man makes, women earn 78c. Over the course of a year, this adds up to \$26,393 (see also p4).

The federal government has recently taken steps to address this inequity with companies with over 100 employees required to report to WGEA. What will be done with this information is yet to be seen but it is hoped that salary irregularities once identified should be fixed.

Another cause for the gap is that women are more likely to work in professions that involve caring for others, such as nursing, teaching and aged care. The recent 25% pay rise in the aged care sector will help to address this. These professions are not highly paid and governments have been reluctant to raise salaries – look at the hard-fought strikes in 2022 for better pay and conditions for teachers, support staff and nurses.

Women are also more likely than men to take time out of the workforce for unpaid work such as caring for family members. This could result in part-time work or lower paying jobs. And, of course, less super at retirement.

What can be done?

As governments are now aware of the super gap, some steps have already been taken to reduce it. WGEA and groups such as Women in Super (www.womeninsuper.com.au) are producing information to raise awareness of the super gap and in some cases to lobby the government for solutions.

A good starting point is attaching super to the Paid Parental Leave Scheme.

On 7 March, the federal government announced superannuation will now be paid on government-funded parental leave. This is an essential step to help address the retirement poverty suffered by many women workers.

Another government initiative to fix the gap is the Low Income Super Tax Offset (LISTO). This measure was put in place to top up or assist low-paid workers in building up their retirement balances. The income cap is \$37,000 and anyone earning less than this amount can receive a top up from the government of up to \$500 per year. It is based on a sliding scale depending on the amount of low-income salary; the lower the salary, the greater the percentage of the cap of \$500.

A great way to improve this scheme would be to raise LISTO to \$45,000. This would enable thousands of low-paid workers to receive government payments to improve their retirement benefit and have more time in the market to benefit from compounding interest.

Topping-up super

Apart from these two government schemes, individuals can top up their own super and many choose to do this, especially after age 50. Salary sacrifice allows fund members to contribute pre-tax money into super which is taxed at 15% rather than marginal tax rates.

Salary sacrifice contributions are currently capped at \$27,500 per annum and this includes employer contributions. However, the unused portion of your concessional cap from the previous five financial years (beginning 2018-19) can be used as a top-up if your super balance was below \$500,000 on 30 June 2023 – a recent initiative to assist low account holders to build their super.

And there is always the possibility of topping up super with a lump sum – as in the case of an inheritance or sale of a property. Again, there are annual caps for lump-sum contributions so it’s a good idea to speak to a licensed financial planner before making any large contributions.

Women’s super is moving in a better direction as governments look to fix or at least reduce the gap so we can all enjoy a dignified and comfortable retirement.

Bernard O’Connor former NGS Super Company Secretary



IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Executive

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Carol Matthews
Eora Nation

Deputy Secretary

David Towson
Eora Nation

Assistant Secretary

Lyn Caton
Dharug Nation

Assistant Secretary

Position vacant

President

Tina Ruello
Catherine McAuley Westmead
Dharug Nation

Deputy President

Position vacant

Vice President Non Systemic

Helen Templeton
St Scholastica’s College Glebe
Eora Nation

Vice President Systemic

Position vacant

Vice President ECS

Michelle Thompson
Shore Preparatory School
Early Learning Centre Northbridge
Eora Nation

Vice President Support Staff

Kylie Booth-Martinez
Assumption Catholic Primary School
and St Stanislaus College Bathurst
Wiradjuri Nation

Vice President ACT

Position vacant

Financial Officers

Denise McHugh
NESA Liaison Officer
Kamilaroi Nation

Suzanne Penson
MacKillop College Port Macquarie
Birpai Nation

General Executive Members

Christine Wilkinson
St Joseph’s Catholic College East Gosford
Darkinjung Nation

Sarah Gardiner
Catherine McAuley Catholic College
Meadowie
Worimi Nation

Anna Luedi
Villa Maria Catholic Primary School
Hunters Hill
Dharug Nation

Glenn Lowe
St Joseph’s Catholic High School
Albion Park
Dharawal Nation

Liz Heggart
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Dharug Nation

Peter Moore
Our Lady of Mercy College Burraneer
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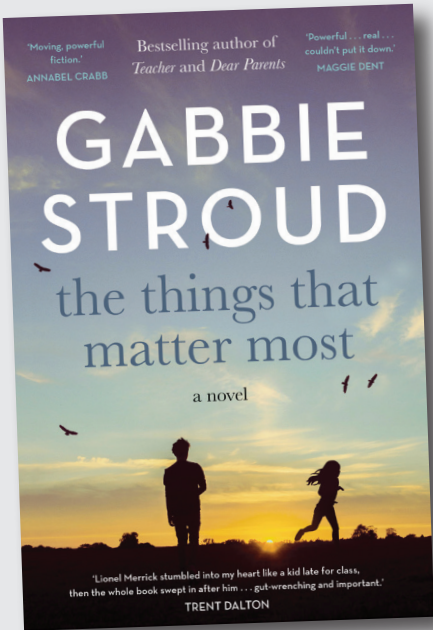
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Newcastle: 8-14 Telford Street, Newcastle East NSW 2302 4926 9400
Lismore: Unit 4, Lismore Professional Centre, 103-105 Molesworth Street, Lismore NSW 2480 (temporarily closed due to flood damage, call the IEU on 8202 8900)
Canberra: Units 11 & 12, 3-5 Phipps Close, Deakin ACT 2600 6120 1500

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Giveaways

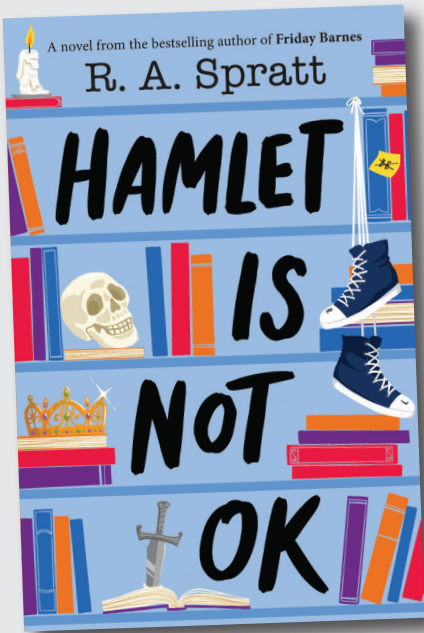


The things that matter most

Author: Gabbie Stroud
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

The staff of St Margaret's Primary School are hanging by a thread. There's serious litigation pending, the school is due for registration, and a powerful parent named Janet Bellevue has a lot to say about everything. As teachers, they're trying to remain professional; as people, they're unravelling fast.

A moving and compelling novel about teachers and their students by the acclaimed author of the bestselling books *Teacher* and *Dear Parents*.



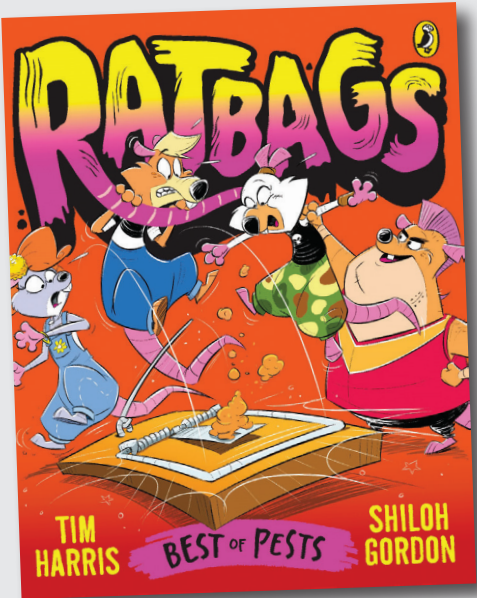
Hamlet is Not OK

Author R A Spratt
Publisher: Penguin

Funny, shocking and brilliant – from bestselling author R A Spratt, a whip-smart take on Shakespearean moral dilemmas.

Selby hates homework. She would rather watch daytime television – anything to escape the tedium of school, her parents' bookshop and small-town busybodies.

So Selby didn't plan to read Hamlet. And she certainly never planned to meet him.



Ratbags#3

Author: Tim Harris
Illustrations Shiloh Gordon
Publisher: Penguin

Humans have had enough of rats and their ratbag ways. Even Mr Pecky has stopped giving them pizza. But things get taken to a whole new level when robot minks with laser eyes roam the streets, ready to destroy all ratbags, stray cats and jazz musicians! How are the ratbags to survive the humans' latest pest control? By joining forces with their enemy, naturally! With Cracker and the ratbags on the same team, things are about to get really hairy.



To go in the draw, email entries to giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the title of the book you would like to receive in the subject line. Write your name, membership number and postal address in the body of your email. All entries must be received by 2 May 2024.

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