Annual Report



Independent
Education
Union of Australia
NSW/ACT Branch

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Introduction



Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said the IEU has made strong progress towards achieving the aims of its strategic plan.

I begin this report by acknowledging our workplace reps and activists. Alongside our dedicated officers and staff, they ensure the IEU is a respected union that improves the working lives of its members.

The IEU's *Stride to Grow 2030* strategic plan, endorsed by Council in 2024, is the cornerstone of the union's planning and activities.

Key objectives include recruiting new members, raising the union's profile in workplaces and the media, optimising operations and winning for our members.

We have made strong progress in addressing the priorities outlined in the five-year plan, and we keep these objectives in mind in all our work.

Consolidating federal gains

The re-election of the federal Labor government in May 2025 enabled the consolidation of gains achieved for workers and unions in the government's first term.

The federal government has improved paid parental leave (26 weeks from July 2026 at the national minimum wage) and ensured the payment of superannuation on top of this entitlement.

Other wins include the introduction of delegates' rights, improved rights for unions and workers in multi-enterprise bargaining, limits on temporary contracts, clearer and enforceable procedures for requesting flexible work arrangements, support for higher wages for employees in the care sectors and a legislated right to disconnect.

These changes directly benefit IEU members. It is vital for employees to utilise new entitlements – as these become commonplace and accepted in workplaces it will be harder for future governments to repeal them.

Regrettably, conservative political parties have threatened to remove many of these rights and other entitlements, such as paid parental leave, bargaining rights, support for care workers and unfair dismissal protections. Unions must remain vigilant.

Progress in NSW

The NSW Labor government elected in March 2023 has also legislated reforms that benefit workers.

These include the abolition of the 2.5% salary cap for public sector workers in 2023 (which allowed for strong teacher pay rises in 2023) and an increased role for NSW tribunals.

All unions, including those such as the IEU that operate in the federal industrial relations system, can now refer work health and safety disputes to the NSW Industrial Relations Commission.

Unions can also lodge underpayment claims in the NSW Industrial Relations Court as an alternative to the only other pathway in the Federal Court.

From July 2026, work health and safety requirements for employers include mandatory codes of practice.

There are several relevant codes of practice for the education sector, including *Managing psychosocial hazards at work* that will be important to IEU members.

Catholic systemic schools

The IEU negotiated better pay and conditions for teachers and general employees in the *NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025* and the *Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Limited – Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025* in late 2025.

These agreements include new benefits to employees that provide a benchmark for subsequent enterprise agreements.

Closely following were three union-negotiated agreements for principals, with corresponding benefits, in eight NSW and ACT dioceses, Sydney Catholic Schools and Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese.

Bargaining in 2026

Our bargaining this year has focused on Catholic independent schools and Christian schools.

The union negotiated multi-enterprise agreements for teachers and support staff in Model A Catholic independent schools that were approved by the Fair Work Commission in July 2026.

Bargaining commenced soon after for new multi-enterprise agreements for about 30 Model B and Model C Catholic independent schools in NSW to replace agreements expiring at the end of 2026.

The union reached agreement with 38 NSW Christian schools represented by Christian Schools Australia in late 2025 for new multi-enterprise agreements for teachers and general staff.

These replaced agreements covering about 50 schools that expired at the end of 2023.

A group of about 20 NSW Christian schools (including some previously represented by Prolegis Lawyers) are covered by multi-enterprise agreements expiring at the start of 2027 that the union negotiated with Independent Schools NSW.

This group has now split, with replacement agreements to be negotiated with individual schools as well as two groups of schools (one group is represented by Prolegis lawyers and one by Independent Schools NSW).

The union is close to finalising enterprise agreements to cover two ACT Christian schools and we have also negotiated a new enterprise agreement with Christian Community Ministries.

The splintering of the Christian education sector creates considerable work for the union in negotiating separate agreements that may have only minor differences between them.

The IEU's application for a supported bargaining multi-enterprise agreement for 103 community preschools has been stymied by the NSW government's failure to commit to an increase in funding.

The government's proposed new funding model, released in June, has only exacerbated the situation through lack of detail.

Our dedicated members are relentlessly lobbying MPs and the union is applying pressure after the Fair Work Commission recommended that the NSW government review and boost funding.

Other industrial work

The industrial team handles numerous disputes and individual member matters. In the past 12 months we recovered $1.7 million in underpayments for members.

Several dioceses have imposed redundancies and restructures in the past year that they claim are due to changes in federal government funding.

After Catholic Schools Broken Bay failed to consult over its "shared principals" plan (meaning 14 primary schools would have a shared principal – with seven principals each overseeing two schools), the union notified a dispute to the Fair Work Commission.

The union is supporting members after a restructure by Maitland-Newcastle Diocese impacted more than 300 employees. This included teacher-librarians, EAL/D staff and support staff for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Recruitment and organising

Our organising team has been focused on recruiting new members and optimising operations in 2026. The Organising, campaigning and growth annexure details several initiatives focused on growth and improving organiser processes, including more efficient use of our database and technology platforms.

Recruitment campaigns included those targeting members in the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation and Aspect schools (Autism Spectrum Australia).

Organisers' visits to schools aim to improve member engagement and recruitment in sectors where we are bargaining for new enterprise agreements.

Support and operational staff

The Support and operational staff annexure demonstrates the union's success in representing and engaging this vital group of members.

With 230 new support staff members joining in the past 12 months, this sector is growing steadily.

Our recent appointment of a dedicated support staff organiser shows the union's commitment to these members.

Early childhood education

Early childhood education is a key area of union activity, as outlined in the Early childhood education annexure.

As well as our Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for community preschools, the union has represented members in a wide range of state and federal forums in relation to teacher accreditation, child safety and other workforce issues.

Professional engagement

The IEU raises key issues the teaching profession faces with governments and policymakers, as outlined in the Professional engagement annexure.

These issues include anti-bullying strategies, misogyny and the manosphere, workload and professional autonomy, teacher accreditation, the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on students with disability (a perennial issue) and Australian Professional Standards.

The IEU has offered a range of professional development courses over the past 12 months, as well as our popular environment conference, held at Taronga Zoo this year.

The number of IEU reps attending reps training has increased by nearly 50 per cent over the past year, in part enabled by new delegates' rights in legislation and enterprise agreements.

Media and communications

The IEU strategic plan recommended raising the union's voice through both mainstream and digital media – a challenge our media and communications team has achieved.

The IEU advocates publicly for members through the media. The extensive radio, print and TV coverage we attracted in the past 12 months is detailed in the Media and communications annexure.

We achieved a strong increase in members using our website, accessing our digital publications and engaging with our social media, including a rise of more than 300 per cent in Facebook engagement.

The IEU also has a growing presence on TikTok and YouTube, producing short-form videos to share the union's message with a wider audience.

The quality of our regular print publications – *Newsmonth*, *Bedrock* and *IE* – continues to be outstanding.

The team has also produced a range of informative fact sheets, posters and other resources for members.

Regional offices

Staff in our offices in Canberra, Lismore, Newcastle and Wollongong strengthen the IEU's bonds with members in regional schools and centres, other unions and local communities.

The vital work of our regional staff is detailed in the annexures.

Support from our federal union

Our branch is part of a national union with a small staff in the federal office.

This federal union plays a crucial role in international engagement with other education unions, including the Council of Pacific Education.

Our federal officials are tireless in representing member interests at federal government forums about workforce planning, housing, child safety, the NCCD, professional standards, AI and teacher workload.

They also represent us in the broader union movement and in the Fair Work Commission. I express my gratitude to this hard-working team, whose work directly benefits IEU members in NSW and the ACT.

IEU Executive, Council and staff

The Executive is the key decision-making body of the union between Council meetings. Its 22 elected members meet at least 11 times a year.

The Executive participated in a full-day workshop in August to discuss the union's strategic direction and the Executive's role in achieving our objectives.

The Executive resolved to regularly map our progress in achieving the goals set out in the strategic plan.

I would like to thank Branch President Suzanne Penson and all members of the Executive for their support and energy in identifying issues of importance to members.

I would also like to congratulate sub branch delegates to Council who were elected this year.

Council plays a vital role in connecting the union leadership with members and encouraging vibrant sub branches. Many of our sub branches have been more active over the past 12 months. The union also welcomes a rise in the number of sub branch delegates attending quarterly Council meetings.

Finally, I would like to thank all IEU staff for their hard work and professionalism. In particular, I extend my thanks to the leadership team of Deputy Secretary David Towson and Assistant Secretaries Pat Devery and Therese Fitzgibbon. I thank Helen O'Regan and Tania Yardley for their excellent executive support, patience and hard work in very demanding positions.

I would also like to express my appreciation to former Assistant Secretaries Lyn Caton and Amanda Hioe who moved on to other roles within the union this year.

Carol Matthews Secretary





Left: Floral tributes at Bondi Beach in 2025. Above: Branch Secretary Carol Matthews lays a floral tribute.

Unions stand together at Bondi Beach

The IEU stood with the Australian union movement in December 2025 to honour the lives lost on 14 December in the terror attack at Bondi Beach. Branch Secretary Carol Matthews laid flowers in tribute.

The IEU extends heartfelt solidarity to members in the Jewish community and all those impacted by this horrific act of terror. Together with the broader union movement, we stand for unity and peace.

President's report

The strength of our union comes from our members: conversations in staffrooms, issues raised at chapter meetings, questions put to organisers and the willingness of members to speak up when something is not right.

Across our schools and workplaces, familiar concerns are evident: workload, staffing pressures, work health and safety, job security, fair salaries and the need for genuine consultation.

These issues reflect the changing nature of work in education and the importance of ensuring that teachers and support staff have a real voice in the decisions shaping their workplaces.

One of the most important roles of the IEU is to ensure individual concerns do not remain individual problems. A member raises an issue. A chapter realises others are experiencing the same thing. Representatives and organisers bring those concerns forward. Council debates them, develops a position and, where needed, acts.

That is unionism in practice strengthened by engaged members. The connection between members, chapters, Council and the Executive is so important.

Members need to know that when they raise an issue their voice can travel beyond their workplace and help shape the direction of the union.

Workload and work health and safety

Workload continues to be a major concern for members, particularly as administration, compliance requirements, meetings, communication and additional responsibilities increasingly extend beyond the normal working day.

Technology has made many aspects of our work easier, but it has also made workers more accessible and can blur the boundaries between work and personal time. Importantly, workload is also a work health and safety issue.

The growing focus on fatigue, psychosocial risks and consultation gives our union an important opportunity to strengthen members' understanding of their WHS rights and establish trained health and safety representatives in every workplace.

Genuine consultation should occur before decisions are made, not after. Members should have access to information, the ability to raise concerns and a meaningful opportunity to influence changes affecting their work.

Valuing the work we do

Defending the professional value of the work undertaken by teachers and education staff is imperative.

Work often changes gradually – another reporting requirement, new initiatives, another administrative process or responsibility. These may appear minor on their own but collectively these expectations can significantly change and intensify a job.

We must also challenge staffing decisions that transfer work to fewer people. When staffing is reduced but student numbers and expectations remain the same, the work becomes concentrated and intense.

Our collective strength

Our union is strongest when members are not just tapping into union services but are active and engaged.

Every chapter matters, new representatives (reps) matter, every motion brought forward matters. Every member prepared to question, contribute and speak up cements our collective strength.

Council brings together voices and experiences from different sectors, sub branches and workplaces, turning those experiences into collective direction.

Communication is not one way. Communication must also travel back to members. We need members to understand the issues Council is discussing, why decisions are being made and how they can help shape the priorities of our union.

Our union is stronger when members are prepared to listen, question, challenge and then work together towards a common goal.

Looking to the future

Artificial intelligence is already changing how teachers plan, assess, communicate and manage information. New technologies will bring incredible opportunities, but they will also raise important questions about workload, professional judgement, privacy, surveillance, data security. The role of teachers will evolve.

The IEU needs to be part of these conversations from the beginning. We should not wait until new systems are introduced and then respond to their consequences. We need to help shape how technology is used, ensure proper consultation occurs and protect professional autonomy.

Workforce shortages will also remain a major challenge.



IEUA NSW/ACT Branch President Suzanne Penson and Secretary Carol Matthews at the union's August Council meeting.

Retaining experienced teachers and support staff will require better workloads, secure employment, professional respect and sustainable career pathways.

We also need to continue developing the next generation of union leaders. That means supporting new chapter reps, encouraging younger members to participate, providing opportunities for members to develop confidence and leadership skills and ensuring our democratic structures remain open and accessible.

As new challenges emerge, consider these questions.

Does this improve education? Is it fair? Is it properly resourced? Has there been genuine consultation? What are the consequences for the people doing the work? And most importantly, what are our members telling us?

The future strength of the IEU will be built in our workplaces. It will be built through strong chapters, active representatives, informed members and a union prepared not only to respond to change but to help shape it.

Our responsibility is to listen to our members and make sure their voices are heard and turn those voices into action.

Together, let's build an IEU that is ready for the future.

Suzanne Penson President

Industrial

Introduction

In the past 12 months, the industrial team has focused on bargaining for members in Catholic systemic schools; Models A, B and C Catholic independent schools; a range of Christian schools and various other independent schools.

The union also applied pressure to the NSW government to fund community preschools fairly so they can lift pay and conditions across the sector.

The team dealt with a number of complex individual and collective disputes across the schools and early childhood education sectors.

The team continues to take advantage of legislative changes to the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) over recent years to secure favourable outcomes for members.

We have been ensuring employers comply with their obligations regarding flexible work arrangements and fixed-term contracts, with the aim of providing members with secure employment and the flexibility to balance work with other priorities in their lives where legislation supports them to do so.

This focus has extended to amendments to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW), which allows the union to refer disputes about work, health and safety to the NSW Industrial Relations Commission.

The union has dealt with issues including general protection matters, unfair dismissals and underpayments arising from misclassification or incorrect progression.

We have also enforced new entitlements introduced through recent amendments to the *Fair Work Act* (such as delegates' rights) and through enterprise agreements.

Catholic dioceses bargaining

Catholic systemic schools

IEU members overwhelmingly endorsed the *NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025* and the *Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Limited – Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025* for teachers and general employees in October 2025.

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) approved these enterprise agreements in December 2025. The agreements provided new benefits to employees.

Pay rises for NSW teachers were 3% in each of October 2024, October 2025 and October 2026. General employee pay rises were 4% in July 2024, 3% in July 2025 and 3% in July 2026 with the 2027 pay increase to be in line with the NSW public sector.

The pay rises for NSW employees reflect those in NSW government schools and pay rises for ACT teachers broadly reflect those in ACT government schools.

Other benefits include superannuation on paid parental leave and extended access to non-initial primary carer parental leave (this can now be taken within 24 months of birth or adoption).

Catholic systemic school principals

The IEU also settled principals' enterprise agreements at the end of 2025. The *NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Principals Enterprise Agreement 2025*, with a nominal expiry of 8 October 2027, was approved by the FWC in February 2026.

This agreement contained pay rises that mirrored the teacher pay increases of 3% in October 2024 (already paid), October 2025 and October 2026, and a cost-of-living review if the consumer price index exceeded 4.5% in early 2026.

The FWC in February 2026 also approved the *Principals (Sydney Catholic Schools) Enterprise Agreement 2025* and the *Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Limited – Principals Enterprise Agreement 2025*.

Key improvements in these agreements include a new delegates' rights provision; superannuation on employer-paid parental leave; extended access to non-initial primary carer's leave (within 24 months of birth or adoption); and up to three days' paid Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and ceremonial leave.

The *Catholic Schools Broken Bay Enterprise Agreement* 2024, negotiated in 2024, has a nominal expiry date in 2029. However, the *Catholic Schools Broken Bay Principals Enterprise Agreement* 2024 expired in December 2025.

Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) proposed postponing negotiations for a new agreement for principals, and because the existing agreement contained guaranteed ongoing minimum increases of at least 3% per annum, members were prepared to continue under the current EA.

CSBB agreed to a pay increase of 3.5% for principals from July 2026.

Catholic Archdiocese Canberra and Goulburn Education Limited

Early learning centres and school age care: In August 2026, the union finalised a new enterprise agreement

with Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Education Limited (CACGEL) for early learning centre (ELC) and school age care (SAC) staff.

The agreement delivers strong outcomes for teachers and support staff, locking in guaranteed annual pay increases over four years, ranging between 5% and 49% above award rates, with notable initial pay increases for ELC teacher directors, educators, SAC directors and support staff.

The agreement ensures ELC teachers are paid at the same rate as their colleagues in schools.

The deal also secures major enhancements to workplace entitlements, including an upgraded allowance of 15 days of personal/carer's leave for all staff from commencement; laying the groundwork for expanded paid parental leave up to 24 weeks by 2027; two days of paid leave for miscarriage or stillbirth; complete elimination of junior rates by 2027; purchased leave options for 48-week employees; and a new broken shift allowance.

The agreement was endorsed by a substantial majority of staff and has been lodged with the FWC for approval.

CACGEL office: Bargaining for a new agreement covering CACGEL office staff commenced in mid-2026, with the union pursuing claims around business manager and allied health professional coverage, leave parity, travel allowances and remuneration alignment.

In negotiations held between June and August 2026, the parties discussed long-standing coverage issues, including the proposed inclusion in the agreement of school counsellors, psychologists, allied health staff and business managers.

The parties have agreed in principle to match clauses in the *NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025*, such as delegates' rights, family and domestic violence leave, flexible working arrangements, fixed-term conversion rules and standard dispute resolution clauses.

Key union claims, including an enforceable right to disconnect, reproductive leave, paid cultural and ceremonial leave, expanded travel allowance rates and consultation about the adoption of artificial intelligence, are still being negotiated. Remaining issues include classifications and pay.

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese counsellors

Bargaining for a new enterprise agreement for Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) counsellors commenced in early 2026.

The IEU is pursuing claims including pay increases, broader coverage, expanded leave entitlements and casual rates of pay for part-time employees who work additional hours.

The IEU did not accept CSPD's offer in July 2026 and we have proposed a counter-offer.

We anticipated receiving a response in early October, as this report went to press.

CatholicCare Wollongong

Employees were previously covered by the *CatholicCare Wollongong (Catholic Family Welfare Services) Enterprise Agreement 2020,* which expired in 2023.

Negotiations for a new agreement were difficult as most of the employees subject to the enterprise agreement are members or employees eligible to be members of the Australian Services Union, not the IEU.

Our membership cohort for the agreement was school counsellors who fought for parity with counsellors employed in schools in other dioceses, such as Parramatta and Maitland-Newcastle.

The IEU negotiated a major win in moving to school term times – previously staff have been required to attend for 48 weeks a year.

This was secured along with wage rises that will see the annual wage review passed on to applicable wages rates in the agreement.

For 2026, the IEU secured a wage rise of 4.75%.

The *CatholicCare Wollongong Enterprise Agreement 2025* was approved by the FWC in November 2025.

Catholic independent schools bargaining

Model A

The union achieved substantial improvements in pay and conditions in bargaining for new Model A multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) for teachers and support staff in seven Catholic independent schools (represented by Catholic Employment Relations).

The agreements secured salary and allowance increases of 3.75% from February 2026; 3.5% from February 2027; and 3.25% from February 2028.

The union also achieved important improvements to leave entitlements for teachers and support staff. These include introduction of 12 weeks' paid non-initial primary carer's leave; superannuation on paid parental leave entitlements; and two days' paid cultural and ceremonial leave.

For teachers, bargaining delivered a new competitive six-step classification structure, including two additional steps within Band 2 while retaining Band 3 for eligible experienced teachers. Teachers will progress to Band 3 as soon as they satisfy the eligibility criteria rather than having to wait until the following February.

The agreement also introduced an important workload transparency provision for teachers.

For support staff, the agreements broadened to cover counsellors and psychologists.

Bargaining also secured less onerous personal and carer's leave evidence requirements, aligning these with the requirements applying to teachers, while retaining competitive pay rates and the existing classification structure.

Models B and C

Bargaining for replacement MEAs for Model B and Model C schools has commenced between the union and Catholic Employment Relations (CER), representing nearly 30 Catholic independent schools.

The IEU presented members' claims to CER on 18 August, including a pay claim of 4.5% in 2027; 4.5% in 2028; and 4.5% in 2029.

The union is also seeking improvements to a range of employment conditions, including improved paid parental leave for the non-initial primary carer and superannuation on paid parental leave, greater workload transparency for teachers and easier evidence requirements for personal/carer's leave.

Other claims specific to support staff include improved personal/carer's leave, coverage of psychologists, counsellors and youth workers, and an improved classification structure with rates comparable to those in other school sectors. A number of bargaining meetings have occurred but progress has been slow.

Mater Dei early learning centre

Mater Dei refused to include staff employed in the Mater Dei early learning centre in the new Model A multi-enterprise agreements.

The union therefore pursued a separate enterprise agreement for the early learning centre staff.

Bargaining commenced in early 2026. The IEU is seeking improvements in pay and conditions as staff are currently covered by modern awards.

Disappointingly, the Mater Dei board has not agreed to respond to the IEU's claims until the NSW government releases the 2027 Universal Preschool Funding guidelines. The IEU has insisted that an interim pay increase should be paid to employees until the guidelines are released.

As Mater Dei early learning centre does not currently charge fees, the union recommended low fees be introduced to cover the cost of employees' pay increases. This would help ensure Mater Dei retains its dedicated and highly skilled teachers and educators.

Christian schools bargaining

Christian Schools Australia NSW

The previous enterprise agreements covering nearly 50 schools represented by Christian Schools Australia (CSA) expired at the end of 2023.

The union was unable to reach agreement with the employers on the terms of new enterprise agreements and in late 2024, schools indicated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) their intention to vary letters of appointment to provide for pay increases in 2024 and 2025, improvements in paid parental leave and increases in personal/carer's leave for support staff.

Bargaining ceased from mid-2024 to mid-2025. Bargaining recommenced in May 2025 with 38 schools (not including schools that were part of Christian Education National group).

Following protracted bargaining, agreement was reached in October 2025 on two multi-enterprise agreements covering teachers and general staff in NSW Christian schools represented by CSA, the *NSW Christian Schools Teaching Staff Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2024* and the *NSW Christian Schools General Staff Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2024*.

Staff overwhelmingly endorsed the new multi-enterprise agreements in voting in November and the FWC approved them in January 2026.

The agreements delivered substantial pay rises, with guaranteed back pay to February 2024 (incorporating the increases agreed under the MoU).

Teachers secured increases of 7% in February 2024; 4% in October 2024; 3.5% in October 2025; and further 1.5% increases in October 2026 and February 2027.

General staff secured increases of 4% in February 2024, 2025 and 2026; followed by 3% in February 2027.

Employees in the preschool and childcare services stream secured wage increases of up to 5%.

For teachers, bargaining delivered a new streamlined seven-step classification structure, bringing the schools into closer alignment with other NSW agreements.

For general staff, the agreement's coverage was expanded to include school psychologists.

The union also achieved considerable improvements to parental leave for both teachers and general staff. The New Parent Bonus, which tops up the federal Paid Parental Leave scheme to an employee's normal salary, increased to 22 weeks from July 2024; to 24 weeks from July 2025; and to 26 weeks from July 2026.

The agreements also provide up to two weeks' paid paternity leave.

Christian Schools Australia ACT

As this report went to press, the union was finalising drafting of multi-enterprise agreements for teachers and general staff at Emmaus Christian School and Trinity Christian School in the ACT to replace the *ACT Christian Schools Teaching Staff Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2020* and the *ACT Christian Schools General Staff Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2021,* which expired in 2023 and 2024 respectively. The union negotiated these agreements with Christian Schools Australia (CSA).

Brindabella Christian College had previously been covered by the ACT agreements, but after substantial financial difficulties and a period of voluntary administration, the school was acquired by Christian Community Ministries (CCM) in mid 2025.

CCM then obtained in November 2025 an order from the Fair Work Commission that the CCM agreement would apply to transferring employees (that is, those employed at the time of the acquisition) rather than the existing multi-enterprise agreements.

The IEU sought guarantees about maintenance of pay and conditions following granting of the order, with partial success. New employees at Brindabella after the acquisition were automatically covered by the CCM EA.

As had occurred in NSW CSA schools, an MoU was issued by the two ACT schools in October 2024 providing for some pay rises and improved conditions in 2024 and 2025.

Brindabella's financial difficulties prior to the acquisition by CCM were an impediment to bargaining.

The union and CSA had agreed to defer resumption of bargaining until after the NSW MEAs were finalised (October 2025).

The employers agreed to a 1.5% interim pay offer at the start of 2026, but were reluctant to recommence bargaining until later in 2026.

The union finalised its claim in April 2026 and bargaining commenced in mid 2026.

Following pressure from members, the schools improved their salary offer, with teachers receiving a 1.5% increase in 2026 and general staff receiving a 3.75% increase (4% for early learning centre staff).

These will be followed by increases of 3.6% in 2027; 3.5% in 2028; and 3.4% in 2029.

The package also includes a range of improvements to conditions, including superannuation on paid parental leave; earlier access to long service leave; increased parental leave for non-primary carers; workload transparency; and additional personal leave for general staff.

Christian Education National schools

A group of more than 20 Christian schools operate under two multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) negotiated between the union and Independent Schools NSW (IS NSW), covering teachers and professional and administrative staff: *Christian Schools NSW (Teachers) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2023*; and the *Christian Schools NSW (Support and Operational Staff) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2023*. The MEAs have a nominal expiry date of January 2027.

This group of schools includes Christian Education National (CEN) schools (formerly covered by the Christian Schools Australia MEAs) and the larger Pacific group of schools.

In June 2026, Prolegis Lawyers advised the union it would be representing eight CEN schools to bargain for new MEAs on the expiry of the existing MEAs.

Bargaining commenced in August. The IEU and Prolegis Lawyers have since met on three additional occasions and both groups have presented their logs of claims.

It is expected in upcoming meetings that the IEU and Prolegis Lawyers will respond to the other parties log of claims to ensure bargaining continues to progress in a timely fashion.

Pacific Group of Christian Schools Ltd

In August 2026, Independent Schools NSW advised the union it would be bargaining on behalf of the Pacific Group of Christian Schools Ltd for new MEAs: the *Pacific Group of Christian Schools Limited (Teachers) Enterprise Agreement 2027*; and the *Pacific Group of Christian Schools Limited (Support & Operational Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2027*.

These will replace the current multi-enterprise agreements that expire at the start of 2027. An initial bargaining meeting was held in late September.

As the Christian schools sector fragments, the union's focus is on securing improved pay and conditions for teachers and professional and administrative staff across the resulting agreements, working towards conditions comparable to the Independent Schools NSW MEAs while maintaining consistency between the separate agreements.

Hunter Christian School

Hunter Christian School was previously covered by the MEAs negotiated between the union and Christian Schools Australia that expired in 2023 but had not been replaced.

Conditions were in line with the MoUs issued in NSW CSA schools in late 2024.

Bargaining with Independent Schools NSW commenced in October 2025 for new enterprise agreements: *Hunter Christian School (Teachers) Enterprise Agreement 2026-2027* and the *Hunter Christian School (Professional and Operational Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2026-2027*.

The employer quickly agreed to key claims to facilitate a smooth transition for teachers toward the Independent Schools NSW Multi-Enterprise Agreement (Co-operative MEA or CMEA) framework in future rounds. The union also ensured that rates of pay at least matched rates agreed in the CSA MEAs in late 2025.

Negotiations concluded in about a month, allowing the EAs to be voted up promptly, and they were approved by the Fair Work Commission in March 2026.

The Teachers EA delivers immediate gains, including: an expedited transition from the legacy 13-step teacher salary scale to the seven-step CMEA scale; higher entry-level and top-of-scale pay rates; and strategic wage protections to ensure mid-scale staff are not disadvantaged.

Additionally, the union secured enhanced entitlements aligned with CMEA standards, including improved paid parental leave and special leave provisions, ensuring staff gained both immediate wage lifts and modernised working conditions without unnecessary delay.

Nepean Christian School

Employees are currently covered by the *Christian Schools NSW (Teachers) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2023* and the *Christian Schools NSW (Support and Operational Staff) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2023*.

These were negotiated between the union and Independent Schools NSW and expire in January 2027.

However, the school decided to pursue separate enterprise agreements in mid-2026.

Bargaining with Independent Schools NSW is progressing quickly, with all parties wanting to resolve the agreements before the end of the year and before the Independent Schools NSW MEAs expire.

Many of the claims are still being discussed, but talks have been collaborative and the agreements are on track to meet the end-of-year timeline.

Wagga Wagga Christian College

Employees at Wagga Wagga Christian College are currently covered by the *Christian Schools NSW (Teachers) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2023* and the *Christian Schools NSW (Support and Operational Staff) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2023*.

Bargaining for a single enterprise agreement at Wagga Wagga Christian College commenced in late July with Independent Schools NSW and talks continue as this report went to press.

The College has agreed to implement a seven-step pay structure for teachers, together with a workload transparency clause similar to the Independent Schools NSW Co-operative Multi-Enterprise Agreement.

Professional and administrative staff have been offered an additional two days' personal leave a year, taking the entitlement to 12 days, along with an increase to the new parent bonus to 26 weeks under both agreements.

The union is finalising its response, with the parties appearing close to an agreement in principle.

Christian Community Ministries

The IEU has commenced bargaining with Christian Community Ministries (CCM), an organisation that operates 17 schools, including 10 in Queensland, three in SA, two in WA, one in NSW (Lakes Christian College) and one in the ACT (Brindabella Christian School).

The current enterprise agreement expires at the end of 2026 and bargaining commenced mid-year for a new agreement, *Christian Community Ministries Schools Enterprise Agreement 2027*.

In the past, the schools in NSW and the ACT have enjoyed better conditions than schools in other states (maintained by loadings above the agreement rates) and this has created added complexity in the bargaining.

CCM has agreed to several enhancements, including increased paid maternity and paternity leave; expanded discretionary leave; additional salary increments; a faster classification review process without downgrade provisions; a Level 4 pathway for teacher aides; removal of junior rates; a right to disconnect clause; and a modest reduction in weekly hours with no loss of pay.

However, CCM has rejected claims aimed at reducing workload and improving staffing, including increased non-contact time, meeting limits, maximum class sizes, additional annual leave and improved long service leave.

The union separately raised strong concerns regarding wage outcomes for general staff transitioning from the *ACT Christian Schools General Staff MEA 2021* at Brindabella Christian College, where proposed annual increases of 0.6% to 1.3% fail to reflect cost-of-living pressures or comparable ACT public sector salary movements.

The union has urged CCM to reconsider, including additional one-off payments.

Employees endorsed the proposed agreement in a vote in late September.

Adventist schools bargaining

Greater Sydney Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

The IEU is pressuring the Greater Sydney Seventh-day Adventist Conference to recommence negotiations for a new Teachers enterprise agreement following a union-endorsed "no" vote on the proposed teachers agreement in late 2025.

Bargaining resumed on 19 February 2026, with the union again outlining four outstanding claims: salary protection for 2028; progression to a seven-step salary scale (rather than the Conference's 11-step model); a five-year long service leave threshold; and retention of the Workplace Framework, which provides enforceable

protections around face-to-face hours, release time, meetings and class sizes.

The Conference's seven-step modelling, which the union requested in February, was not provided until June, without savings clauses or transitional arrangements.

In August, the union submitted detailed modelling including an eighth step for long-standing employees, transitional arrangements and savings clauses, and sought financial evidence supporting the Conference's claims of financial difficulty.

The Conference provided substantiating financial information in August 2026. The union responded in early September agreeing to recommend a "yes" vote. As this report went to press, we were waiting for the Conference's response.

The Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Greater Sydney) Ltd Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2026-2027 was approved by the Fair Work Commission in March 2026, following bargaining that commenced in August 2025.

The IEU sought to continue negotiations to progress a number of key claims.

However, the Conference put the proposed agreement to a vote in October 2025.

The agreement was voted up by employees, providing for 3% pay increases in 2026 and 2027.

The union secured important improvements for members, including 12 weeks of paid parental leave for the non-initial primary caregiver; an increase in long service leave accrual from 1.05 weeks to 1.30 weeks per year; and the inclusion of a right to disconnect.

South NSW Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

The *Seventh-Day Adventist Schools (South New South Wales) Ltd Enterprise Agreement 2019-2022* had a nominal expiry date of 23 January 2024 and covered teachers and school leadership positions across three schools.

Although a replacement agreement was not finalised following its expiry, salary increases were provided by administrative action, broadly consistent with wage outcomes achieved through bargaining with the Greater Sydney Conference.

The Conference provided a preliminary agreement to teachers and the union in November 2025. The union provided without-prejudice comments on the preliminary document in mid-December.

Following consultation with members at the commencement of Term 1, 2026, the union served its log of claims on the employer.

Progress was delayed by the unexpected and extended absence of the Conference Secretary, with bargaining not resuming until late June.

Notices of Employee Representational Rights (NERRs) were issued in July 2026 and formal bargaining commenced shortly thereafter.

The union secured strong improvements to employee entitlements and working conditions including:

- additional five days of personal leave
- additional two weeks of paid parental leave for the initial primary carer
- introduction of 12 weeks of paid parental leave for the non-initial primary carer
- increased discretionary leave
- improved release time of 2.5 hours per week
- a formal mentoring and release program to support early career teachers
- competitive salary rates
- modernisation of the agreement, including updated provisions and the adoption of gender-neutral language.

Employees voted in favour of the proposed agreement in August 2026.

As the report went to press, the agreement was with the Fair Work Commission for approval.

Other schools bargaining

The Armidale Waldorf School

The Armidale Waldorf School was previously not covered by an enterprise agreement, with pay and conditions mostly aligned with the modern award.

Following chapter advocacy and involvement, members successfully drew their employer to the bargaining table to negotiate for a single teachers agreement.

After a long bargaining process, teachers voted overwhelmingly in favour of *The Armidale Waldorf School Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2024*.

It was approved by the Fair Work Commission in June 2026.

The new agreement introduced improved pay, conditions and certainty to members in this school.

Early childhood education and care bargaining

NSW community preschools

Since the Fair Work Commission (FWC) granted a supported bargaining authorisation for 103 NSW community preschools in September 2024, the union has been seeking a multi-enterprise agreement.

However, employers refuse to commit to a multi-enterprise agreement without an increase in funding from the NSW government.

In February 2026 the FWC recommended that the NSW government increase funding to address the substantial undervaluation of the work performed by teachers and educators in the sector (*IEU and NSW Preschools* [2026] FWC 424).

The NSW government in June 2026 announced a Universal Preschool Funding Program to replace its covid-era Start Strong funding. It appeared to be a breakthrough – however, this is not the case.

The union sought further details of the new funding model without success.

The FWC in August 2026 recommended that the NSW government provide further information to the parties, including cameo modelling.

In September, the FWC recommended that this information is provided before new funding guidelines are finalised.

The critical issues are:

- the overall level of funding – that is, whether it is actually increasing
- teacher wage rates – the NSW government has stated teacher wage rates will be funded at 5% above the award. (However, this is in fact below current preschool teacher wage rates in the sector, with most services already providing teacher remuneration rates at 6% to 15% above the award. Further, it would collapse teacher and educator relativities in contrast to long day care and government preschools.)
- disability and higher needs funding is insufficient
- staffing ratios – the NSW government claims the model assumes staffing levels based on public preschools. This is unrealistic for community preschools that operate longer hours than government preschools and cannot access additional staffing on an emergency basis.
- fee caps – a $20 a day fee cap will apply. The fee cap, if coupled with inadequate funding, could mean some community preschools are no longer viable.

Long day care supported bargaining

The IEU, along with the Australian Education Union and United Workers Union, secured the first supported bargaining multi-enterprise agreement for staff in long day care. The Fair Work Commission approved *The Early Childhood Education and Care Multi-Employer Enterprise Agreement 2024-2026* on 19 December 2025.

Because employers and employees can opt in to a supported bargaining MEA after it commences, it now covers more than 200 long day care and school-aged care employers and tens of thousands of early childhood education sector employees across Australia.

Negotiations for a new long day care supported bargaining MEA commenced in October 2026 (as this report went to press).

KU enterprise agreement

During bargaining for the *KU Children's Services Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2024 – 2026,* KU agreed to the IEU's request to introduce a Directors' Working Party to review the unmanageable workloads of KU directors.

The working party is due to commence in late 2026, comprising two IEU-nominated directors, two KU-nominated directors, KU management, the IEU and United Workers Union.

SDN enterprise agreement

After SDN issued a Notice of Employee Representational Rights in June 2026, the union held meetings with members to consult on the log of claims. Negotiations commenced on 11 August.

Key issues include substantial pay increases, raising personal leave above the current 12 days and improved non-contact time for transition to school statements.

Gender undervaluation increases for diploma-qualified educators have narrowed the pay gap with teacher rates, but SDN has fallen behind other employers – one part-time member earns $19 an hour more at Goodstart in a comparable role.

Worker retention payment

The worker retention payment (WRP) team has engaged with approved providers and staff at centre-based day care and out-of-school-hours care services across Australia to promote uptake of the payment.

The payment delivers a 15% pay increase above the award rate.

The payment delivers an equivalent dollar amount to early childhood teachers and educators already paid above the applicable award.

The team has visited services to explain the interaction between the WRP and the *Children's Services Award 2010* gender-based undervaluation pay increases.

The team has also provided support and resources to services to apply for and pass on the payment to staff.

Industrial support has included assisting services to join the *Early Childhood Education and Care Multi-Employer Enterprise Agreement 2024-2026*; drafting clauses for the WRP to be inserted in enterprise agreements during bargaining; and drafting individual flexibility arrangements that services can use to apply for the WRP.

NSW Health

The union represented early childhood members in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in a section 19 award review process for the *Teachers' (NSW Health Early Childhood Service Centres) Salaries and Miscellaneous Conditions Award 2024*.

This regulatory review process delivered pay rises for staff. NSW Health confirmed that the Senior Officials Wages Advisory Committee approved determinations securing the 15% Commonwealth Early Childhood Wage Retention Program/Grant wage uplift.

This guarantees full backpay from 2 December 2024 for eligible teachers and educators, contingent on centres submitting required Commonwealth reporting.

Post-secondary bargaining

The IEU has been actively bargaining in the post-secondary education sector, with enterprise agreements finalised at several colleges achieving good outcomes for members.

The *UTS College Academic English Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2026-2029* was approved by the Fair Work Commission in March 2026. It provided pay increases for teachers of 3% a year for 2026, 2027 and 2028.

The Taylors College agreement was hard fought, with the employer seeking a considerable diminution of the existing arrangement around student vacations. Strong action by the chapter maintained the status quo, with the final *Taylors College Waterloo Campus Enterprise Agreement 2026* delivering pay rises of 3% in 2025 and 2026. The FWC approved the agreement in June 2026.

An agreement in principle was reached at WSU The College in August 2026, with salary increases of 3.25% backdated to July 2025, plus 3.5% from July 2026, 2027, 2028 and 2029, and a final 3% on expiry in July 2030.

Negotiations with WSU International College were continuing as this report went to press, with a salary settlement likely in the 9% to 10% range over three years.

The *UOWC Ltd Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2025* (with pay rises of 3% a year), applying to UoW College, was finally approved by the FWC in December 2025.

At Navitas Skilled Futures, bargaining paused while the federal government reviewed the college's program, with a memorandum of understanding providing increases of 3% in 2025 and 2.5% in 2026.

Members at colleges covered by the modern award received general wage increases of 4.75% in July 2026.

Disputes/individual member matters

Catholic Schools Broken Bay multi-site principals dispute

In August 2026, the union became aware that Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) was implementing a "multi-site" leadership model, placing a single principal in charge of two schools.

What began as two redundancy matters quickly revealed a far larger restructure – ultimately affecting 14 schools (10 in Sydney's northern beaches and four on the north shore), with each paired to share one principal.

CSBB failed to give the union advance notice of this restructure and appears to have considered that "principal appointments" did not trigger its consultation obligations under the enterprise agreement.

It was only through members that the union obtained an internal CSBB document confirming appointments had already been finalised across all 14 schools.

The union notified a dispute to the Fair Work Commission in August, arguing the plan was a major workplace change requiring genuine consultation, and raised serious concerns about workload and work health and safety. We also expressed concern about the impact on the principals themselves, as well as the practical implications for assistant principals and staff left without on-site leadership.

At a conference before the FWC in September, CSBB agreed to further consultation about pay and release for assistant principals and the working hours of support

staff at the affected schools. Further consultation was agreed at each pair of schools in late Term 4/Term 1 2027 and generally at the end of Term 1 2027 to consult on the operation of the model.

CSBB refused to delay implementing the changes, on the basis that both principals and assistant principals at each of the schools had agreed to the changes and that new letters of appointment had been issued.

This dispute was still on foot as this report went to press and is likely to evolve in late 2026.

Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle restructure

Maitland-Newcastle Diocese informed the union in late August of a major restructure to take effect from 2027.

This would abolish teacher-librarian positions from primary schools; reduce the number of teachers of English as an additional language or dialect (EALD); reduce support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students; and cut a number of other positions.

More than 300 positions were impacted although for some staff the reduction in teaching load could be made up with other teaching duties, either at the same school or another.

The employer's stated reasons for the restructure were the need to ensure resources were aligned with the priorities of student learning and to ensure financial sustainability.

The union surveyed members about the impact of this restructure on teaching and learning.

Many members were distressed about the changes and unsure about the options offered to mitigate the effects of the restructure. The union sought further detail of the positions impacted and met with the diocese to argue against the cuts.

This issue drew extensive media coverage, with the abolition of primary school teacher-librarians a key focus. The union featured heavily in media coverage, stating our opposition to the changes.

The union held a meeting of nearly 50 reps in early September. Unfortunately, strong public opposition to the cuts was not successful in reversing the decision about teacher-librarians, but there was a partial reversal to cuts in support for students of EALD or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

The union has called a further meeting for teacher-librarians members to hear their specific concerns.

At the time of writing, the union is supporting affected members.

Accrual of leave on workers compensation

In a major victory this year, the union recovered more than $78,000 in entitlements withheld from a member whose employment was terminated following a workplace injury.

The entitlement arose because of the intersection of NSW workers compensation laws and federal workplace laws, and included unpaid superannuation, correctly calculated long service leave, and fully paid annual leave accrued while on workers compensation.

Winning this dispute prevented the employer from short-changing an injured staff member when they were at their most vulnerable.

Personal/carer's leave

The union defended a member's entitlement to access paid personal/carer's leave to care for an ageing family member with serious chronic medical conditions.

This dispute arose when the employer challenged the leave request on the basis that the support constituted general "elder care" rather than legitimate carer's leave, prompting the union to initiate formal proceedings in the Fair Work Commission to establish that the member's medical evidence fully satisfied the enterprise agreement's evidence requirements.

The matter was resolved through conciliation with a solution that was satisfactory to the member.

Incorrect incremental progression

The union launched an application in the new Industrial Court of NSW on behalf of a member to seek recovery of underpaid wages, unpaid superannuation, and interest totaling more than $115,000, along with civil penalties for alleged systematic misclassification and failure to progress in line with the relevant multi-enterprise agreement.

The claim reflects the IEU's commitment to enforcing incremental progression rights for teaching staff.

Redeemer Baptist School

In August 2026, the IEU gave evidence at a NSW parliamentary inquiry into Redeemer Baptist School.

The inquiry followed media reporting on child safety matters as well as the treatment of staff "volunteers" within the organisation.

The union filed a claim in the Federal Court seeking unpaid wages on behalf of two volunteers at Redeemer Baptist School. The claim seeks recognition that these individuals were employees who should have been remunerated in accordance with the relevant modern award and the *Fair Work Act* 2009 (Cth), rather than engaged as unpaid volunteers.

The matter was still before the Federal Court as this report went to press.

Delegates rights: Redlands School and Rouse Hill Anglican College

In May 2026, the union pursued two significant delegates' rights disputes – at Redlands School in Cremorne and Rouse Hill Anglican College.

Both disputes concerned delegates' access to all-staff email communications and, more broadly, the right of union delegates to communicate electronically with union members and employees who are eligible for membership.

At Redlands School, the dispute was long standing. The union asserted that the IEU rep had a workplace right to communicate with colleagues, including IEU members and potential members, through all-staff email communications.

The employer had restricted this access and sought prior review of communications from the IEU rep before they were distributed.

Redlands strongly resisted the union's position; however, after the dispute escalated towards proceedings in the Fair Work Commission, the union achieved an important outcome.

The dispute was resolved on the following basis:

- the ability to send "all-staff" and "cohort" (for example, "primary staff") emails via the Pulse system as "Pulse – IEU Rep" emails (with the Pulse system used by all leadership and all staff for cohort communication at Redlands); and
- the establishment of an "IEU tile" on the Redlands staff intranet that provides access to "IEU/IEU Rep" material and communications, with an agreed disclaimer (see below).

Not only did the union members achieve full email access, with "all-staff" and "cohort" email access, but this access is unconstrained.

The "IEU tile" on the Redlands intranet also enables the rep to provide union resources and communications.

This outcome substantially strengthens the rep's capacity to communicate directly and effectively with members, potential members and colleagues.

The Rouse Hill Anglican College dispute was largely unresolved as this report went to press, following a conciliation on 7 May 2026 involving Independent Schools NSW.

This matter differs from the Redlands dispute as the college does not have a "Pulse" system.

In relation to communications to non-members, the employer has directed that IEU reps post union-related information on an electronic noticeboard.

While this matter was subsequently discontinued following the conciliation, the union's concerns remain on foot and we will continue to consult with reps to address further issues as they arise.

Neal Bent Industrial Coordinator
Michael Aird Industrial Officer
Liam Crisanti Industrial Officer
Samantha Danalis Industrial Officer
Emma Ford Industrial Officer
Nadia Gubbay-Nemes Industrial Officer
Wendy McMurdo Industrial Assistant
Elle Miller Industrial Assistant
Carolyn Moore Industrial Officer
Deborah Weston Industrial Assistant

List of agreements

Catholic systemic schools
Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Limited – Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025
The NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025
Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Limited – Principals Enterprise Agreement 2025
Principals (Sydney Catholic Schools) Enterprise Agreement 2025
NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Principals Enterprise Agreement 2025
ACT Catholic Education Early Learning Centre and School Age Care Centre Enterprise Agreement 2026

Catholic independent schools
NSW Catholic Independent Schools (Support Staff-Model A) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2025
NSW Catholic Independent Schools (Teachers-Model A) Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2025

Christian schools
NSW Christian Schools General Staff Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2024
NSW Christian Schools Teaching Staff Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2024
Hunter Christian School (Professional and Operational Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2026-2027
Hunter Christian School (Teachers) Enterprise Agreement 2026-2027

Independent schools
Indie Education Enterprise Agreement 2026-2029
Seventh-day Adventist Schools (Greater Sydney) LTD Operational Staff Enterprise Agreement 2026-2027
Trinity Grammar School Teachers Agreement 2025
Reddam House (Support and Operational Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2025
Reddam House (Teachers) Enterprise Agreement 2025
The Armidale Waldorf School Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2024
Independent Schools (teachers) Cooperative Multi enterprise Agreement 2025 (2)

Early childhood education and care
West Bathurst Preschool Teachers and Earlystart Children & Family Centre Enterprise Agreement 2025
Camden Preschool Employee Collective Agreement 2024

Post-secondary colleges
UOWC Ltd Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2025
UTS College Academic English Teachers Enterprise Agreement 2026-2029
Taylors College Waterloo Campus Enterprise Agreement 2026

Other
Life Without Barriers Education Enterprise Agreement 2026
CatholicCare Wollongong Enterprise Agreement 2025

Summary of disputes

Disputes by employer	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Catholic systemic	100	154	119	204	182
Catholic independent	14	16	5	22	30
Independent Schools NSW/non-systemic	62	81	83	112	110
Early childhood education and care	9	7	13	26	35
Special	–	2	–	5	8
Business colleges	–	1	–	1	–
English colleges	3	2	4	–	1
Post-secondary (other)	–	3	–	2	3
Miscellaneous	4	1	1	6	14
Total	**192**	**267**	**225**	**378**	**383**

Disputes by nature	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Accreditation	1	–	1	–	–
Assessment/appraisal	25	24	16	4	–
Casual employment – includes casual conversion	–	–	–	1	4
Child protection	36	58	54	80	71
Classification	2	6	5	14	10
Conditions	7	13	5	–	–
Contract of employemnt (includes variation, new contract review)	3	8	6	13	14
Disciplinary issues (performance and conduct) – includes suspension	6	10	2	71	107
Enterprise agreements/awards	1	3	5	–	2
Fixed-term employment	2	3	1	5	–
General protection	2	1	2	3	1
Harassment/discrimination/staff conflict/bullying	22	36	14	36	38
Leave-annual/maternity/sick/long service/other	10	12	7	13	12
Overpayment	–	–	–	6	3
Promotions positions	3	1	1	3	–
Restructure/redundancy/redeployment	12	19	17	40	16
Right to request flexible work arrangements	–	–	–	3	7
Superannuation	–	2	1	–	–
Termination of employment (includes dismissal and resignation)	36	39	54	43	48
Wage claims	16	16	19	16	29
Workers compensation (return to work)	3	14	13	22	15
Worker health and safety	3	2	2	4	3
Workload and Work Practices Agreeement issues	–	–	–	1	3
Total	**192**	**267**	**225**	**378**	**383**

Recovery of money
Monies recovered for the year September 2025 to September 2026 were $1,706,174.

Workers compensation
The union referred 110 members to the union's solicitors for advice regarding disputed workers compensation claims and general workers compensation advice this year: 70 members have ongoing workers compensation matters; 36 members were referred to the union's solicitors under the Legal Benefits Scheme.

Organising, campaigning and growth

In 2026 the union established a dedicated organising team comprising two coordinators and three team leads to support the work of organisers across NSW and the ACT.

The new structure enables a more targeted focus on organising work, including strategic activity in identified schools while balancing the demands of often complex member matters.

Throughout 2026, the organising team focused on strengthening organiser capability, improving systems and reporting, introducing more consistent organising practices, supporting membership growth, and enhancing collaboration across the union.

We have improved data quality, record-keeping, planning processes, organiser development and campaign readiness. Many initiatives are still evolving.

Strengthening organising systems

A major focus this year has been improving the systems that support organising work.

The team progressed SharePoint-based member records and developed more consistent enquiry-screen processes in our database. We are standardising reporting for school visits, workplace visits and organiser activity.

These improvements aim to increase consistency, strengthen institutional knowledge, and provide better visibility of organising activity across the union.

The team also advanced the use of dashboards, reporting tools, and membership data to better identify organising opportunities, track progress, and support decision-making.

We are developing and refining membership trend reporting, mapping tools and recruitment to help organisers focus resources where they will have the greatest impact.

Leveraging technology and innovation

The team explored the practical use of AI tools, including Microsoft CoPilot, to increase efficiency and reduce administrative workload.

We have used CoPilot to assist with meeting summaries, reporting, chronology preparation, dead-file management and workflow improvements.

Training and planning throughout the year support the safe and effective use of these technologies across the organising team.

Organiser support and leadership development

A key priority this year has been strengthening support structures for organisers.

The team introduced one-on-one meetings focused on professional development, wellbeing, workload management and capability building. Feedback gathered through these discussions informed planning, resource development and priorities.

The team is establishing clearer supervision processes, improving communication, and establishing consistent systems for performance and development planning.

Organiser support has been a central focus this year, particularly in response to workload pressures arising from temporary allocations and staffing gaps.

Professional development and capability building

This year we focused on practical organising skills. Workshops, planning days and learning activities covered topics including:

- meaningful school visits and organising conversations
- recruitment and membership growth strategies
- representative mapping and development
- record-keeping and reporting
- workplace organising and campaign planning.

Recruitment and organising practice

Throughout the year, the team focused on purposeful organising activities guided by data, mapping and planning.

Discussions focused on improving the quality of school visits, clarifying expectations regarding organising activity, and strengthening the link between school engagement, recruitment and member development.

We developed targeted school approaches, workplace mapping and membership trend analysis to inform priorities and support long-term organising goals.

The team also worked to improve visibility of recruitment opportunities and organising outcomes through better reporting and ongoing dashboard development.

Campaign development

The team began developing longer term campaigns through workplace mapping, rep engagement and development of the Work Practices Agreement campaign framework.

Rather than relying solely on industrial activity, we focused on building campaigns grounded in member engagement, workplace conversations and organising opportunities.

The team is also working to improve campaign consistency, communications, supporting materials and organiser readiness, with this work continuing into 2027.

Member support and risk management

In responding to individual member matters, we have substantially improved record-keeping, case management and organiser support.

During Term 3, the team prioritised reviewing allegation-response processes and strengthening templates, checklists, guidance materials and referrals. We are still refining these processes to improve member outcomes.

An ongoing focus on quality records, data integrity and consistent processes is strengthening risk management and supporting improved member service delivery.

Looking ahead

Priorities for the coming year include:

- improved SharePoint and member record systems
- enhancing organising dashboards and reporting tools
- embedding AI-assisted workflows where appropriate
- developing organiser capability and supervision programs
- strengthening organising frameworks and school visit practices
- expanding workplace mapping and growth-focused organising
- supporting long-term campaign development through greater rep engagement and member participation.

The organising team is focused on building a stronger, more capable and data-informed organising program that supports members, develops reps and grows union power across all sectors of our membership.

The foundations we have established in 2026 are a platform for continued improvement in organising effectiveness, member engagement and sustainable membership growth.

Expanding reach

Throughout 2026, the team supported the union's work across recruitment, member engagement and bargaining, with a focus on strengthening the connection between members, their chapters and the broader industrial work of the IEU.

This has included work with student teachers and early career teachers, direct engagement with members in Catholic independent schools covered by the Model B and Model C agreements, and early preparation for some of the major bargaining campaigns that will begin in 2027.

Across all of this work, we have focused on ensuring members are involved in the decisions and campaigns that directly affect their wages, conditions and working lives.

Student teachers and early career teachers

The IEU has strengthened engagement with student teachers throughout 2026.

Recruiting within universities presents challenges, particularly with gaining regular access to students at different universities and education faculties.

In response, we have developed relationships that provide clearer pathways for engagement, leading to a noticeable increase in student participation in IEU activities throughout the year.

This is an important development for the union. Student teachers are increasingly entering schools earlier through placements, casual employment and other school-based roles. This means many have their first experiences of workplace rights, employment arrangements and industrial issues well before they finish their degrees.

Our work with student teachers offers opportunities for conversations about union membership, workplace rights, contracts and accreditation. We also discuss what the transition from university into teaching really looks like.

Importantly, this has also allowed the union to begin building relationships with future members before they enter their first permanent or temporary teaching role.

There is more work to do, particularly in developing stronger and more consistent relationships with universities. However, the increased student participation we have seen this year is encouraging and shows the value of building on established relationships.

The IEU continued its engagement with student teachers throughout 2026, building on relationships developed with universities over recent years.

Officers maintained contact with university representatives, developed and sourced materials for student engagement, and pursued opportunities to speak directly with students about IEU membership, workplace rights and entering the teaching profession.

The IEU engaged with Western Sydney University, University of Technology Sydney and University of Notre Dame during the year, while a planned event at the University of Newcastle was postponed.

These visits are an important way of introducing students to the union before they enter the profession.

Student membership grew from 256 members in 2025 to 368 members this year, providing a strong base for the IEU to maintain contact with students as they move into employment and the early stages of their careers.

Planning also began in 2026 for a Student Teacher and Early Career Teacher Committee, with a focus on strengthening the connection between student membership and the early years of teaching.

The committee is intended to provide a clearer avenue for student and early career members to raise issues affecting them, particularly around entering the profession, accreditation, workplace rights and support in the first years of teaching.

This work will continue in 2027 alongside further university engagement, professional support and opportunities for student and early career members to become more involved in the union.

Model B and Model C Catholic independent schools bargaining

The team supported bargaining preparations for new multi-enterprise agreements covering teachers and support staff in Model B and Model C Catholic independent schools.

During Term 3, organisers visited Model B and Model C schools to speak directly with members about the upcoming bargaining and the issues they would like the union to pursue.

Organisers encouraged chapters to meet, discuss concerns at their school and pass motions identifying their bargaining priorities. This was an important way of ensuring the union's log of claims was directly informed by members' experiences.

Across Model B and Model C schools, members raised a broad range of issues. These included pay increases that recognise cost-of-living pressures and maintain competitiveness across the sector, improved parental



Aspect members met with the IEU in Wagga Wagga to amplify their call for fair pay for teacher aides.

leave, stronger workload transparency for teachers and greater clarity around face-to-face teaching hours, release, meetings and additional duties.

Members also raised the need for better support for early career teachers, improved conditions for support staff, allowances, leave entitlements, classifications and agreement coverage for some professional and support staff roles.

Some of the most useful discussions covered the differences between individual schools – this helped identify issues that may not always be obvious when looking at the agreement alone.

The visits also offered insights for organising. Bargaining gives members a direct reason to engage with their chapter and the union. Our school visits provided opportunities to reconnect with chapters, support reps, speak with members who may not have been actively involved and have conversations with potential members.

The motions and feedback we received from chapters have helped shape the union's bargaining priorities and will inform the campaign as negotiations progress.

Our bargaining position is strongest when members are organised, participating in their chapter and speaking collectively about the conditions they want to improve.

Building capacity: Sectors in focus

Throughout 2026, the union has focused on building capacity in two of the largest employers affiliated to peak body Independent Schools NSW: The Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation (TASC) and Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia). Staff are covered by the *Cooperative Multi enterprise Agreement (teachers and professional and operational staff)*.

The union's work has focused on building strength at the individual workplace level, developing confident reps, and expanding membership and participation based on collective issues.

Our approach involves bringing members together, identifying issues that matter, building representative structures and giving members the tools to act collectively.

The Anglican Schools Corporation: We have focused on developing a stronger network of reps across TASC schools and improving collective knowledge and power across all chapters.

In March, we brought TASC reps together for a full-day training program at the IEU office in Ultimo. Reps engaged in practical activities to build their confidence in recruiting new members and strengthening their chapters.

As a result, TASC reps are now in regular contact with each other, offering mutual support and unpacking differing expectations across the one employer.

A key component of the day's training was mapping workplaces and identifying opportunities for recruitment. Reps considered where members and non-members were located within their schools, where we had strong union presence and where there were gaps.

We also explored how workplace issues can become a starting point for conversations with non-members, rather than treating recruitment as separate from a campaign.

Workload was another important focus. Reps examined workload transparency requirements and compared practices across schools. This created an opportunity for reps to understand not only what their agreement provides, but how they can use those provisions to organise members around workload concerns.

The training also helped establish a network of reps from different TASC schools.

Building this network gives reps and chapters the opportunity to share experiences, identify common issues and see themselves as part of a broader collective rather than operating in isolation within individual schools.

This targeted program has been successful with the union recruiting 90 new members across TASC schools.

Aspect: Aspect teacher aides are paid 17.5% (or about $180 a week) less than teacher aides working in Catholic systemic schools or NSW government schools.

Addressing this considerable pay gap has been the focus of the union's "Respect@Aspect – Fair pay for teacher aides" campaign during 2026.

In May, Aspect reps came together for dedicated training. The emphasis was on supporting reps to organise in their workplaces, communicate with members and identify opportunities to grow the union. Reps discussed the campaign, mapped their workplaces and planned how they could involve more colleagues in collective activity.

In July, Aspect reps met and endorsed a statewide petition calling on the employer to pay aides fairly.



IEU members at The Armidale Waldorf School with their new enterprise agreement, which commenced in June.

Launched in September, the petition calls on Aspect to pay an additional 5% above agreement rates in February 2027 and commit to pay equity by 2028.

The petition is targeted at all Aspect employees – teachers and support staff, members and non-members. At the time of writing, it had gathered more than 500 signatures.

Organisers are encouraging members to speak directly with non-members about why collective strength matters. The message is simple: the stronger the union is at Aspect, the greater our capacity to win better pay. Since starting the campaign, the union has recruited almost 80 new members at Aspect.

Preparing for bargaining in 2027

While the Model B and Model C work was a major focus during 2026, we also began preparing for bargaining focused on other sectors in 2027.

Catholic systemic schools: This sector will be a key focus in 2027. We have laid crucial groundwork ahead of formal bargaining commencing, including looking at existing Work Practices Agreements and the relevant annexures to current enterprise agreements.

These provisions have a very real effect on our members' day-to-day work, particularly around workload, hours, duties, release arrangements and other local work practices. It is vital that we understand how they are operating in practice before bargaining begins.

Reviewing these arrangements now gives the union the opportunity to identify inconsistencies, lack of clarity or provisions that need to be improved. It also means that when we begin broader consultation with members in 2027, we will already have a good understanding of issues emerging across schools and dioceses.

Members will still be central to determining the claims and priorities for the next agreement, but this early groundwork will enable better informed and more focused discussions.

Independent schools: We have also begun preparing for bargaining for members in schools affiliated to peak body Independent Schools NSW.

The team has looked at how the current agreements are operating, what issues are emerging in schools and where members may want to see improvements.

Good bargaining preparation takes time, so organisers have been out talking to members, understanding the workplace issues arising from clauses in an agreement and ensuring chapters have the opportunity to contribute before claims are finalised.

The work across all school sectors will continue into 2027, with member consultation and chapter participation at the centre of the process.

Member benefits

The IEU continually looks at ways of extending benefits to members.

This year we proposed a partnership with travel and tour operator Contiki, which focuses on 18-35-year-olds. Under the proposal, eligible members would be able to access discounted Contiki travel through an IEU-specific offer, with additional savings potentially available to members who have previously travelled with Contiki.

This is a slightly different area of work for the union, aimed at giving younger members an additional practical benefit alongside industrial, professional and workplace support.

Conclusion

Across all sectors, the IEU's organising team is developing reps, building sector-wide networks, identifying emerging leaders and establishing structures that support a strong IEU into the future.

Therese Fitzgibbon Assistant Secretary
Donna Widdison Organising Coordinator
Peter Criticos Campaigning and Growth Coordinator
Emily Cranney Organising Lead
Sean van der Heide Organising Lead
Kendall Warren Organising Lead

Membership statistics

Members and their workplaces	
Teachers	
Early childhood centres	955
Post-secondary education	174
Miscellaneous/IEU	45
Non-systemic schools	8426
Principals	538
Systemic schools	14,124
Unemployed/Leave without pay/Parental leave	737
Retired/Life members	621
Without category	270
Subtotal	**25,890**
Support staff	
Early childhood centres	81
Post-secondary education	33
Miscellaneous/IEU	24
Non-systemic schools	1531
Systemic schools	3123
Unemployed/Leave without pay/Parental leave	49
Retired/Life members	30
Without category	28
Subtotal	**4899**
Students	
Students	363
Subtotal	**363**
Total	**31,152**

Members by classification	
Teachers	
Full-time	17,154
Part-time	6026
Casual	1351
Leave without pay/Parental leave	565
Unemployed	173
Retired	613
Support staff	
Full-time	2144
Part-time	2560
Casual	115
Leave without pay/Parental leave	32
Unemployed	17
Retired	30
Trainee	1
Exempt from dues	
Students	363
Life	8
Total members	**31,152**

Members and workplaces by sub branch

Sub Branches – metropolitan	Schools	Members	EC Centres	Members	Colleges	Members	Other	Members	Total workplaces	Total members
Central Coast	39	828	165	47	5	0		14	209	889
Central Metropolitan	95	2015	333	95	237	48	3	101	668	2259
Cumberland	86	2371	455	36	35	13		26	576	2446
Ku-ring-gai	46	1031	191	52	14	2		14	251	1099
Lansdowne	90	2337	416	25	35	10		20	541	2392
Metropolitan East	61	1285	199	37	27	41		16	287	1379
Northern Beaches	36	689	149	25	10	3		8	195	725
Northern Suburbs	54	1244	260	78	36	2		8	350	1332
Penrith Blue Mountains	81	1780	296	32	13	0		17	390	1829
Southern Suburbs	59	1604	387	73	18	9		30	464	1716
Total metropolitan workplaces									**3931**	
Total members in metropolitan workplaces										**16,066**

Sub Branches – regional	Schools	Members	EC Centres	Members	Colleges	Member	Other	Members	Total workplaces	Total members
ACT/Monaro Branch	64	1485	106	52	16	1		20	186	1558
Central Western	81	1176	192	37	11	0		11	284	1224
Hunter Valley	115	2663	414	146	38	65		46	567	2920
Mid North Coast	46	914	146	28	9	6		5	201	953
North Coast	55	974	145	56	13	3		3	213	1036
North West	41	778	111	20	7	0		14	159	812
Riverina	52	1017	152	72	6	0		8	210	1097
South Coast	96	2810	497	100	26	6		26	619	2942
South East	43	754	129	43	4	0		5	176	802
Total regional workplaces									**2615**	
Total members in regional workplaces										**13,344**

Others	Members
Principals Sub Branch	538
Students (university)	363
Unemployed	190
Retired	643
Other/Life members	8
Total members	**1742**

Total (workplaces)	**6546**	
Total (members)		**31,152**

Workplaces by category	
Catholic systemic schools	619
Non-systemic schools	621
Post-secondary education	560
Early childhood centres	4743
Miscellaneous/IEU	3

Workplaces visits by category	
Systemic schools	700
Non-systemic schools	469
Post-secondary education	31
Early childhood centres	235
Total workplace visits	**1435**

Statistics 1/10/2025 to 1/10/2026

Support and operational staff

Catholic systemic schools

The *NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025* was approved by the Fair Work Commission and came into operation on 24 December 2025.

The agreement covers nine dioceses and is in place until October 2027.

The union has negotiated separate agreements with the Broken Bay and Parramatta dioceses.

The union had sought to extend the coverage of the agreement to include counsellors and wellbeing staff, but employers did not agree to this.

Parramatta diocese already has a stand-alone agreement for counsellors.

The union will reassert this claim in the next round of bargaining.

Following the union's successful negotiation in 2023 of an agreement establishing pay equivalency for non-teaching roles with NSW government schools, there were no substantive changes to the support staff enterprise agreement in this round of bargaining.

Over the past 12 months, the union assisted members with classification issues associated with the agreed translocation arrangements for senior administrative staff in small regional primary schools contained in the *NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2023* (see the Industrial annexure for more details.)

Independent schools

The union-negotiated *NSW Independent Schools (Professional and Operational Staff) Cooperative Multi Enterprise Agreement* was approved by the Fair Work Commission in April 2025.

This agreement covers 234 schools, including schools that previously operated under the Christian Schools multi-enterprise agreement, single school enterprise agreements and the modern award.

The agreement delivered a realignment of classifications and wage rates across many occupational streams relative to equivalent roles in NSW government schools.

But a substantial wage gap remains for employees in learning support roles.

At the time of writing, the wage rate for learning support roles in the agreement are up to 17.5% lower than in NSW government schools and Catholic systemic schools.

Aspect campaign

Learning support staff working in schools and satellite classes operated by Aspect, a provider of autism services, are also dealing with work health and safety risks and greater supervision requirements in situations where teachers are not present.

The Respect@Aspect campaign seeks to address work safety issues and unfair pay for Aspect teacher aides.

The campaign includes a claim for pay rises above rates in the agreement, measures to address inadequate reporting of workplace incidents and changes to the protocols around student supervision.

The IEU launched a petition in support of the Respect@Aspect campaign on 15 September.

Meetings with Aspect management, together with further correspondence between the union and employer, have led to the establishment of a Teacher Aide Consultative Committee.

The committee has been convened to discuss key aspects of the teacher aide role, including qualifications, the value of experience, higher duties (where a teacher aide performs the work of a teacher), work health and safety, career progression and classifications.

Although employer representatives discouraged discussion of pay equity, it was the first issue raised by teacher aides in attendance.

Teacher aides made it clear to the employer that achieving fair pay is their highest priority.

Union membership among support staff at Aspect has grown 12 per cent since the beginning of the campaign.

This growth in membership will strengthen the union's position when bargaining begins for a new enterprise agreement in 2027.

Other sectors

Bargaining for support staff members in Catholic independent schools, Sydney Seventh-day Adventist schools, ACT Christian schools, schools operated by Christian Community Ministries, and several diocesan offices occurred throughout the year (see the Industrial annexure for more details.)

Member participation

Support staff members provide valuable information and guidance to union officers in addressing the industrial and professional needs of non-teacher members, regularly informing the union of issues as they arise.

Seven support staff members have been elected to IEU Council and there are two support staff members on the IEU Executive.

Across our membership, there are 134 support staff reps, including five who are Indigenous. These reps support members and promote the union. Seventy-two support staff have participated in reps training sessions in the past 12 months.

World Support Staff Day

International World Support Staff Day is celebrated annually on 16 May.

The IEU encouraged all members to celebrate the vital role support staff play in their school.

The union also acknowledged the day for members in a video message, which focused on how teaching and learning could not happen without the hard work and dedication of support staff.

In Port Macquarie, 32 support staff from a range of roles and schools across the Mid North Coast held an end-of-year social event.

Organised by members Tracy Bancroft and Vickye McKechnie, the gathering created space for connection, recognition and solidarity.

The union thanks Tracy and Vickye for their efforts, which have been central to re-energising support staff engagement across the region.

Communications

The union regularly covers issues relevant to support staff in our publications *Newsmonth* and *IE*.

In addition to the IEU's main Facebook page, we have a closed Facebook group for support staff members.

This growing group currently has 485 members and engagement is strong. It is an invaluable means of communicating directly with support staff members, allowing for the timely distribution of information on matters of interest to them.

The platform also enables members to share their stories and experiences, ask questions, and obtain information directly from the union in a safe and supportive environment.

The group's administrators produce content and, where necessary, refer matters to and seek advice from other IEU officers.

Membership

Membership data shows an increase of 230 support staff over the past 12 months.

There was strong growth in members working in independent schools and Catholic diocesan education offices.

Support staff membership data at the time of publication.

Category	Members
Catholic systemic schools	2898
Independent schools	1439
Christian schools	56
Early childhood education	84
Post-secondary education	34
Catholic diocesan education offices	207
Other/retired members	118

On 1 September 2026, there were 4836 support staff members, compared with 4606 for the same time last year. Support staff comprise 15.7% of the union's overall membership.

Carolyn Moore Industrial Officer

Early childhood education and care

Professional engagement

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Council

The ECEC Council met four times in the past 12 months.

Discussions at this year's meetings focused on the IEU's Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for fair funding for community preschools.

Members also discussed the extensive child protection reforms and the workload this imposes on preschools and long day care centres.

This year's regional ECEC councillors included Melinda Gambley, North Coast, Clunes Community Preschool; Jodie Wiggins, Mid North Coast, St Joseph's Early Learning; Jane Courtney, South Coast, Tathra Preschool; and Megan Parkes, Hunter Valley, KU Mayfield.

Our Sydney metropolitan councillors are Michelle Thompson, Shore Early Learning Centre; Amy Martin, Busy Bees; and we welcomed Suzannah Mangan; Learn and Play; to the group.

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority released its updated report on the National Workforce Strategy, which included 2025 data.

The ECEC team is surprised that the 2025 data shows improvements in professional identity, community perceptions of the sector, sense of purpose, wellbeing, and satisfaction with pay and workplace conditions.

This is despite negative media attention, substantial child protection reforms (including tripling of fines and banning of personal devices), and the increase in allegations reported to the Early Learning Commission.

Staffing waivers have declined. However, many for-profit services have closed, with G8 Education shutting down 40 centres in 2026. Genius Childcare and Edge Early Learning have also closed centres after going into liquidation. Due to regulatory breaches, Jenny's Kindergarten was ordered to close some services and transfer ownership of others.

Enrolments in the for-profit sector have also decreased following ongoing media reports of child safety issues.

NSW Early Learning Commission

The union has quarterly meetings with the NSW Early Learning Commission.

Topics of discussion include the ongoing impact of child safety reforms, including a lack of clarity about inappropriate conduct and lack of appeal process regarding enforceable undertakings.

Child-safe recruitment practices can disadvantage members who raise concerns with their employer about breaches of the National Law and Regulations.

The requirement to provide a reference from a current or most recent employer may negatively affect their prospects of securing a new position.

The ban on personal mobile phones, smart watches and other devices has resulted in casual teachers missing work opportunities and being unable to receive important messages from their own children's schools and out-of-school-hours care services.

Reports of allegations have increased, yet the sector lacks adequate resources and systems to ensure procedural fairness for employees facing allegations.

National Child Safety Reform Consultation

The IEU was part of the National Child Safety Reform Consultation. The following topics were raised:

1. Supervision practices and ratios: The union opposes across-the-service ratios and advocates for two staff members to always be in line of sight when children are present.
2. Transparency for families: The union raised concerns about increased workload arising from ever-increasing compliance documentation and non-disparagement clauses in relation to discussions with families.
3. Persons with management and control – 'fit and proper' requirements: The union cautions against additional regulatory burdens deterring members from taking leadership roles and the potential impact of expertise requirements for parent volunteer management committees.
4. Suspension, supervision and information sharing: The union advocates for clear protections for privacy, procedural fairness and appeal mechanisms. The union also raised concerns about unsubstantiated allegations.
5. Whistleblower protections: Members investigated for false or unsubstantiated allegations experience distress. The union also emphasises the need for anonymous reporting options.
6. Quality ratings during investigations: The union cautions against unclear thresholds for rating changes, demoralisation and employers blaming employees.













Hundreds of IEU members and supporters in May rallied in Sydney, Lismore and Coffs Harbour to demand the NSW government provide funding for pay rises for teachers and educators in community preschools.

7. Safer fencing: The union highlights the administrative burden for services required to provide installation and repair documentation.

NSW Parliament Early Education Roundtable

The IEU joined the roundtable hosted by NSW Shadow Minister for Early Learning Felicity Wilson in April 2026.

Also in attendance were representatives from not-for-profit providers (SDN, Uniting, Gowrie NSW, Big Fat Smile); for-profit providers (ACA, Montessori Academy, Australian Childcare Alliance, Guardian, Only About Children); and the sector's peak body, Community Early Learning Australia (CELA).

The union stressed chronic workforce shortages and the critical need to achieve pay equity, improve working conditions, increase award compliance, enhance the professional standing of early childhood teachers, and adequately fund the inclusion of children with additional needs.

Early Education Forum

The media and communications team produced a video about the sector's workforce crisis, including inequitable pay and working conditions, unmanageable workloads and a lack of professional recognition.

The video was shown to more than 1000 participants at an early childhood education forum held at Sydney University in February 2026.

NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)

The IEU representative on NESA's Early Childhood Reference Group is organiser Lisa James.

This year's meetings provided the opportunity for the union to share feedback on the NESA and Early Learning Commission Memorandum of Understanding about safeguarding children, workforce integrity and information sharing.

Other topics discussed included:

- the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- changes to the NESA Teacher Accreditation Manual, especially the role of Teacher Accreditation Delegate in early childhood education, and changes to the Proficient Teacher policy
- status of students without an Initial Teacher Education Bachelor degree who commenced a Graduate Diploma from late January 2026 and are no longer eligible to apply for teacher accreditation in NSW.

IEUA National ECEC meeting

The NSW/ACT Branch joined a meeting of other IEU state branches facilitated by the IEU's federal union in late 2025. This meeting discussed:

- the status of federal ECEC reforms and professional issues
- emerging ECEC union coverage issues
- developments in ECEC multi-employer bargaining
- options to access the ECEC worker retention payments.

University presentations

Western Sydney University invited the IEU to present to final year leadership and management students about their rights and responsibilities in early childhood education settings, industrial instruments, rates of pay and working conditions.

Sydney University invited the IEU to speak to final year early childhood education students in October.

Enterprise agreements and awards

NSW preschools multi-enterprise agreement

The union launched its campaign for better pay and conditions in NSW community preschools in 2024.

The campaign is led by IEU preschool ambassadors Janene Rox, Cronulla Preschool Kindergarten; Melinda Gambley, Clunes Community Preschool; Jodie Cox, East Maitland Preschool; Margaret Gleeson, Keiraville Community Preschool; Bridget Isichei, Byron Bay Preschool; and Raelee Smith, Muswellbrook Preschool.

In the past year, these members/ambassadors and IEU officials have attended the Fair Work Commission (FWC) on many occasions as part of the supported bargaining process.

Secretary Carol Matthews, officers and a delegation of IEU members attended a NSW Budget Estimates hearing on 4 March.

Members and officials attended meetings with dozens of NSW MPs of all political persuasions in March and again in September to make the case for fair funding. The union held a media event outside the FWC in March.

Hundreds of members participated in Start Strong Pay Fair rallies in Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Lismore in May.

In June, the NSW government announced its Start Strong program would be replaced by Universal Preschool Funding in 2027 as part of a $1.8 billion investment in the sector.

In August, the FWC recommended that:

1. The NSW government provide bargaining parties with cameo modelling based on the Universal Funding program in relation to the nine services nominated by the bargaining parties by 28 August.
2. The NSW government provide the bargaining parties with the draft guidelines for the Universal Preschool Funding program in a form that is consistent with the NSW government's legal obligations by 31 August.

The matter was listed for further conferences at the FWC on a number of occasions in September.

The union has serious concerns about the viability of preschools under the NSW government's new Universal Preschool Funding program.

Long day care multi-enterprise agreement

The multi-enterprise agreement now covers more than 40,000 employees and 541 employers. It is due to expire on 30 November 2026.

The federal government extended the Early Childhood Worker Retention Payment program until 30 June 2028.

The Fair Work Commission convened to discuss commencement of negotiations for a new multi-enterprise agreement on 15 October.

KU Enterprise Agreement

KU agreed to the IEU's request to establish a working party to review the unmanageable workload of KU directors.

This was one of the IEU's claims during bargaining for the KU enterprise agreement.

The working party commenced on 30 September. It includes two IEU-nominated members who are directors; two KU-nominated directors; KU management; the IEU; and United Workers Union.

Goodstart Early Learning bargaining

Bargaining with Goodstart for a new enterprise agreement commenced on 19 October.

A notice of employee representational rights has not yet been issued to staff.

The IEU will be represented in bargaining by two member delegates and an organiser.

SDN enterprise agreement
SDN issued a notice of employee representational rights to employees in June 2026.

The union held online meetings with members in July to consult on the log of claims.

Key issues include pay increases; increasing personal leave above the current 12 days a year; and more non-contact time to prepare transition to school statements.

The gender undervaluation pay increases for diploma-qualified educators has narrowed the gap between diploma and teacher rates.

SDN has fallen behind other employers. One member employed part-time at SDN is currently paid $19 an hour more in her role at Goodstart.

Negotiations commenced on 11 August.

So far, SDN has offered a 3% pay increase to preschool teachers and Worker Retention Payment rates for long day care teachers but rejected all other union claims.

Negotiations are continuing.

NSW Health Early Childhood Service Centres award
The IEU worked with NSW Health to update the *Teachers' (NSW Health Early Childhood Service Centres) Salaries and Miscellaneous Conditions Award* with new classifications and salaries aligning with the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award* in 2025.

At a meeting on 14 October, the Ministry of Health said teachers would receive their back pay of about $20,000 each under the Early Childhood Worker Retention Payment program by the end of October.

NSW Health was required to submit three determinations over an 18-month period to amend the classifications and salaries to ensure compliance with grant guidelines.

IEU members were instrumental in applying pressure on NSW Health to finalise the process.

The IEU and NSW Health have commenced discussions for the 2026 award.

Uniting Early Learning enterprise agreement
The Uniting Early Learning enterprise agreement expires in late 2026.

The IEU has visited Uniting services to consult with members on the log of claims and engage with non-members for recruitment.

Key issues raised by members include workload, the administrative burden arising from child protection reforms, increased personal liability and the need for more non-contact time.

Uniting provided a 2% pay increase to preschool employees on 1 July 2026 as an interim measure until bargaining commences in late 2026.

Integricare bargaining
Integricare will commence formal bargaining after the IEU indicated its intention to seek a majority support determination.

The union has visited all services to consult with members on a log of claims.

Key issues include rates of pay after low wage increases over recent years and the removal of overtime payments for most employees attending staff meetings.

Integricare has distributed a notice of employee representational rights and negotiations began in September 2026.

Lisa James Organiser
Kate Damo Organiser
Emily Cokely Organiser

Principals

In 2026, the importance of a strong and active Principals Sub Branch was clear.

Throughout the year, principals met to share developments across schools and dioceses, identify emerging and ongoing issues, and advocate collectively to ensure the concerns of principals were heard and acted upon.

Although every school and system faces its own unique circumstances, the issues raised by principals have been remarkably consistent.

Workload, wellbeing, consultation, staffing, resourcing, workplace safety, compliance obligations, technological change, and the growing complexity of the principal's role are key concerns.

Sub branch activity and meetings

The Principals Sub Branch represents principal members working in Catholic systemic, Catholic independent and independent schools throughout NSW and the ACT.

At the February annual general meeting, Christopher Egan was elected President and Niamh Marzol Deputy President.

Our meeting structure combines online meetings with face-to-face opportunities, supporting regional participation while maintaining the benefits of meeting in person.

A strength of the sub branch is its ability to bring together principals from different dioceses and sectors to compare experiences, identify emerging issues early and share practical strategies.

Key issues

Workloads

Workload was one of the significant themes in 2026.

Principals are increasingly required to manage responsibilities extending well beyond educational leadership.

This includes a lack of support structures around staff shortages, compliance, finances, technology change, parent complaints, staff wellbeing, work health and safety obligations, and complex legal and regulatory matters.

In some systems, reductions in central office and shared-service staffing have resulted in additional work being transferred back to schools.

Members report diminished finance and operational support, with greater responsibility placed on principals and school-based staff.

Principals are best placed to lead teaching, learning, and school communities when administrative, compliance and operational demands are appropriately resourced and managed.

Administrative support in schools is a concern, with principals questioning whether current arrangements adequately reflect the complexity and breadth of their responsibilities.

Lack of consultation

A lack of consultation and poor communication were recurring concerns throughout the year.

Members reported restructures, staffing reductions, shared-service changes, technology transitions, and revisions to policies and procedures.

While change itself is not necessarily the issue, concerns arise when changes are announced or implemented without genuine consultation.

Principals require more than notification once decisions have been made. They need early access to accurate information, meaningful opportunities to test proposals, and adequate time to assess the practical implications for staffing, workload, students and school communities.

The union has advocated strongly this year to protect conditions that enable genuine consultation. This includes challenging inadequate processes, insisting that principals be involved before decisions are finalised and can raise concerns directly.

Where employers have taken this seriously, principals report greater confidence in the process and better outcomes at the school level.

Wellbeing

Principal wellbeing and psychosocial safety required serious attention throughout 2026.

Concerns about the emotional and professional impact of sustained workplace pressure were key issues.

This is evident in situations where principals had to manage complex staff matters, difficult parent interactions, complaints, legal threats, challenging student behaviours, work health and safety, and organisational change without timely employer direction, HR support or system-level intervention.

The introduction of legally binding work health and safety codes of practice on 1 July sharpened the need for this advocacy.

Psychosocial hazards include excessive workload, poor consultation, unreasonable demands, inadequate support and exposure to aggression or conflict.

Employers have a legal obligation to identify and manage these risks, including those affecting principals.

Principal wellbeing cannot be addressed through wellbeing programs or rhetoric about resilience alone. It requires proper attention to workload, staffing, administrative support, consultation and employer decision-making.

Parent behaviour

Members reported increasingly challenging interactions and safety issues involving parents.

The proposed *Education Amendment (School Community Safety) Bill 2026* generated discussion about stronger mechanisms for responding to threatening, abusive and unreasonable behaviour.

No one should be expected to accept aggression, threats or harassment as part of the job. Schools need clear procedures, effective employer support and appropriate legal mechanisms to protect staff and students.

Technology

Members discussed concerns about artificial intelligence, deepfakes, recording devices and wearable technology.

Principals are encouraged to review information and communication technology (ICT) acceptable-use agreements and consider whether existing policies adequately address privacy, consent, AI-generated content, recording devices, wearable technologies, and the responsibilities of students and parents.

This work should form part of future bargaining and workplace practice discussions.

Industrial issues

Industrial advocacy is an important part of the union's work.

Catholic systemic enterprise agreements were approved following negotiations, delivering salary increases and improvements to conditions.

Members also discussed cost-of-living adjustment provisions, same-day superannuation arrangements, the expansion of government-funded paid parental leave to 26 weeks, increases to minimum wage and modern award rates and the 3% pay increase for Catholic systemic support staff.

A positive long service leave outcome in the Maitland-Newcastle diocese also demonstrated the importance of members raising issues when workplace arrangements are not applied correctly.

Independent school principal members face distinct industrial challenges. Principal union density is an area for growth, particularly as independent school principals operate under individual contracts rather than enterprise agreements.

Workload transparency has been a major focus in 2026, with members questioning whether transparency provisions are properly implemented and whether workload expectations are clear, documented and understood.

Future priorities

The issues raised throughout 2026 provide a clear direction for future work.

Priorities include:

- protecting principals' workload and wellbeing
- improving consultation and communication
- strengthening administrative and central office support
- ensuring employers meet their WHS and psychosocial safety obligations
- responding to aggressive and unreasonable behaviour
- preparing for emerging AI, privacy and technology issues
- strengthening workload transparency
- ensuring principals' voices are represented in future bargaining initiatives and negotiations.

The experiences shared this year show why principals' membership matters.

There is real value in raising an issue with colleagues and discovering another principal has faced the same problem, found a solution or taken steps to address it.

Conclusion

The IEU acknowledges and thanks all principal members who contributed to our meetings in 2026.

Our reps give their time while managing demanding roles, and their willingness to share experiences helps us identify issues early and advocate effectively.

We acknowledge and thank former principals organiser Lyn Caton for her contribution and support to principals in 2025, particularly during a challenging period of enterprise bargaining and industrial change.

The role of a principal has never been simple, but the breadth and complexity of the issues discussed in 2026 demonstrate how much is now expected of school leaders.

The union has an important role in ensuring principals are supported in this work and that their rights as employees are not overlooked.

The Principals Sub Branch provides a collective voice, and our task is to strengthen that voice, increase participation and ensure principals are genuinely involved in decisions that affect them and their schools.

Christina Ellul Principals Organiser

Post-secondary education

The post-secondary education sector includes several areas of adult education such as ELICOS (English language colleges), business colleges, VET schools, community colleges and other private providers.

The IEU has long been active in this sector and was instrumental in securing the industry's first award in 1989.

The post-secondary education sector presents challenges for the union, as its heavy reliance on casual and temporary employment limits opportunities to organise workplaces. Nevertheless, the IEU has always maintained an active presence in this sector.

Attracting and retaining members

Membership in this sector was stable in 2026. At the time of writing, there were 209 members, representing a slight decline from the previous year.

Membership is concentrated in the ELICOS (English) and VET sectors, with smaller numbers spread across a range of other colleges.

The small decline in membership may be attributable to federal government policy: as part of broader efforts to reduce immigration, the government has sought to curb international student numbers.

This reduction in student arrivals has almost certainly contributed to job losses across the sector.

The union introduced new sector-specific membership materials in 2026, including updated membership forms and a dedicated industry membership fee, discounted from the full-time rate to reflect the sector's lower wages and greater job insecurity.

These initiatives enabled officers to visit several colleges throughout the year to recruit and build membership. While results have been mixed, the organising work is ongoing.

Bargaining

The union has been bargaining on behalf of members with several employers, including UTS College, Taylors College, Navitas Skilled Futures, WSU The College and WSU International College.

Details of those outcomes can be found in the Industrial annexure.

Most college employees are covered by the *Education Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award*.

The national wage increases delivered a welcome boost for these workers, with award rates increasing by 4.75% from 1 July 2026.

The sector is particularly prone to underpayments and other illegal or unethical practices. The union has pursued underpayment claims and represented members in unfair dismissal cases.

The sector is a challenging environment for union organising, but the IEU is holding its own.

Kendall Warren Organising Lead

Child protection

Child protection cases

For the period September 2025 to September 2026, the IEU finalised 71 child protection cases.

As always, the union urges members to comply with obligations in their employment contract, employer policies and current NSW/ACT child protection legislation.

This will reduce the risk of an allegation being made against them. It will also assist them to maintain NSW Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance, ACT Working With Vulnerable People registration as well as NESA and TQI registration.

While confidentiality must always be maintained, members are not prevented from contacting their IEU organiser to seek confidential advice, support and representation relating to their matter.

NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme

The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) introduced new Reportable Conduct Fact Sheets in October 2025 to:

- reflect legislative amendments to the *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (the Act) effective from 1 October 2025
- implement recommendations from a review of the Act, including to provide more detailed guidance on reportable conduct categories and case examples
- respond to stakeholder feedback seeking enhanced guidance on identifying reportable allegations.

In February 2026, the Children's Guardian announced a new investigations and enforcement team to strengthen compliance with NSW child protection laws.

The new team launched Operation Sentinel to sift through data from the Working With Children Check (WWCC) and Reportable Conduct Directorates as well as other systems to "identify suspicious patterns or unlawful behaviour".

This resulted in the OCG issuing more than 100 fines and warnings to organisations and individuals.

The compliance issues included low rates of WWCC verification, inadequate systems for managing complaints and reportable conduct allegations, flawed investigations, and inadequate responses to official OCG correspondence.

ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme

The ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme has completed its ninth year of operation.

In his 2025 ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme Standards of Investigations Communiqué, the ACT Ombudsman expressed concern that some designated entities had not met the investigation standards outlined in the guidance materials available on the Ombudsman's website.

In response, ACT Reportable Conduct team staff have been instructed to closely monitor the quality of investigations conducted by designated entities, ensuring thorough evidence gathering, appropriate investigation planning and documentation, and findings based on the balance of probabilities.

NSW Working with Children Check

In February 2026, the IEU provided a submission in response to an OCG discussion paper as part of a review of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (WWC Act).

The review is examining:

- the scope and application of the WWC Act, including what is 'child-related work'
- the approach taken in the WWC Act to applications, assessments and offences
- the definition of employers and employer obligations
- the powers available to enforce compliance with the obligations in the WWC Act.

Feedback will be considered in the OCG's report on the review of the WWC Act.

The WWCC application fee was increased by the OCG on 1 July 2026 to $112 for paid workers, and it remains free for volunteers.

Russell Schokman Policy Adviser

Professional engagement

In 2026, the professional engagement team strengthened the IEU's role in key professional issues affecting members' work.

This included accreditation, curriculum reform, professional standards, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), assessment, early childhood education, workload, teacher supply and digital safety.

The union actively engaged with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Centre for Educational Measurement and Assessment (CEMA) and the federal Department of Education.

We wrote formal submissions and participated in reference groups and advisory committees, while members directly participated in syllabus and policy development.

The consistent focus was on ensuring change is shaped by the profession, properly supported, and implemented in a way that does not create unnecessary workload or undermine teacher expertise, professional autonomy or working conditions.

Representation and engagement with NESA

The IEU supported member involvement in NESA technical advisory groups and syllabus-writing processes, including Years 11–12 subjects and the 2026 VET Technical Advisory Group for the Children's Education and Care Curriculum Framework.

This work ensures experienced, practising teachers contribute directly to curriculum development, quality assurance and policy discussions before decisions are finalised.

Teacher accreditation and early career support

Teacher accreditation is a key area of union advocacy.

The IEU supports members with advice on the revised NSW Teacher Accreditation Manual and NESA professional development log audits, particularly where new processes affect workload, job security or create confusion.

For conditionally accredited teachers, the IEU strongly advocated for reduced teaching loads.

NESA's recommendation of 0.6 FTE for full-time conditionally accredited teachers is a positive outcome.

The union continues to oppose job sharing between two conditionally accredited teachers as a staffing solution and will keep pressing for secure employment, manageable workloads and structured mentoring.

Initial Teacher Education and pathways into teaching

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and alternative pathways into teaching were key areas of focus as governments responded to teacher shortages.

The IEU supports the sensible recognition of genuine industry experience but argues that teacher shortages must not be used to lower entry standards or weaken professional preparation.

This included NESA discussions, trade-to-teach pathways, recognition of prior learning for technical and applied studies teachers and work on how autism spectrum disorder is addressed in ITE programs.

The union's position is clear: pathways must strengthen the profession, not dilute standards.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

A review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) was a major national issue during 2026.

Through its participation in AITSL reference groups, professional panels, consultations and an expert submission, the union argued that any changes to the standards must be shaped by teachers and must not increase workload, weaken professional autonomy or create unfair implementation pressures.

The IEU also opposed separate teaching standards for early childhood education.

The IEU worked with the Australian Education Union to support a single national framework that protects professional parity, workforce mobility and recognition of early childhood teachers.

The union raised concerns about subjective measures in professional standards and the industrial consequences for accreditation, pay progression, performance processes and accountability.

Curriculum reform and assessment

The IEU scrutinised NSW curriculum reform and assessment changes, focusing on implementation time, professional learning and workload.

The union argued that new syllabuses cannot be layered onto existing workloads without clear resources, adequate preparation time and meaningful professional learning.

NCCD and unnecessary workload

Workload generated by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on students with disability is a key example of the union challenging unnecessary administration.

When some employers advised staff that evidence requirements had changed in 2026, the IEU challenged this misleading advice and made clear that there were no changes to the 2026 NCCD evidence requirements.

Members were not required to create extra documentation beyond existing guidelines and the official evidence requirements fact sheet.

The IEU also moved into direct policy engagement through monthly meetings with the federal Department of Education on the 2027 NCCD Guidelines and fortnightly participation in the NCCD portal advisory group.

Anti-Bullying Rapid Review

The IEU supported the national Anti-Bullying Rapid Review by connecting the taskforce with school communities and promoting consultation opportunities.

Schools in Tamworth and Canberra-Goulburn participated, and the IEU was recognised in the final report's list of stakeholders.

In 2026, this work moved into the implementation phase through the NSW anti-bullying framework, which strengthens expectations around prevention, reporting, record-keeping and timely school responses. NESA compliance monitoring is expected in 2027.

Hate speech and professional responsibilities

New hate speech requirements were introduced in NSW school sectors in 2026, requiring school codes of conduct to reflect strengthened expectations.

The IEU monitored the implications for teachers and school leaders, particularly around controversial curriculum content, professional discussion, complaints and compliance.

Online misogyny

The Monash University project with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) on online misogyny and the "manosphere" is vital work on digital safety and gender-based violence in schools.

The IEU initially supported the project through sector engagement and promotion. The project examined how misogynistic online communities influence attitudes and behaviours among boys and young men and what this means for secondary schools.

By March 2026, a pilot professional learning program had been evaluated, with early findings showing strong support from teachers and school staff.

The research also contributed to the development of *An Introductory Guide to the Manosphere and the Impacts for Young People, Teachers and Schools*.

The research was presented to members at June Council in the *Disrupting the Manosphere* presentation by Dr Naomi Pfitzner and Dr Stephanie Wescott.

Delegate feedback identified social media algorithms, online misogyny and harmful gender stereotypes as growing concerns for school communities.

Members called for practical professional learning, whole-school strategies, leadership support, parent and community engagement, and resources that did not simply create another layer of teacher workload.

This feedback informed more professional learning for secondary teachers, leaders and support staff in August.

This progression from research partnerships to member consultation and professional learning demonstrates the union's capacity to translate emerging concerns into practical support for members.

Professional development

Professional development was a key part of the year's work, with programs designed around issues members encounter in schools and early childhood settings.

The focus was on providing useful professional learning that supports members in their day-to-day work, including accreditation, assessment, inclusion, leadership, professional boundaries, workplace communication, digital safety and issues affecting students and staff.

Member interest was strong across a range of programs, particularly in assessment and workplace communication.

Participation data highlights the need to continue improving how the union promotes and schedules professional learning to increase attendance.

Professional engagement at a federal level

The professional engagement team also contributes to federal IEUA discussions and strategic work.

The federal Professional Engagement Committee met in Sydney in March to consider workload issues associated with the NCCD and artificial intelligence, early childhood education reform, conditional accreditation, reduced teaching loads, trade-to-teach initiatives and broader professional engagement priorities.

These discussions point to a longer-term role for professional engagement: not only responding to immediate policy issues, but also helping to develop a union position on effective professional support across an entire career.

Workload and professional autonomy

Workload runs through many of the professional issues our members raise.

Whether the issue is NCCD evidence collection, curriculum reform, accreditation, assessment, professional standards, artificial intelligence or regulatory change, the union's approach is to consider what implementation means for the people doing the work.

That perspective was reinforced in July when Branch Secretary Carol Matthews participated in a teacher workload panel with NSW Education Minister Prue Car, union representatives and academics.

The panel identified compliance, administration, programming, reporting, increasing student complexity and technological change as major contributors to workload intensification.

The IEU advocates for getting rid of unnecessary administration, clearer advice about what teachers are not required to do, reductions in face-to-face teaching and greater trust in teacher expertise.

Priorities for the year ahead

Looking ahead, several major priorities will continue over the next 12 months.

The APST review requires ongoing member and union involvement as it progresses through future consultation phases.

Work continues on the 2027 NCCD guidelines and portal, and curriculum reform will move from preparation to implementation for additional syllabuses.

The professional status and recognition of early childhood teachers is still a major issue.

Support for beginning and conditionally accredited teachers, teacher supply pathways, mentoring and career development require ongoing attention.

Technology, artificial intelligence, online harms and digital safety are likely to be prominent areas of professional and industrial policy.

Our professional development program will continue to be reviewed in light of participation, feedback and member needs, with a focus on converting strong interest and registrations into meaningful engagement.

Most importantly, we will continue to create opportunities for members to contribute directly to the professional discussions that affect their work.

Christina Ellul Professional Engagement Lead

Professional development
October 2025 – October 2026

Presenter / organisation	Program / workshop
Marty McGauran	Inform and empower our kids and the digital world: Insights, impacts and ideas for educators
The Culture Collective	Regulation: Theory and practice
Michael Elphick & Associates	Adaptive leadership in schools
Sarah Moore	Transforming difficult conversations: Shifting from avoidance to alignment
Sarah Moore	Transforming difficult conversations: Implementation follow-up
The Culture Collective	Starting well: The basics of inclusion
Christina Ellul, IEU	My accreditation, my career – part 1
Christina Ellul, IEU	My accreditation, my career – part 2
Michael Elphick & Associates	Adaptive leadership in schools
Sarah Moore	Regulated leaders, regulated teams: Leading calm through the chaos
Sarah Moore	Regulated leaders, regulated teams: Implementation follow-up
NGS Super	Pre-retirement seminar
HESTA	Super fit
Prof Jim Tognolini, CEMA	Foundations of assessment literacy for teachers
Drew Hanger	Understanding boys, masculinity and the man box
The Culture Collective	Sustaining the educator: Maintaining professional boundaries in 2026
HESTA	Transition to retirement
Pat Devery and Christina Ellul, IEU	Understanding the role of rep – Information session for principals
Prof Jim Tognolini, CEMA	Creating consistent and effective assessment rubrics
IEU	Environment Conference – Taronga Zoo
Dr Naomi Pfitzner, Monash University	Supporting secondary school teachers to address online spaces as pathways to gender-based violence for boys and men
Prof Jim Tognolini, CEMA	Achieving fairness and validity in assessments
Carl Cincinnato, Migraine & Headache Australia	Migraine in the workplace
Prof Jim Tognolini, CEMA	Achieving consistent and comparable judgement across the school
Kirra Pendergast	Education in a world of digital chaos
The Culture Collective	The handover: Your head start on the year ahead 2027
Sarah Moore	Transforming difficult conversations

Union training

The union introduced advanced reps training as part of our overall training program this year, complementing the foundation course that we have been delivering since 2022.

Advanced training

The advanced course was developed to provide experienced reps with practical skills and strategic understanding to build stronger chapters, identify opportunities for growth and lead collective activity in their workplaces.

The course begins with "Mapping and density: understanding your workplace".

Participants analyse membership data from their workplace to identify opportunities for recruitment.

They seek out areas where membership can be strengthened and the members in their workplace most likely to provide support when a chapter needs to organise around an issue.

This led directly into "Recruitment conversations", a practical session designed to give reps greater confidence in approaching prospective members.

Participants work through the often-challenging conversations involved in recruitment.

They consider how the information they gather through workplace mapping can translate into effective one-to-one organising.

"Unpacking your agreement" is a key part of the advanced course.

Using workplace scenarios, reps develop their ability to navigate the documents underpinning members' rights and responsibilities.

They identify the relevant provisions that enable them to provide practical and accurate assistance to the members of their chapter.

The course then brings these skills together in "From staffroom conversations to collective solutions".

Participants examine how a workplace concern can move from conversations between individual members to coordinated chapter action.

The session considers the roles of individual members, small chapter delegations, the chapter as a whole and IEU staff in building a collective response.

The advanced course has been well received, with 88 reps completing the program in its first year.

Participant feedback will now inform further development and potential expansion of the course.

Participation

Overall participation in reps training increased substantially in 2026.

A total of 286 reps undertook training, compared with 196 in 2025, an increase of almost 46 per cent.







More than 280 reps participated in training sessions the IEU ran across NSW and the ACT in 2026. This year, the union introduced advanced training for experienced reps to boost their skills and strategic understanding.

This growth reflects the continuing strength of the foundation program and the value of training that responds to reps at different stages of their development.

Sector-specific training

The program is also responsive to particular sectors and campaigns.

Fifteen reps from The Anglican Schools Corporation schools and nine reps from Aspect schools (autism services) participated in training tailored specifically to address their workplace context and the campaigns the union is pursuing in these sectors.

The expansion of the program in 2026 is an important step in developing confident, knowledgeable and strategically capable workplace reps.

As we connect recruitment with an understanding of the workplace, increase industrial knowledge and collective organising, reps training is helping to achieve improved and lasting outcomes for members.

Pat Devery Assistant Secretary

Media and communications

The IEU's communications inform and advocate for teachers and support staff through print publications (*Newsmonth, IE, Bedrock*) and digital channels (website, social media, email updates, NewsExtras, eNewsletters) as well as through the media.

We engage with and influence both broad and targeted audiences, including members; employers; politicians and government; policy and decision makers; parents; the wider community; and other unions and activists.

Media

The IEU features regularly in the media with coverage generated by media releases and requests for comment from various key outlets, including the ABC, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, 9News, 7News, 2GB and 2SM as well as regional media.

The IEU is frequently approached for comment by the media on a range of issues, providing opportunities for the union to advocate publicly for members.

Start Strong Pay Fair rallies

With rallies in Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Lismore on two occasions (16 October 2025 and 6 May 2026) calling for fair funding for community preschools, the IEU drew coverage across metropolitan and regional television, radio, print and online.

News cycle

The IEU has been a trusted source of comment for the media in relation to major news stories over the past 12 months (see Media coverage, below) including:

- Bondi terror attack, December 2025
- Operation Rosny, the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into alleged illegal political donations by the (now former) chief executive of Catholic Schools NSW Dallas McInerney (IEU Secretary Carol Matthews was quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald* front page stories on two occasions in August
- allegations of unsafe practices relating to children at Redeemer Baptist School followed closely by allegations the school had not paid teaching staff
- sexual assaults allegedly committed by students from The Scots College, Bellevue Hill and St Gregory's College, Campbelltown
- ongoing child safety matters in the early childhood education and care sector.

Media releases (from most recent to September 2025)

- 15 Sep 2026: Union warns new funding model endangers community preschools
- 07 Sep 2026: Union lodges underpayments claim for staff at Redeemer Baptist School
- 02 Sep 2026: Union condemns shared principal plan
- 14 Aug 2026: ICAC inquiry – Union members demand transparency
- 10 Aug 2026: Union gives evidence at parliamentary inquiry into Redeemer Baptist School
- 14 Jul 2026: IEU statement on alleged day care paedophile Hamish Alexander Edward Tait
- 26 Jun 2026: Union welcomes new funding model for community preschools
- 23 Jun 2026: Optimism for community preschool funding boost as NSW budget handed down
- 22 Jun 2026: IEU statement on Redeemer Baptist School
- 17 Jun 2026: Federal government funding boost locks in pay rises for long day care staff
- 20 May 2026: Parliamentary report urges NSW government to fund pay rises for preschool teachers
- 06 May 2026: Media alerts: Community preschools set to rally in Martin Place and Lismore
- 23 Mar 2026: Preschools and NSW government come face-to-face at Fair Work Commission
- 18 Mar 2026: Preschools turn pink for pay rises
- 12 Mar 2026: NSW Education Minister needs a plan for community preschools
- 02 Mar 2026: Union backs MP's call to scrap exemptions to anti-discrimination law
- 17 Feb 2026: Union win – Fair Work Commission backs pay rises for preschool teachers
- 11 Feb 2026: Urgent reform crucial to solving serious safety issues in early childhood settings
- 03 Feb 2026: Hate speech has no place in NSW schools
- 15 Dec 2025: IEU statement on Bondi Beach terror attack
- 05 Dec 2025: Education leaders urge media to end harmful school league tables
- 30 Oct 2025: IEU Statement: Minns government announces reforms to Start Strong preschool program
- 28 Oct 2025: IEU statement on Four Corners' exposé of criminals working in the early childhood sector
- 28 Oct 2025: Age of criminal responsibility – Children need support and early intervention not prison
- 13 Oct 2025: Media alert for rallies: Preschool teachers urge NSW government to provide funding for fair pay

- 26 Sep 2025: **NSW Upper House inquiry – Union calls for changes to child safety bill**

Media coverage (from most recent to Sep 2025)

- 23 Sep 2026: **Job cuts to roll out across Hunter Catholic Schools**, *Newcastle Weekly*: Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said members were bitterly disappointed by the announcement. "The union is deeply disappointed that the employer is proceeding with the staff restructure, including cuts to teacher-librarian roles in primary schools," Matthews said. "The union is still working through the impact of the restructure on our members after receiving the latest advice from the employer. The employer has advised that more than 200 positions will be affected by the restructure. The union understands this is still the case. Our members are very concerned about the impact of this staff restructure on student learning."

- 22 Sep 2026: **Catholic schools job cuts finalised after more than $17m deficit**, *Newcastle Herald*: The Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT told the *Newcastle Herald* the changes would involve removing teacher-librarians from primary schools and reducing the allocated hours for English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) and Aboriginal education workers.
  The move sparked backlash from staff, parents and the wider community, with one teacher-librarian saying that "the real losers will be children" and the Australian Library and Information Association saying it was "extremely concerned" by the decision. Triggered by the Hunter news, a petition calling for mandating teacher-librarians in Australian schools has reached 20,000 signatures, and another petition calling for a "reconsideration" of the restructure garnered 734.
  On Monday, the Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT said it was "deeply disappointed" that the cuts to teacher-librarian roles in primary schools were going ahead. "The union is still working through the impact of the restructure on our members after receiving the latest advice from the employer on Monday afternoon," secretary Carol Matthews said.
  "The employer has advised that more than 200 positions will be affected by the restructure. The union understands this is still the case.
  "Our members are very concerned about the impact of this staff restructure on student learning.
  "The union will be vigilant about ensuring that the work the employer claims is no longer funded is not imposed on other staff members."

- 22 Sep 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by NBN News re Maitland-Newcastle Diocese staff restructure that may result in redundancies, especially teacher-librarian roles.

- 22 Sep 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by ABC Newcastle reporter Ben Clifford re Maitland-Newcastle diocese staff restructure that may result in redundancies, especially teacher-librarian roles.

- 18 Sep 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by ABC South East NSW Mornings presenter Lisa Markham about Start Strong preschool pay campaign and visits to NSW MPs.

- 15 Sep 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews provided news grabs to 2GB re Start Strong Pay Fair preschool pay campaign and visits to NSW MPs.

- 7 Sep 2026: **Union says shared principal plan is 'deeply concerning'**, *HR Leader*: The Independent Education Union (IEU) has lodged a dispute with the Fair Work Commission after Catholic Schools Broken Bay allegedly informed staff and communities within the diocese of the proposal. There is not much known about the plan, what schools were informed, and when the directive would commence, but the announcement itself has generated criticism from the IEU, who noted the likely impacts on employment, workloads and school management.
  According to IEU NSW/ACT branch secretary Carol Matthews, "this change will impact staff, students and families in the affected schools.
  "The union cannot see how this restructuring will benefit anyone.
  "It is basically a cost-cutting measure by reducing the number of principals."
  Matthews said the union was not consulted before the announcement, despite their legal obligation to do so. She said: "The union anticipates the change will add to teacher workloads given the employer has not indicated it will increase the number of staff to compensate for having a part-time principal.
  "Principals have complex jobs. They have to ensure high standards of teaching and learning to deal with parents, staff and school communities."
  The union also raised the issue of management, questioning how this will affect the chain of command and order of authority.
  Matthews said: "If the principal is not on site and there's an emergency – such as an upset parent or an injured child – then who is in charge? If the assistant principal is teaching in front of a class, they're not readily accessible.
  "We do not know whether staffing at affected schools will be increased to compensate for the loss of a full-time principal."

- 07 Sep 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by ABC Newcastle presenter Paul Culliver re Maitland-Newcastle Diocese staff restructure that may result in redundancies, especially teacher-librarian roles.

- 06 Sep 2026: **'I have nothing to hide': Redeemer Baptist School principal speaks for first time**, *Sydney Morning Herald*: A controversial Sydney private school faces the prospect of having to repay thousands in wages to staff who claim to have been exploited.
  The Independent Education Union has filed an application with the Federal Court to recover wages for two people who were staff at Redeemer Baptist School but who were treated as volunteers.
  "The union believes Redeemer Baptist has broken the law by not paying staff," said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT branch secretary Carol Matthews. If the claims are successful, it could open the floodgates for similar claims. "We anticipate we'll be adding more people to the application."

- 06 Sep 2026: IEU legal action against Redeemer Baptist School over unpaid wages discussed in a *60 Minutes* episode on the Nine Network.

- 04 Sep 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by NBN News re Maitland-Newcastle Diocese staff restructure that may result in redundancies, especially teacher-librarian roles.

- 01 Sep 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews provided news grabs to ABC Newcastle and 2NUR re Maitland-Newcastle Diocese staff restructure that may result in redundancies.



The Sydney Morning Herald

INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.

Business growth shifts from city's east to west

Coalition signals bid to drive migration lower

Opera Australia thinks big for 2027 season

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Teachers push for clarity on funding

Trouble in Tiger Town

The developer of Rozelle Village and the owners of Wests Tigers leagues are on a collision course as doubts over the new club surface

Top paramedic casts new doubt over reliability of defibrillators

Safety concerns persist over defibrillators

Libs' only option is to h back at Hanson: Howa

The Sydney Morning Herald

AUGUST 22, 2026

SATURDAY

INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.

LABOUR PAINS

Pacific workers' great Australian dream dashed

Completion date for M6 a long and winding highway

STROKES OF GENIUS

Thirty must-see works of art (that aren't the Mona Lisa)

OPERATION ROSNY

Catholic Schools ousts CEO McInerney

Big fish in international pond

Sydney fish maestro Josh Niland is scaling up, taking what has earned him acclaim in Australia to the global stage.

Swans hotel scandal deepens

Labor and Coalition unite to stop One Nation AI backlash

- 31 Aug 2026: **'Some roles will change': Potential job cuts at Hunter Region Catholic schools,** Newcastle Herald: Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said the union was aware some staff had been told of a restructure that might lead to some redundancies. "The union has called on the employer for more consultation, more detail and a reasonable timeframe around this possible restructure," she said. Matthews said the union would support members through the restructure process to ensure the diocese met all of its legal obligations.
- 22 Aug 2026, **Catholic Schools NSW ousts CEO McInerney**, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT branch secretary Carol Matthews said she was not surprised by the termination. "It is vital that government funding of non-government schools is used solely for the purpose for which it is intended," Matthews said.

  "The community must have confidence that public money is being used for educating school students and not for improper purposes."

  She said NSW law required "very close scrutiny of expenditure at the school level" to ensure funding was used for the benefit of students and the operation of schools.

  "The legislation needs to be expanded to apply the same scrutiny to the bodies that receive funding on behalf of non-government schools," she said.
- 14 Aug 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews provided news grabs to 2SM re Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) inquiry into allegations that Catholic Schools NSW made illegal political donations to the NSW Liberal party.
- 14 Aug 2026: **Teachers demand more scrutiny of Catholic school funding amid allegations of 'sham arrangement' with NSW Liberal group,** *The Guardian*: Secretary Carol Matthews said close scrutiny of public funding "was not applied to organisations such as Catholic Schools NSW that receive funding on behalf of Catholic diocesan schools". "Regardless of the findings of ICAC in this matter, there should be greater scrutiny of bodies such as Catholic Schools NSW, which receive public funding on behalf of non-government schools," Matthews said in a statement.
- 12 Aug 2026: **'No defence of this': A reckoning in Catholic schools as teachers want answers,** *Sydney Morning Herald*: The state's peak body for Catholic schools is under pressure from its own teachers to show greater transparency over funding after allegations that $165,000 was funnelled to right-wing Liberal Party operatives. "IEU members would be deeply concerned if any public funding for non-government schools has been diverted from its intended purpose," Matthews said.
- 11 Aug 2026: **School inquiry puts volunteer classification back on HR agenda,** Human Resources Director: The Legislative Council's Education Committee, chaired by Greens MLC Abigail Boyd and established on 7 July 2026, heard evidence on 10 August 2026 that the North Parramatta school's [Redeemer Baptist] entire teaching workforce had, for years, been engaged as unpaid volunteers rather than employees – despite receiving substantial public funding. Secretary Carol Matthews told the committee she was unaware of any comparable case. "I'm not aware of any other school where core teaching duties are performed by volunteers."
- 11 Aug 2026: **Redeemer Baptist inquiry exposes governance risks for school boards,** *The Educator Online*: Secretary Carol Matthews said non-government school staff are ordinarily covered by enterprise agreements broadly comparable to NSW government school salaries, and that a federal minimum award, including super, applies even where no such agreement exists. "It appears that the school's teacher 'volunteers' are not receiving even these minimum conditions," she said.
- 10 Aug 2026: **'Modest' $400,000 event defended amid school budget concerns,** *Canberra Times*: Secretary Carol Matthews said all non-government school employers needed to be transparent and accountable for expenditure of both parent fees



Branch Secretary Carol Matthews in July spoke to Nine News about child safety in early childhood education.

and public money. "The IEU is not aware of the breakdown of the reported expenditure to implement the Apostolic Action Plan, nor how much is for the launch and how much is for curriculum writing and teacher development," Ms Matthews said. "Our members would be interested to see the details given expenditure is tightly controlled at the individual school level."

- 10 Aug 2026: **'Fire and brimstone on acid': Inside a Sydney private school's control tactics,** *Sydney Morning Herald*, Secretary Carol Matthews highlighted [Redeemer Baptist School's] reliance on a volunteer core staff, pointing specifically to a year 13 program that required church youth to complete a year of unpaid labour after graduating, and described the program as "clearly exploitative". She told the inquiry that she knew of no other school with zero staff, nor a situation in which children were placed in the homes of teachers, including the school principal and single staff members. "These days it would be considered extremely unusual to have one staff member alone with students overnight," she said.
- 04 Aug 2026: **Red flags: A tech company claims it can identify Australia's most at-risk children,** *Sydney Morning Herald/The Age*, Carol Matthews, NSW/ACT branch secretary of the Independent Education Union, which represents early childhood care staff, said for-profit software was "no substitute for a comprehensive focus on child safety at every centre". The union backed the regulatory reforms over the past year but was wary of the technology. "Machine learning takes the risk of a privacy breach to a whole new level," Matthews said, warning that many services may not be equipped to safeguard the data. She urged employers to consult staff before rolling out any such platform.
- 30 Jul 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews spoke to ABC Illawarra Mornings host Nick Rheinberger about gender-based harassment of female teachers and students and combating the harmful impact of the manosphere. "It is really important to the culture of a school, and also health and safety, that teachers and female students do not feel under attack from attitudes from boys, which are hostile and aggressive towards females," she told Rheinberger.
- 27 Jul 2026: **'No risk-free way': Schools warned to stop posting student photos online,** *Sydney Morning Herald*, Secretary Carol Matthews said the union had observed an increasing number of deepfake matters in the last 18 months. "Where staff have experienced AI-generated anonymous videos and images, it is extremely stressful and upsetting," she said. "A number of staff within one school may be impacted at the same time. Everyone deserves a safe workplace."
- 25 Jul 2026: **The NSW, ACT private schools paying teachers up to $190,000 revealed,** *Daily Telegraph*, Brad Hayes, IEU national secretary said bargaining outcomes "are focused on reducing teacher workload and safeguarding the wellbeing of school staff. Most non-government schools pay their staff at similar rates paid in comparable public schools," he said. "Teacher shortages are still a major problem, and competitive wages and conditions are essential to attract and retain our next generation of teachers."
- 23 Jul 2026: **The staffing crisis in Australian independent schools,** *HR Leader*: Secretary Carol Matthews agreed that better pay, working conditions, and clearer career paths will help address challenges in recruitment and retaining staff, but "tackling staff shortages also requires listening to teachers and respecting the profession". She said: "Schools and employers must invest in their staff by improving job satisfaction for teachers and school leaders, ensuring sustainable workloads, providing financial stability through fair pay, supporting mental and physical health, and preserving professional autonomy and teacher discretion." Matthews acknowledged the right to disconnect as a good first step, adding that "employers must remove the requirements for teachers to enter data in multiple locations and streamline administrative processes. Teachers should not have to constantly prove they are doing the right thing. Our community must strive to fully value and respect the teaching profession."
- 14 Jul 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews spoke to 9News about child safety and alleged daycare paedophile Hamish Tait. "Services should have measures in place so that all staff are absolutely aware about the [child safety] risks," she said.
- 14 Jul 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews spoke to ABC Illawarra Drive about child safety and lifting quality in the early childhood sector by improving pay and conditions. Matthews said university-educated early childhood teachers were "still earning significantly less" than their colleagues in primary schools even though they have the same qualifications. "Stable employment really assists with ensuring that child safety is maintained," she said. "Less use of casuals, highly skilled staff – all of those are features of high-functioning, very safe services."
- 23 Jun 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews provided news grabs to 2SM re allegations that teachers are treated as volunteers and not paid.
- 20 Jun 2026: **'We are struggling': the Hunter preschool worried for the future,** *Newcastle Herald*: IEU members and Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed about Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and the threat to preschools

if the NSW government does not provide funding for pay rises in community preschools.



- 20 Jun 2026: **'A magical place': Beloved Wollongong preschool faces survival threat after 74 years,** *Illawarra Mercury*: IEU members interviewed about Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and threat to preschools if NSW government does not provide funding for pay rises in community preschools.
- 18 Jun 2026: **St Joseph's College requires students to be 'biologically male' to attend,** *Daily Telegraph*: Secretary Carol Matthews said: "Discrimination can have a devastating impact on the mental health of teachers, support staff, students and school communities. Teachers, support staff and students in faith-based schools deserve the same protections as the rest of the community," Matthews said.
- 17 Jun 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews provided news grabs to 2NUR (Newcastle), amplifyCBR (Mix 106.3 Canberra) and 2CC (Canberra) re extension of federal government funding for pay rises for teachers and educators in the long day care sector.
- 27 May 2026: **Pay rises for preschool teachers: Parliament backs what local families already know,** *In the Cove* (Lane Cove local news): The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch, which gave evidence at the inquiry last year, is calling for a 15% pay rise to begin addressing what acting secretary David Towson describes as "a systemic, gender-based undervaluation of this highly feminised workforce. The industrial umpire has spoken, and now the Parliament has too," Towson said. "We urge the NSW government to listen to both recommendations for increased funding to fix acute staff shortages caused by inadequate pay and conditions in community preschools."
- 20 May 2026: **NSW childcare inquiry scrutinises role of property developers, investors in safety failures,** ABC: Acting Secretary David Towson said the report highlighted the safety problems being caused by serious staffing shortages. He said more funding was needed to address pay concerns among educators. "Ninety-five per cent of teachers and educators are female, and the gender disparity in the pay rates here, it's dreadful," he said.
- 20 May 2026: 2SM, ABC Sydney, Acting Secretary David Towson provides news grabs about the NSW parliamentary inquiry report urging the state government to work with the IEU to provide funding for pay rises in community preschools.
- 17 May 2026: **Coffs Coast preschool educators rally for equal pay,** Nambucca Valley *News of the Area*, Coverage of the Start Strong Pay Fair rally in Coffs Harbour. IEU member Sarah Barcala, the director of Urunga Community Preschool, told *News of the Area,* "Our rally will show that the community values their preschools and will place additional pressure on the NSW government to act. The pay disparities are resulting in difficulties in attracting and retaining committed and appropriately qualified staff."
- 08 May 2026: IEU members Liz Heggart and Amy Kermode video interviewed by the *Daily Telegraph* ahead of the 2026 federal budget.
- 07 May 2026: Preschool ambassador Raelee Smith interviewed by ABC Upper Hunter about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and the Sydney rally.
- 06 May 2026: **Preschool teachers demand pay rise, warning toilet cleaners earn more,** *Daily Telegraph*, IEU members Meredith Wakeman and Donna Worner interviewed about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign at the Sydney rally. Director of Gumnut Bowral Memorial Preschool, Meredith Wakeman, said teachers in some areas are leaving the profession to clean toilets because they earn "a lot more" doing so. Donna Worner: "Early childhood educators are just absolutely fed up with being paid so poorly, and they are sick of having to come out and do this. We would much rather be delivering the best quality preschool care that we possibly can, rather than having to fight for every cent that we deserve."
- 06 May 2026: 2SM, 2GB, Triple M, Acting Secretary David Towson provided news grabs about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and rallies in Sydney, Lismore and Coffs Harbour.
- 06 May 2026: Acting Secretary David Towson interviewed by ABC Sydney about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and rallies. Towson told the ABC the pay disparity needs to be addressed in a workforce that is predominantly women. He said the pay disparity made it difficult for many early childhood centres to attract and retain staff who could earn more elsewhere.
- 06 May 2026: NBN News, coverage of Start Strong Pay Fair rallies in Lismore and Sydney.
- 06 May 2026: Community preschool teachers rallied in Sydney today, demanding better pay, 7News Riverina: IEU members Corie Flanagan (Coolamon Preschool) and Donna Worner (Kapooka ELC) interviewed about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and the Sydney rally.
- 06 May 2026: Preschool teachers across the state have rallied demanding a 15% pay rise, 7News Mid North Coast coverage of the Start Strong Pay Fair rallies in Coffs Harbour and Sydney, including interview with IEU member Kerrie Stitchbury (Toormina Community Preschool).

- 06 May 2026: Hunter preschool teachers take on state government, 2NUR FM, IEU member Jodie Cox interviewed about Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises.
- 06 May 2026: IEU member Raelee Smith interviewed by 2NM about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and the Sydney rally.
- 05 May 2026: Lismore and Northern Rivers preschools rally in Lismore on Wednesday for NSW government to fix funding, Lismore App: IEU member Bridget Isichei interviewed about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign and Lismore rally. "We cannot fund fair wages without government support," she said. "Current funding levels are too low. Community preschool teachers are paid less than their counterparts in public preschools and long daycare settings. It's urgent that the NSW government increase funding to support community preschools to pay their teachers and educators fairly."


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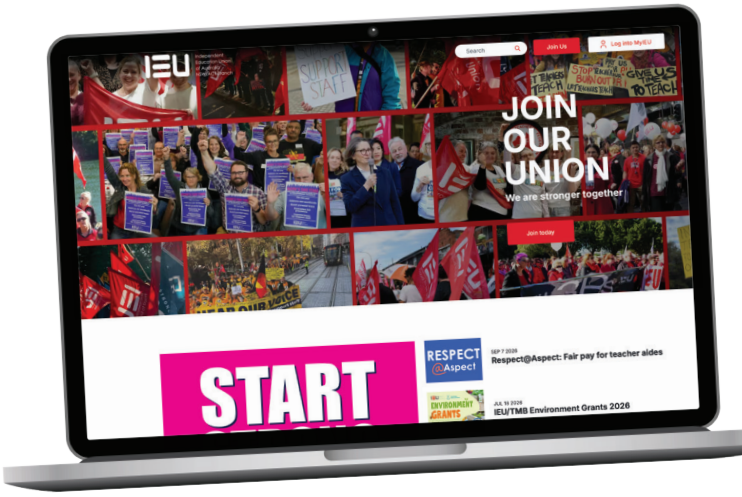
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- 25 Apr 2026: *Newcastle Herald*, annual May Day liftout, editorial and advertisement, full page.
- 23 Mar 2026: **Education union to seek 'clarity' on state's preschool funding review at Fair Work Commission hearing**, *Daily Telegraph*: IEU Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said she hopes the hearing will "provide some clarity", and an opportunity to resume negotiations. "Up until very recently, the NSW government has taken a clear position that the preschools did not need more funding to pay the increase for employees," Matthews said. "Then in parliament last week Minister Car announced that there would be a review, in line with the FWC recommendations. We're still unclear as to what additional funding might be available. The union is hoping that some of that information will be clearer in the FWC (on Monday), and that the NSW government will provide some details on the length of the review, (and) how the review will be conducted."
- 23 Mar 2026: 2SM, 2GB, ABC Sydney, Triple M, Secretary Carol Matthews provides news grabs on IEU and preschool teacher members returning to Fair Work Commission after it recommended the NSW government boost funding for pay rises in community preschools.
- 23 Mar 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by ABC Mid North Coast and 2ST (Shoalhaven and Southern Tablelands) about the IEU and preschool teachers returning to Fair Work Commission after it recommended the NSW government boost funding for pay rises in community preschools.
- 23 Mar 2026: preschool campaign ambassador Jodie Cox interviewed by ABC Newcastle about Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises in community preschools and the resumption of negotiations with the NSW government for funding for pay rises following FWC recommendation.
- 19 Mar 2026: **Exposed: The $10bn fake abuse scam destroying male teachers' careers and leaving them suicidal**, *Daily Telegraph*: IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said although the police crackdown on claim farming had "been effective", she still knew of many teachers fighting to clear their name against allegations they insist are false. "It's absolutely devastating," she said. "Usually they cannot continue to teach and may be subject to restrictions in their private life too. So no coaching sports teams or working with children. The financial impact may see them forced to sell their home just to defend the matter. The case doesn't just impact the employee, it impacts their whole family."
- 18 Mar 2026: IEU member Raelee Smith interviewed by ABC Upper Hunter on Wear it Pink day of action about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises in community preschools.
- 18 Mar 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by ABC Illawarra Nick Rheinberger on Wear it Pink day of action about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises in community preschools.
- 18 Mar 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by ABC Riverina and ABC Dubbo on Wear it Pink day of action about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises in community preschools.
- 18 Mar 2026: Old Bar community preschool director Catherine Heiss interviewed by ABC Mid North Coast on Wear it Pink day about the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises in community preschools.
- 17 Mar 2026: Community preschools warn of staffing crisis amid wage gap, IEU member Raelee Smith interviewed by 2NM about the staffing crisis in community preschools as qualified teachers leave for better paid roles elsewhere. "It is actually their responsibility to try and fund these wage increases so that we stop losing staff outside of the sector to either long day care, to schools, or to other professions entirely where the wages are higher."
- 04 Mar 2026: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by 2SER The Wire about religious exemptions in the *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act*.
- 03 Mar 2026, 17 Feb 2026: 2SM, Secretary Carol Matthews gave news grabs on reforming the *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act* to remove exemptions for non-government and religious schools.

- 23 Feb 2026: Deputy Secretary David Towson interviewed by Deborah Knight on 9News about students with ATARs under 50 admitted into teaching degrees. He said the data also showed more students were applying to study education, "which is critically needed across the nation, so this is not entirely bad news". He pointed out that roughly the same number of students with an ATAR above 90 also chose to enrol in teaching degrees last year. "It's not that the standards are being lowered," he said. "It is a rigorous course to become a teacher."
- 22 Feb 2026: Calls for urgent action on community preschool pay after Fair Work recommendation, *New England Times,* "The NSW government must accept the umpire's recommendation and immediately fund pay rises that properly value the work of staff in community preschools," NSW/ACT branch secretary Carol Matthews said.
- 17 Feb 2026: 2SM, 2GB, ABC Sydney, Triple M, Secretary Carol Matthews provides news grabs on Fair Work Commission recommendation that the NSW government boost funding for pay rises in community preschools.
- 17 Feb 2026: Thousands of early education workers get big win in push for 30 per cent pay rise, Yahoo: "The NSW government must accept the umpire's recommendation and immediately fund pay rises that properly value the work of staff in community pre-schools," the NSW and ACT branch secretary of the Independent Education Union of Australia, Carol Matthews, said. "The NSW government has undervalued their work for far too long. This has caused a workforce crisis that must be fixed by paying salaries comparable with teachers in schools."
- 12 Feb 2026, 2SER, Interview with Secretary Carol Matthews re hate speech laws.
- 11 Feb 2026: 2SM, news grabs on Productivity Commission report on serious safety breaches in early childhood education and care.
- 04 Feb 2026: How will Labor's Thriving Kids work and who is still eligible for the NDIS, *The Guardian*, quoting from IEU Speaks, Thriving Kids report: A roadmap for better support in ECEC and schools, issued by IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes, "The Independent Education Union – which represents staff in independent and religious schools, and early childhood education centres – said Thriving Kids should ease the workload burden on teachers and better support children and families."
- 03 Feb 2026: New laws mean school staff face termination over hate speech, *Education HQ,* "The vast majority of schools already have guidelines preventing hate speech, but these new requirements will make it crystal clear that hate speech based on race or religion is not acceptable," IEU NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said. "We don't anticipate teachers will be impeded in classroom discussions by the new requirements, which are based on the prohibition of hate speech in the Crimes Act."
- 19 Nov 2025: Why workers could see their real wages go backwards, ABC News, features ACTU Secretary Sally McManus and interview with IEU member and Cronulla preschool director Janene Rox.
- 14 Oct 2025: NBN Newcastle interviews IEU members Jodie Cox and Raelee Smith about Start Strong Pay Fair community preschools campaign.
- 15 Oct 2025: 2GB, 2SM, Triple M, Gold FM and ABC 702 Sydney interview Secretary Carol Matthews about Day of Action rally for Start Strong Pay Fair campaign.
- 15 Oct 2025: Secretary Carol Matthews interviewed by ABC Sydney Afternoons host Kathryn Robinson about Day of Action rally – part of Start Strong Pay Fair campaign.
- 15 Oct 2025: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Advertiser*, *Yarrawonga Chronicle*, 10News, 7News, 9News cover Start Strong Pay Fair Day of Action rally, including speeches by IEU member Melinda Gambley and Secretary Carol Matthews.
- 15 Oct 2025: 7News Coffs Coast covers Day of Action rally in Coffs Harbour featuring IEU member Kerrie Stichbury from Toormina Community Preschool.
- 15 Oct 2025: NBN News, Mid North News cover Start Strong Pay Fair day of action rally in Coffs Harbour.
- 15 Oct 2025: WIN Illawarra covers Start Strong Pay Fair Day of Action rally.
- 15 Oct 2025: *The Northern Rivers Times* covers Start Strong Pay Fair Day of Action rally in Lismore featuring quotes from IEU member Bridget Isichei.
- 15 Oct 2025: ZZZ radio interviews IEU member Melinda Gambley re Start Strong Pay Fair campaign.
- 15 Oct 2025: ABC Illawarra interviews with IEU member Margaret Gleeson re Start Strong Pay Fair campaign.
- 26 Sep 2025: 7News Riverina interviews Secretary Carol Matthews regarding the child safety bill inquiry; Carol Matthews provides news grabs for 2SM and 2GB.



Website (ieu.asn.au)

Snapshot of the IEU website's performance from 1 Sep 2025 to 31 Aug 2026:

- 518,000 page views by 166,000 users – an increase of 22% on the previous period
- 1.5 million events (page view, user engagement, first visit, session start, form visit etc)
- 102,000 visits from organic searches (generally a Google search)
- 100,329 visits from direct traffic (source unknown or user enters the URL directly into browser)
- 28,344 visits from emails sent by the IEU
- 8400 visits from social media
- Users viewed the website from desktop computers 68.8% (previous period 47.7%), mobile devices 30.6% (previous period 51.4%), and tablets 0.6% (previous period 0.9%). This shift in desktop/mobile views may

in part reflect increased use of our membership portal and renewal functions, which members may find easier to complete on a desktop or laptop computer.

Publications website (publications.ieu.asn.au)

- 128,000 page views by 96,000 users compared with 40,000 in the previous period.
- 480,000 events (page view, user engagement, first visit, session start, form visit etc)
- 15,000 visits from organic searches
- 77,000 visits from direct traffic up from 25,000 in the previous period
- 7500 visits from emails up from 3600 in the previous period – these results demonstrate the reach of the IEU's digital editions of publications and the importance of all-member emails in promoting each edition as well as individual articles
- Users viewed the website from: desktop computer (87.3%), mobile device (12.3%), and tablets (0.4%).

Digital communications

Campaign Monitor

Campaign Monitor is the email platform through which the IEU distributes NewsExtra bargaining updates, campaign updates, upcoming professional development and training and the digital editions of IEU publications.

We have expanded our use of this platform throughout 2026 through increased staff training and streamlined approval processes.

Key observations (1 September 2025 to 31 Aug 2026):

- a total of 85 emails sent to 505,562 recipients
- open rate of total emails sent was 56.8%
- clicks to IEU website, petition or form was 20,960
- NewsExtra email updates have consistently high open rates averaging above 70%
- email boosts of print publications have an average open rate of 55%.



Social media

Our expanded digital media team has enabled us to develop our social media offering with strong results.

The IEU Facebook community is a key information hub, with 1.9 million views and a 600% increase in engagement from 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026.

Our impact on Instagram has also expanded, with 303,000 views and a 270% increase in engagement over the same period.

LinkedIn and Bluesky are strong platforms for connecting with members and supporters, with steady follower growth and engagement.

Since expanding our capacity for vertical video content, we have begun posting regularly on TikTok and YouTube Shorts. These videos cover a variety of IEU events and activities, news appearances, explainers and skits to showcase our wins and promote union strength.



Top 10 Facebook posts and videos (by organic reach)

- 3 Sep 2026: Post re Angus Taylor declaring teachers "run their own agendas" [screenshot ABC News]
- 2 Sep 2026: Media release: IEU has lodged a dispute with the FWC re Catholic Schools Broken Bay shared principals
- 14 Jul 2026: Media release: IEU statement on alleged day care paedophile Hamish Alexander Edward Tait [photo]
- 4 Sep 2026: IEU in the media (SMH) re Catholic Schools Broken Bay shared principals [tile]
- 30 Jan 2026: Independent school (AIS) pay rises on the way [video]
- 17 Jun 2026: BREAKING: Federal government extends pay rises for staff in long day care sector [text post]
- 2 Sep 2026: IEU rejects comments by Nationals leader Matt Canavan re "feminisation of the curriculum" [tile]
- 22 Jun 2026: Media release: IEU statement on Redeemer Baptist School
- 26 Jun 2026: Media release: Union welcomes new funding model for community preschools
- 17 Feb 2026: Union win: Fair Work Commission backs pay rises for preschool teachers [text post]

Top 10 Instagram posts and videos (by organic reach)

- 6 Aug 2026: Navigating the Manosphere [video]
- 27 Aug 2026: Redeemer Baptist School: Carol Matthews at Parliamentary inquiry [video]
- 24 Feb 2026: In the media: 9News feat Deputy Secretary David Towson on lowering national enrolment standards [video]
- 30 Nov 2026: What have unions done for us, really? [video]
- 13 Apr 2026: Day of Action 6 May [video]
- 17 Feb 2026: News alert: Fair Work Commission backs thousands of early education workers [photo]
- 3 Sep 2026: In the media: Carol Matthews on ABC Radio Sydney re Catholic Schools Broken Bay shared principal plan [video]

- 2 Sep 2026: Media release: IEU has lodged a dispute with the FWC re Catholic Schools Broken Bay shared principals
- 22 Jun 2026: Media release: IEU statement on Redeemer Baptist School [carousel]
- 3 Oct 2025: The pay gap between teachers in preschools, long day care and primary schools is utterly unjustifiable [carousel]

Publications

Each year we produce eight editions of *Newsmonth* (issues 1 and 8 are digital only; issues 2 to 6 are print and digital); two editions of *IE* magazine (print and digital); and three editions of *Bedrock* (print and digital). We upload all print publications to the IEU website, promote to members via Campaign Monitor and share individual news stories and features on social media.

For digital editions of our publications:

- Current: ieu.asn.au/publications
- Archive: publications.ieu.asn.au





Newsmonth

Newsmonth incorporates bargaining, industrial and campaign updates, union wins, member milestones, member stories and snaps, reps' profiles, sub branch reports, professional development updates and columns from elected officials. We produce six print editions a year and two digital-only editions; all are uploaded to the IEU website, distributed via Campaign Monitor, and shared on social media.

Newsmonth#6 2026

Cover: Catholic independent schools Model B and Model C – Bargaining set to begin
In post 17/8; email 21/8; open rate 56.26%

Top stories

- Catholic independent schools: Model B and Model C bargaining set to begin
- ICAC inquiry: Members demand full transparency on school funding
- Christian schools: Bargaining for new agreements
- NSW parliamentary inquiry: IEU raises serious concerns about Redeemer Baptist School
- Combating the manosphere: IEU on ABC Illawarra
- IEU environment conference: Close encounters of the wild kind

Newsmonth#5 2026

Cover: Parental leave: Setting a whole new standard
In post 13/7; email 17/7; open rate 57%

Top stories

- Workload panel: What's driving it and how do we fix it?
- Parental leave: Setting a whole new standard
- Meet the researchers challenging the 'manosphere'
- Union win: Rep's persistence delivers historic EA
- Start strong pay fair: Union welcomes preschool funding breakthrough

Newsmonth#4 2026
Cover: Community preschools: Push for fair pay ramps up. In post 9/6; email 17/6; open rate 53.21%

Top stories
- Community preschools: Push for fair pay ramps up
- Classroom behaviour: Union welcomes more support for teachers
- Model A Catholic independent schools: Vote yes for strong gains in new agreements
- Models B and C: Consultation begins
- NCCD compliance: Employers must correct wrong advice
- Respect@Aspect: Fighting for better pay and conditions

Newsmonth#3 2026
Cover: Proposed parent ban: Harassment must stop
In post 27/4 (with IE#1); email 30/4; open rate 51.14%

Top stories
- Rising inflation spotlights cost-of-living clause
- Proposed parent ban: Harassment of staff must stop
- Union elections: Make your vote count
- Anti-discrimination law: Union steps up campaign to scrap religious exemptions
- Start strong pay fair: NSW government stalls on pay boost

Newsmonth#2 2026
Cover: Workload transparency – Enforcing your hard-won right in independent schools
In post 16/3; email 26/3; open rate 52.8%

Top stories
- Workload transparency: Enforcing your rights
- Union backs call to scrap religious exemptions
- IEU Election Notice
- Anti-Bullying Framework: What it means for you
- Professional development and events

Newsmonth #1 2026 (digital only)
Cover: New year, new pay rises
Email 13/2; open rate 55%

Top stories
- New year, new pay rises
- Union wins over $19,000 back pay for member
- Professional development and events
- Reps' checklist: How to start strong in 2026
- Membership renewal: What you need to know
- NESA called: Have you updated your login?

Newsmonth#8 2025 (digital only)
Cover: A year of progress – Member wins in 2025
Email 13/2; open rate 57%

Top stories
- Long service leave: Employer backs down after union pressure
- A year of progress: Member wins for 2025
- Sub branch reports: Term 4
- NSW Christian schools: Overwhelming support for new MEAs
- Adventist teachers say 'NO' to inferior EA

Newsmonth#7 2025
Cover: Day of action – Preschool teachers rally for fair pay
In post 10/11; email 13/11; open rate 58%

Top stories
- Catholic systemic schools EA: Pay rise to come after 98% yes vote
- Respect@Aspect: More members mean greater bargaining power
- Anti-Bullying review: Schools and teachers must not be left to carry the burden
- Day of Action: Preschool teachers rally for fair pay
- Workplace Relations Minister: "We need healthy, strong unions"
- IEU Annual General Meeting 2025



IE magazine
IE is the union's nationwide professional journal. We produce two 36-page editions a year in collaboration with the union's VicTas and QNT Branches. Content includes in-depth profiles of prominent people in relevant fields, features on pedagogical research, member interviews, and analysis of education policy.

IE#2 2026
In production concurrently with 2026 Annual Report
Cover: Abang Othow – teacher, author, refugee

Top stories
- InFocus profile: Abang Othow, former teacher, author and ambassador for the Refugee Council of Australia

- Importance of handwriting for learning
- Professional development for mathematics teachers
- How to improve classroom behaviour

IE#1 2026
Cover: Uncle Bob Anderson – Indigenous Elder, eternal optimist
In post 27/4 (with Newsmonth#3); email 8/5; open rate 50.72%

Top stories
- Melody makers: Bringing music to the classroom
- Class acts: Unlocking history's secrets
- Teacher shortages: Respect is crucial to solving the crisis
- Ethical bystanders: How to combat workplace harassment
- Bridging the reading gap: Catering to a diverse range of abilities
- Hard labour: The long fight for a fair day's work



Bedrock
We produce three editions a year of this 24-page magazine for members in the early childhood education and care sector in collaboration with the QNT Branch. It includes sector-wide industrial updates and covers issues such as childhood psychology, teaching STEM, member stories and embedding First Nations knowledge.

Bedrock#3 2026
Cover: Game on – Why pretend play matters
In post with Newsmonth#7: 9/11

Top stories
- Workforce stability: High-quality services depend on staff
- Leading by example: Long-term member loves her role
- Teaching patience: Helping children learn to wait
- Making the grade: Supporting transitions to school
- IEU environment conference: Close encounters of the wild kind

Bedrock#2 2026
Cover: Creative minds – The art of learning
In post 9/6 (with Newsmonth#4); email 6/7; open rate 58.38%

Top stories
- Creative minds: Why arts education matters
- Staffing ratios: The numbers aren't adding up
- Frozen faces: Effect of excessive screen use
- Teacher training: Quality must be maintained
- Gender diversity: The role of men in the sector

Bedrock#1 2026
Cover: Keys to success – Why music matters
In post 16/3 (with Newsmonth#2); email 31/3; open rate 55.6%

Top stories
- Song and dance: Why music matters in early childhood education
- Book smart: Why reading with young children matters
- Voices of Country: Preserving language through song
- Michelle Lashbrook: Lifting the status of early childhood teachers
- Simple, affordable, accessible: The path to universal early childhood education and care

Resources and campaign collateral
Each year we develop a range of materials for reps and organisers. Most are downloadable at ieu.asn.au/resources.
- Start strong pay fair campaign t-shirt
- What your union can do for you flyer
- What is workplace safety? (information series)
- Thinking about retirement? (information series)
- Compare the pair: Fair pay for Aspect teacher aides
- Tax time: Union fees are tax deductible?

Monica Crouch	Media and Communications Coordinator
Katie Camarena	Digital Communications Manager
Zoe Hercus	Digital Communications and Social Media Campaigner
Chris Ruddle	Graphic Designer
Andrew Taylor	Media Adviser

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Join the Independent Education Union
We're the voice of teachers and professional, administrative, operational and support staff in non-government education. Know your rights and responsibilities at work.

Enterprise agreements, salaries and conditions
The IEU negotiates enterprise agreements that secure your pay rises and conditions, including sick leave, carer's leave, parental leave and long service leave.

Industrial advice, support and representation
The IEU has workplace rights specialists who can advise and support you on a wide range of employment issues, such as classification, contracts, disputes, discrimination, termination, flexible work requests and more.

Child protection and workplace investigations
The IEU provides crucial advice and representation during workplace investigations such as reportable conduct allegations, performance issues and workplace conflict.

Workers compensation and workplace health and safety
The union promotes and supports health and safety at work. We provide workers compensation advice and advocacy, and representation where required.

Accreditation advice and professional development
The union provides advice on teacher accreditation and registration, and we offer a range of free and discounted face-to-face and online professional development sessions.

Advancing your interests
- A professional voice: through representation and advocacy to employers, government, policymakers and in the mainstream media.
- Payment recovery: the IEU recovered more than $4.4 million in underpayments to members in 2025 alone.
- Community and connection: opportunities to network with engaged education professionals in your workplace and region.

Keeping you informed
- Stay across workplace issues and professional news with our regular email updates and print publications, including Newsmonth (workplace news and views); IE magazine (professional journal); and Bedrock (for early childhood education and care members).
- Follow us on social media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, BlueSky.
- Bookmark our website: www.ieu.asn.au

Authorised by Carol Matthews, Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch

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Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch

Briscoe Building 485-501 Wattle St Ultimo NSW 2007
02 8202 8900 | ieu@ieu.asn.au | www.ieu.asn.au



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- Select the My Account tab.
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Authorised by Carol Matthews, Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch

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Information technology

Artificial intelligence

The union is investigating the use and implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) across the organisation, with the aim of identifying opportunities where AI may increase efficiency, assist staff and improve the services we provide.

As part of this investigation, the union is also assessing the potential limitations and risks associated with the use of AI.

We are trialling Microsoft Copilot to assess its ability to support organisational workflows, improve productivity and enhance the way staff access and work with information.

As part of the trial, the union is exploring how Copilot may integrate with existing Microsoft 365 services, including SharePoint, and how these capabilities could support information retrieval, AI agents and task automation.

The union's approach to AI is to ensure that appropriate policies, controls and security measures are carefully considered before it is introduced across the organisation.

Cybersecurity

The union takes cybersecurity very seriously and is committed to safeguarding member information as well as staff and data.

We proactively monitor for potential risks and provide real-time protection against malware, phishing, ransomware and other cyber threats.

The union conducts regular phishing simulations to raise awareness among staff, with the aim of educating them about potential vulnerabilities and the latest phishing tactics.

SharePoint – staff dashboard

The union is developing and enhancing the IEU Staff Dashboard and Case Matter Management, introducing additional functionality to support organisers and industrial officers in their work.

The initiative includes a dedicated homepage button, enabling broader staff access, testing and ongoing user feedback.

A key achievement was the implementation of user-based security controls, including both restricted and unrestricted management of member matters.

We have developed and will be introducing:

- monthly reporting
- streamlined case closure and archive management processes
- improved data collection for annual reporting.

These improvements have increased operational efficiency, strengthened information governance and improved reporting across the organisation.

Member payment system

The union is working with Osky Interactive and ST Software as part of an ongoing project to upgrade its member payment system.

The project involves transitioning to a new application programming interface (API) – or set of rules, protocols and tools that allows different software applications to communicate with each other – and integrating it with the union's existing website and membership systems.

This will provide a more secure payment process by removing the need for the union to store members' payment details, thereby reducing the amount of sensitive payment information held within the union's systems.

Website and membership systems

The professional engagement, training and events section of the IEU website is a work in progress, with enhanced features under development.

The training and events components of the membership system are being enhanced in preparation for delivery of the next set of features and improvements outlined in the project roadmap.

We have upgraded the membership system's enquiry screens to improve call handling and support the creation and management of member, workplace and employee tasks.

Joanna Kotsakis Administration Manager
Lance Whiteley IT Manager
Trong Duong IT Assistant

Social justice

The IEU has a proud history of supporting social justice campaigns.

Social justice is grounded in union values of fairness, equity and advocacy beyond the workplace.

IEU members deeply value the union's commitment to social justice and much of this work is in collaboration with the Environment Committee, Women and Equity Committee, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee.

We work across the union movement in solidarity with broader campaigns in Australia and overseas through Union Aid Abroad–APHEDA, the global justice organisation of the Australian union movement.

The IEU is also represented on the ACTU International Committee, attending meetings regularly and participating in broader union and global campaigns.

Palm Sunday rally

In the 1980s, the IEU (or Independent Teachers Association as it was then known), supported the African National Congress in its struggle against South Africa's apartheid regime.

In 1983, members marched behind a "Teachers for Peace" banner alongside members of the NSW Teachers Federation. This marked the beginning of the union's long-standing association with the annual Palm Sunday peace marches.

The IEU has proudly supported the annual Palm Sunday rally for more than 40 years.

For many years, the IEU has joined the Palm Sunday rally planning committee alongside other unions, church representatives and other allies.

In 2026, the IEU again took on marshalling duties and collecting donations to cover the rally's costs.

The theme of this year's event was "Yes to Peace. No to War."

Speakers noted that peace is possible when people recognise one another as friends and neighbours. They called for unity rather than racism – and an Australia that welcomes migrants and refugees.

Unions, including the IEU, emphasised that peace is union business and called for an end to current wars.

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

The IEU has been a partner with Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, the global justice organisation of the Australian union movement, since its inception in 1984. APHEDA's new executive officer Clare Middlemas attended the IEU's June Council meeting and thanked the union for its commitment, particularly at a time when global conflict, inequality and attacks on workers' rights are intensifying.

One of the strongest examples of this partnership is in Timor-Leste. During the struggle for independence and the rebuilding period that followed, Australian unions stood alongside the Timorese people.

The IEU contributed to these efforts by supporting education initiatives, helping to provide resources to schools and assisting with teacher training.

That solidarity continues today. Since 2016, the federal IEU has supported farmers in Timor-Leste to organise and advocate for their rights through the establishment and strengthening of unions.

This project helps farmers to gain access to land, develop sustainable farming practices and build collective power.

Following APHEDA's presentation at the June Council meeting, more than 30 IEU members joined APHEDA, and existing members were inspired to upgrade their commitments.

The IEU is proud that many of its members are also APHEDA members. Not only do they help promote APHEDA's work, they also attend events and forums.

Stand with Gomeroi campaign

The IEU supports the Gomeroi people in their campaign to stop Santos drilling 850 coal seam gas wells in the Pilliga region in northern NSW.

A report outlining trade union involvement in the Gomeroi people's decades-long struggle to defend the Pilliga was launched at NSW Parliament House in November 2025.

At the launch, IEU member and Wiradjuri woman Kylie Booth-Martinez said: "As an Aboriginal education officer and the leader of First Nations education across both primary and secondary schools, my work is not a title. It is a responsibility.

"I walk alongside our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, supporting their learning, advocating for their wellbeing, and connecting our schools back to community through truth, culture and respect."

The IEU supports Unions NSW's Stand with Gomeroi campaign as the fight for climate, environment and native title justice goes on.







Top: At the launch of the **We stand with Gomeroi** *report, Deputy Secretary David Towson, Kylie Booth-Martinez, Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, Denise McHugh and Katie Camarena; above left: Deputy Secretary David Towson, left, at the Palm Sunday rally; above right, APHEDA executive officer Clare Middlemas, left, and Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.*

Around the globe

Around the globe is a regular column in *Newsmonth* reporting on global justice issues and workers' rights.

In 2025-2026, we reported on the 'No ICE at the World Cup' campaign, APHEDA projects including the Timor-Leste farmers' project, the Afghan women's football team, conflict in Iran and Gaza, and the dire situation in Myanmar.

IEU solidarity in action

Throughout the year, the IEU stood in solidarity with many unions, workers and organisations fighting for justice.

In December 2025, the IEU joined the Australian union movement in Bondi to lay flowers in honour of those who lost their lives on 14 December and to express heartfelt solidarity to all those affected by this act of terror.

In January, the IEU signed a joint statement condemning the violent suppression of protests by the Iranian authorities and demanding an end to the use of force against unarmed demonstrators.

The statement was co-signed by Pax Christi Australia, Crosslink Christian Network Australia, Bill Crews Foundation and the Iranian Women's Association Australia, among others.

In March, the IEU joined other Australian unions, and education unions around the world, in expressing deep concern over the escalating conflict in the Middle East involving the United States, Israel and Iran.

In a statement, the IEU called for peace and an immediate ceasefire.

In August, the IEU signed an open letter to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong calling on the Australian government to implement the recommendations of a parliamentary inquiry into democracy and human rights in Myanmar.

This followed the visit to Australia of exiled union leader and Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar president Maung Maung.

A collective effort

We acknowledge the support of Branch Secretary Carol Matthews and Deputy Secretary David Towson as well as elected Executive and Council members whose steadfast support enables the IEU's social justice work.

Our media and communications team deserves special thanks for consistently capturing and amplifying these initiatives and bringing them to life.

We extend our gratitude to our IEU colleagues and members who devote so much of their own time to this work on top of their workloads and family commitments.

Thank you for showing up in solidarity, digging deep to support vulnerable communities in times of need and waving the flag of social justice.

Your commitment makes this ongoing work possible.

Katie Camarena Digital Communications Manager

Women and Equity Committee

This has been another year of progress, collaboration and advocacy for the Women and Equity Committee.

While women in Australia have made considerable progress, including achieving a record-low gender pay gap and introducing reforms to paid parental leave and superannuation, gender equality is still out of reach for many working women.

More than 70 per cent of IEU members are women, and the committee focuses on advocating for greater equity and inclusion, fair pay, safe workplaces and meaningful action to address discrimination.

The committee came together before the March, June and August Council meetings to share resources and updates, and to listen to what is happening in schools around NSW and the ACT.

Topics discussed included women in leadership, workplace discrimination and harassment, the rise of misogyny in the classroom, the gender pay gap and reproductive health leave.

The committee has more than 20 members made up of Councillors and IEU staff.

Collaborating for stronger outcomes

Our work is guided by five principles in the federal Women and Equity Committee's charter: equity, diversity, leadership development, involvement and activism, and political engagement.

We work collaboratively with other IEU branches, the ACTU Women's Committee, the Unions NSW Women's Committee, the UnionsACT Women's Committee and the broader union movement.

We share resources and work on campaigns that strengthen women's economic security and workplace safety, and address workplace sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination.

Collaboration with the industrial, organising and communications teams ensures these issues are reflected in bargaining, submissions, sub branch meetings, member communications and across the IEU's social media platforms.

Campaigns and advocacy

The committee mobilises around key dates including International Women's Day and Equal Pay Day.

The committee strongly supports initiatives such as Wear It Purple Day, which highlights the importance of creating safe, supportive and inclusive environments for LGBTQIA+ students and staff in schools. We also support the campaign to abolish anti-discrimination exemptions in faith-based schools and workplaces.

In March, committee members joined fellow IEU members, activists and union colleagues at International Women's Day rallies in Newcastle and Sydney.

The federal office released a statement emphasising the role unions play in advancing women's rights, economic security and workplace equality, noting that 50,000 women across Australia are IEU members.

Equal Pay Day fell on 17 August this year, the earliest date ever recorded in Australia. It is the number of extra days into the new financial year (starting 1 July) that women in Australia must work to match what men earned in the previous financial year. In 2026, this was 48 days.

The IEU produced a video explainer celebrating this progress while reinforcing the need to close the gender pay gap once and for all.

Commencing on 25 November each year, the IEU proudly supports the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. The union has developed resources that raise awareness of violence against women and girls and the actions we can all take to put an end to it.

On Wear It Purple Day on 28 August, IEU staff wore purple and shared messages of support for LGBTQIA+ students and colleagues as part of a social media campaign promoting safe and inclusive school communities.

The campaign for 10 days of universal paid reproductive health leave continues as unions across Australia build on the precedent set by Queensland's public sector which introduced this leave in 2024.

National wins for working women

It has been another year of strong gains for working women. From 1 July 2026, minimum award wages increased by 4.75%, delivering a real pay rise for many of Australia's lowest-paid workers.

Families also benefited from improvements to Australia's paid parental leave scheme, which increased from 24 weeks to 26 weeks.

Another major reform was the introduction of payday superannuation. From 1 July, employers are required to pay super contributions at the same time as wages rather than quarterly. This change helps build retirement







Top: Members of the IEU Women and Equity Committee at June Council; left: Branch Secretary Carol Matthews at the Sydney twilight IWD rally; above: IEU staff Wear It Purple to support LGBTQIA+ young people and colleagues in schools.

savings sooner, reduces the risk of unpaid super and is expected to narrow the gender retirement income gap, which is still a major source of economic inequality for older women.

While these achievements represent meaningful progress, challenges remain. Women are over-represented in lower-paid occupations, undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid caring work and retire with substantially less superannuation than men.

Closing the gender pay gap

Australia's gender pay gap fell to a record low of 11.3 per cent this year, yet women still earn less on average than men and face structural barriers to economic equality.

In March, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency released statistics on gender pay gaps in both private enterprise and the Commonwealth public sector. This was the first time the two sectors were combined in one release.

In the private sector, the gender pay gap is 21.1 per cent. This means women are paid about 79 cents for every dollar earned by men when total remuneration, including bonuses and overtime, is taken into account.

Looking ahead

Despite progress, substantial barriers to gender equality persist.

Women still face barriers to leadership, economic security and workplace equality.

In the education sector, the growing influence of the 'manosphere' and the misuse of AI are increasing the risk of teachers and support staff leaving the profession due to misogyny and gendered violence.

The Women and Equity Committee is committed to ensuring these issues stay firmly on the union agenda through advocacy, member engagement, education and campaigning.

Together, we will continue to challenge discrimination, advance equity and strengthen the rights of women across the non-government education sector.

Katie Camarena
Angela McDonald
Women and Equity Committee Co-Convenors

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee provides a strong, member-driven voice for First Nations teachers, support staff and communities in NSW and the ACT.

Over the past 12 months, the committee has deepened member engagement through a dedicated survey, advocated on cultural leave and self-identification, and represented the union in national policy and union movement forums.

Committee membership and structure

The committee brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander union members from the Central West, Riverina, Sydney, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga and surrounding regions. Current members include:

- Aunty Mary Atkinson
- Aunty Karen Andriske
- Michelle Thompson
- Kylie Booth-Martinez
- Craig Duncan
- Leona Oliver
- Kye Longford
- Samantha Brancatisano
- Karen Tighe
- Lyn Caton (Convenor)

The committee meets four times during the year, usually ahead of IEU Council meetings, in a hybrid format at the union's Ultimo office and via Zoom.

Congratulations were extended to Aunty Mary Atkinson on being named the 2026 Wagga Wagga Citizen of the Year, and to Aunty Karen Andriske and her daughter on the publication of their book, *Hope: Unfinished Business – A collection of reflections from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women*.

The committee acknowledged the passing of Aunty Elsie and Aunty Louise (Hilda) Campbell. We are grateful for their tireless work and contributions.

A new welcome process was introduced, with the convenor writing directly to prospective members to encourage self-identification.

Terms of reference

The committee's terms of reference, ratified in March 2025, continue to guide its work in 2026.

The document keeps the committee focused on advocacy, policy advice to the Executive, cultural awareness, and support for recruitment, retention, and professional development.

The committee agreed that the Terms of Reference remain fit for purpose, with findings of the 2026 member survey informing future revisions.

National First Nations education policy

A focus for the committee in 2026 is the co-design of the new National First Nations Education Policy by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation and the federal government, guided by the principle "Nothing about us, without us".

Members Aunty Mary Atkinson and Craig Duncan completed the national survey and contributed to consultations in Term 1.

Early themes included the need for culturally safe learning environments, stronger recognition of First Nations educators and genuine partnership backed by clear accountability and funding.

The committee is also monitoring:

- the federal government's three-day guarantee of subsidised early childhood education and care
- the allocation of $33.6 million to the Clontarf Foundation to support First Nations boys to continue schooling
- a documented rise in school-based racism.

Cultural and ceremonial leave

The committee advocates for cultural and ceremonial leave, separate from personal leave, for members undertaking obligations such as Sorry Business.

Entitlements vary across enterprise agreements, from three to five days, with Parramatta Diocese the most generous.

The committee will pursue broader, more consistent provisions in upcoming bargaining.

ACTU conference: Racism, truth and treaty

Craig Duncan and Michelle Thompson represented the IEU at the two-day ACTU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Conference in Melbourne in October 2025.

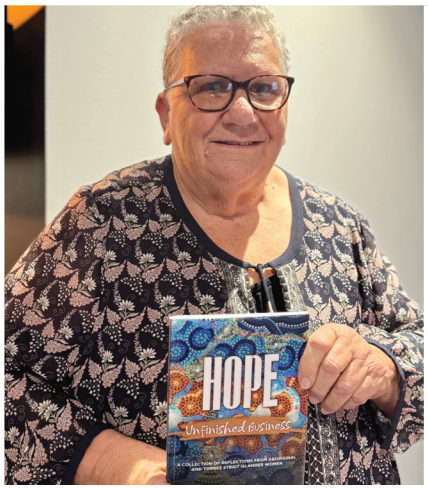
Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman discussed structural racism and cultural safety.

Speakers from Common Threads and Together 4 Treaty spoke about treaty-making and the ongoing impact of blue asbestos contamination from the Wittenoom mines on the Banjima people.









Clockwise from top left: IEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee member Kylie Booth-Martinez; NSW Teachers Federation member Russell Honnery and committee member Craig Duncan; committee member Aunty Karen Andriske; committee member Michelle Thompson, left, with author Brenda Matthews.

The conference reaffirmed union solidarity and First Nations leadership.

Member survey and engagement

A key initiative in 2026 was the development and distribution of the first dedicated survey of identified members.

We received many responses, providing insights into cultural connection and identity, confirmation of Aboriginality and the effectiveness of committee communications.

Members reported ongoing difficulty confirming Aboriginality for education, employment and scholarship purposes, and the informal burden placed on staff asked to vouch for a student's or family's identity.

Cultural capability building and networking were identified as top priorities for the next two years.

The committee is drafting a proposal for staged cultural capability professional development.

It also advocates for improved self-identification; about 100 members are currently recorded, but this figure is believed to significantly understate actual membership.

Terminology

Following member feedback, the committee will no longer use the acronym 'ATSI', as the term is outdated and no longer supported by current reconciliation guidance.

The term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' will be used instead.

Community engagement

Members reported strong NAIDOC Week activity across regions. This included a community march in Bathurst, celebrations in Riverina and Newcastle schools, whole-school assemblies featuring smoking ceremonies, song lines and dance, and a 'Connecting to Country' excursion program.

Craig Duncan represents the IEU on the NESA Aboriginal Education Consultative Forum.

The committee marked National Reconciliation Week, which was themed 'All In' and the 60th anniversary of the Wave Hill Walk-Off.

Looking ahead

The committee is strengthening its member base, sharpening its advocacy and ensuring First Nations voices inform the IEU's agenda.

Priorities into 2027 include:

- embedding dedicated cultural and ceremonial leave clauses in enterprise agreements
- developing staged cultural capability professional development for the wider membership
- growing self-identification and representation within union structures
- continuing engagement in the national First Nations education policy
- collating Aboriginal education role descriptions across dioceses to support advocacy
- exploring regional yarning circles and a regular *Newsmonth* presence.

The committee reaffirms that reconciliation and equity must be built on consultation, cultural safety and genuine partnership.

The IEU stands with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and support staff, students, families and communities.

Lyn Caton Convenor

Environment Committee

In 2026, the Environment Committee was convened by organisers Richard Ryan and Josef Dabbs, assisted by organisers David Whitcombe and Lyn Caton.

The committee meets every three months to discuss projects and activities, including the union's annual environment grants and biennial environment conference, held this year at Taronga Zoo.

IEU and Teachers Mutual Bank environment grants

Each year the union invites members to apply for the IEU/TMB environment grants. Jointly sponsored with TMB, members can apply for one of six grants of up to $3000 each.

The grants fund projects designed to initiate sustainability and environmental projects in schools, colleges or early childhood centres.

The grants support environmental education with projects focusing on biodiversity, conservation, sustainability, and Indigenous connections to land.

Environment grants 2026

Applications for the 2026 grants opened on 20 July and closed on 11 October, with more than 70 applications received.

Successful applicants will be announced at the IEU AGM on 24 October and listed on the union's website and social media platforms, and reported in *Newsmonth*.

Environment grants 2025

The 2025 environment grants, included a wide variety of innovative and exciting projects.

Early childhood education

Chrysalis Morning Star Kindergarten, Bellingen

Bringing bees and building up our food forest: The kindergarten aims to increase biodiversity and sustainability by creating outdoor learning spaces.

The project will add native bee boxes and a frog pond, expand food production through herbs, vegetables and fruit trees, and strengthen composting and worm farms.

Children will engage in growing, harvesting and recycling, fostering environmental responsibility and a deep connection to nature.

Peter Pan Preschool, Wangi Wangi

Little Sprouts, Big Future: The project aims to facilitate composting stations, recycled water tanks and a sensory garden into the preschool's curriculum. Children will develop respect for nature, families will be able to take home produce, and the community will benefit from a greener, more connected environment.

This initiative seeks to promote lifelong eco-friendly habits, support biodiversity and encourage collective action toward sustainability.

Primary schools

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, West Kempsey

Future farmers, floodproof garden: The project aims to rebuild the school garden to be flood-proof and productive by combining hydroponics with movable garden pods.

This will allow students to compare plant growth in soil and hydroponic systems, deepening their understanding of plant needs, sustainability and innovative agriculture.

Through hands-on investigations, students will explore STEM concepts such as biology, chemistry, and engineering while fostering environmental awareness.

Catherine McAuley Catholic Primary School, Orange

Critters Cafe: The aim of the Garden Corner, incorporating the Critter Cafe, is to sustainably use food waste that the school produces each week.

The school's environment officers (Year 6 students) oversee and monitor the removal of food scraps from the playground to the Critter Cafe, where tumbleweed worm buffets are in the garden beds.

This process enriches the soil, supports the growing of produce and encourages students to appreciate where their food comes from.

St Joseph's Primary School, Charlestown

Native bees and flower corridor: The project aims to restore pollinator populations and strengthen biodiversity at the school following the varroa mite's impact on Newcastle bee communities.

Students will create native flowering corridors in garden beds and around an existing yarning circle, attracting both native and European bees.

The project promotes ecological stewardship, creating lasting environmental benefits in our school grounds and educational benefits for students learning about bees and native vegetation.



The IEU's environment conference held at Taronga Zoo in August offered members immersive, hands-on experiences such as observing animals, fieldwork and data collection.





Secondary schools

Caroline Chisholm College, Glenmore Park

Ready, Set, Organise: Recycling and Composting: This project aims to increase composting and recycling at the school and empower students to steward better waste management practices.

It will add cardboard, recycling and organic waste composting bins at the school.

Mount St Joseph Catholic College, Milperra

Let it grow: MSJ community green space: The project aims to develop a series of green spaces – vertical garden/living wall, fresh produce garden and interactive science and technology teaching and learning garden – to support student learning and connect the school with the local community.

Students are designing green spaces as part of their CSIRO STEM projects. These designs will be incorporated into the planning for the spaces.

Rosebank College, Five Dock

Nest and Seek: The project aims to support sustainability and biodiversity by designing and 3D-printing bird boxes to be placed around the school grounds. The bird boxes will be fitted with wireless cameras for observation.

Students will engage in hands-on STEM learning through design, engineering and digital technologies to create functional habitats for native wildlife.

This initiative will benefit students by linking classroom learning to real-world action, enhancing the school's sustainability efforts and providing safe spaces for wildlife.

Environment events

In August the IEU hosted its "Wild Learning" environment conference at Taronga Zoo in Sydney.

Early childhood education and school members participated in sessions on nature journalling, STEM enrichment design, and fieldwork and collecting data.

The sessions run by staff at the zoo's education centre provided practical strategies and materials that could be taken straight into classrooms.

One secondary school member said there were so many valuable lessons to learn by stepping outside the classroom, talking to experts and exploring the environment.

"It was really cool to step into the shoes of a student and experience the excitement and curiosity of hands-on learning," she said.

ACTU Climate Action Group

Members of the IEU Environment Committee are also part of the ACTU Climate Action Group and meet with the group quarterly online.

Richard Ryan Organiser

Canberra

The ACT office welcomed Lyn Caton back to the organising team in 2026, where she worked with Angela McDonald and Tahlia Bruce to support members across the Monaro, Riverina and South East Sub Branches.

Bargaining on several smaller enterprise agreements has been a strong focus over the past 12 months.

This includes negotiations for new agreements covering ACT Catholic early learning centres and school age care (also known as outside school hours care or OSHC) services, Christian Schools Australia schools in the ACT, South NSW Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist schools, Brindabella Christian College, Wagga Wagga Christian College and the Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Organisers worked with members through workplace visits, meetings, surveys and ongoing updates to develop claims and seek feedback on employer proposals.

While priorities differ across workplaces, members have consistently sought agreements that better reflect the work they perform, provide clearer workload protections and address the conditions affecting recruitment and retention.

We thank members for their high level of engagement in meetings, surveys and workplace discussions, which ensures these negotiations are grounded in their experiences.

Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Education Ltd (CACGEL) also set a new benchmark for parental leave, announcing that, from 2027, eligible parents will have access to 24 weeks of paid leave.

This move positions the diocese as a leader in the sector and highlights a growing expectation for more equitable parental leave provisions across education.

ACT organisers also represent members in the broader education and union movement.

This includes participation in the ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board and its Professional Standards Committee, Professional Learning Committee, Initial Teacher Education Committee and Professional Practice Committee.

The IEU Canberra office plays an active role in UnionsACT and the federal IEU Women and Equity Committee, ensuring the experiences of members in our region are represented in wider discussions about workforce pressures, professional standards and workplace rights.

We thank our workplace representatives, Executive and Council delegates, sub branch committees and members whose involvement has shaped priorities, strengthened workplace chapters and supported collective advocacy throughout the year.

Monaro Sub Branch

The Monaro Sub Branch provides members with opportunities to engage directly with professional and industrial issues.

In April, the sub branch welcomed ACT Teacher Quality Institute chief executive Lyndall Read for a discussion about teacher registration, professional learning requirements, flexibility for part-time and returning teachers, the review of the code of professional practice and proposed registration changes affecting early childhood teachers.

The establishment of the IEU/CACGEL Consultative Committee is a significant development. Meeting once each term, this committee provides a forum for IEU members and CACGEL representatives to discuss workplace issues, organisational change and matters requiring consultation.

Chapter reports to the sub branch highlighted practical concerns, including NCCD workload, increasingly complex classes, meeting arrangements, time off in lieu, and access to planning and release time. These discussions allowed members to compare experiences across workplaces and identify matters requiring coordinated action.

The sub branch is pursuing concerns about the workload associated with ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) requirements, including the cumulative impact of assessment, moderation and quality assurance processes on senior secondary teachers.

The IEU has sought greater engagement with the BSSS about how these requirements operate in schools and the need for workload implications to be properly considered when policies and processes are developed or reviewed.

Monaro members are well represented across the union and related bodies, including the IEU NCCD Committee, BSSS and IEU Executive. This high level of engagement ensures local perspectives contribute to the union's professional and industrial advocacy.



The IEU's Canberra-based organisers Tahlia Bruce, Angela McDonald and Lyn Caton.

Riverina Sub Branch

The Riverina Sub Branch represents members across diverse roles and workplaces, navigating several important issues throughout the year.

IEU members employed as Aspect (autism services provider) teacher aides describe their work as both challenging and deeply rewarding, supporting students with additional needs in complex classroom settings.

However, members are frustrated by unfair pay that does not reflect the skill and responsibility their roles require, along with serious safety concerns that require urgent attention from the employer.

In May 2026, the IEU surveyed members on the Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga (CEDWW) Reading Intervention Program, following concerns about assessment practices, curriculum alignment, and consultation processes.

The survey gathered member experiences and evidence to support ongoing advocacy with CEDWW. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with responses due by 25 May 2026. The sub branch thanks all contributors, as this feedback will shape our continued advocacy on the issue.

The past year has also brought significant change at the diocesan level, with CEDWW undergoing a major central office restructure, including an entirely new leadership team and the dissolution of the Learning Directorate.

The sub branch will closely monitor how this transition affects members, particularly in relation to communication, consultation, and the continuity of support for schools.

The Riverina Sub Branch is committed to supporting members and encourages continued engagement as these matters progress.

South East Sub Branch

The South East Sub Branch is an important forum for IEU members from across the region to come together, share experiences and identify common workplace issues.

Members from Bega, Pambula, Tumut, Murrumburrah, Goulburn, Young, Broulee, Batlow, Braidwood, Boorowa, Cooma, Batemans Bay and Yass participated in sub branch activities throughout the year, with both teachers and support staff represented.

Workload is a consistent focus for members, with concerns about the increasingly complex needs of students regularly emerging.

The demands associated with the NCCD – including documentation, planning, adjustments and ongoing student support – are still contributing to workload pressures for both teachers and support staff.

Work health and safety is a key issue, particularly in relation to psychosocial hazards and occupational violence. Members have raised concerns about the impact of challenging student behaviours, workplace pressures and insufficient support on staff wellbeing and safety.

The sub branch provides an important opportunity for members to share experiences, identify common concerns and develop collective approaches to workplace issues.

We congratulate all members, reps, Council and Executive sub branch members for your activism.

Tahlia Bruce Organiser
Lyn Caton Organiser
Harriet Kerr-Dodd Office Administrator
Angela McDonald Organiser

Newcastle

The IEU's Newcastle office supports members and chapters in the Central Coast and Hunter Valley sub branches, serving more than 3000 members in schools from Taree in the north to Woy Woy in the south, and west to Merriwa.

The office is staffed by office administrator Veronica Lang and organisers Jim Hall, Carlo Rendina and Raelene Maxworthy.

In February, the Central Coast and Hunter Valley Sub Branches held annual general meetings to elect their 2026 executive teams.

The Hunter Valley Sub Branch elected Amanda Wood as President, Katrina Easton as Deputy President and Kim Keating as Secretary. The Hunter Valley Sub Branch committee comprises Dot Seamer, Sarah Gardiner, Jessica Mead and Susan Carter.

The Central Coast Sub Branch elected Arden Cassie as President, Maddi Hoskins as Deputy President and Ann Hall as Secretary.

The work of sub branch executive members and union activists is essential to the Newcastle office's ability to provide a high level of service to members.

The union thanks executive and committee members for the time and effort they devote to IEU members.

Throughout 2026, the Newcastle office advised, assisted and supported members in areas including disputes, permanency, flexible work requests, reportable conduct matters, and pay and performance issues.

The union provides a a high level of service to members throughout the region.

Throughout 2026, organisers assisted chapters to resolve a range of school-based issues and facilitated campaigns for members in Catholic, Christian and independent schools.

Hunter Valley Sub Branch meetings

These meetings are always well attended, but members from remote schools in the Upper Hunter and Manning Valley often find it difficult to attend in person.

To accommodate broader participation, a hybrid meeting was held in August at Hunter Unions.

Twenty-eight members attended in person and 10 joined online. Of those attending online, eight had never previously been able to attend a meeting.

This format was supported by all attendees, and the sub branch agreed to hold more hybrid meetings in future.

Maitland-Newcastle Catholic systemic schools

In every sector and school, workload is a major concern for teachers, affecting their work-life balance and wellbeing.

Work practices agreements address classroom-related issues effectively but are limited in their ability to manage pressures that arise outside the classroom.

Demands associated with teaching and learning, compliance and registration, wellbeing and community engagement, and system-wide school initiatives are often unregulated, beyond teachers' control, and a source of significant stress.

Members raised and discussed these issues at the May sub branch meeting. A motion was passed authorising organisers to seek support from all Catholic systemic school chapters.

Within three weeks, organisers had visited more than 20 schools. Members reported similar workload concerns and welcomed the opportunity to actively pursue a solution.

On 23 July, a union delegation that included Executive members Amanda Wood and Sarah Gardiner met with the Director of Schools to outline and discuss these concerns.

It was acknowledged that teacher workload was a serious issue. It was agreed that the director, or a head of department, would meet with the union each term; that system initiatives would be subject to comprehensive evaluation before implementation; and that oversight was needed to monitor and moderate external demands.

Reps training

On 31 March, more than 30 school reps from Catholic systemic, independent and Christian schools attended training in Newcastle.

A wide variety of reps attended: new and experienced, young and old, primary and secondary, teachers and support staff, sole reps and committee members.

A breakout group of 10 reps who had previously attended training discussed the practical application of their previous learning.

The organisers thank all those who attended, including Deputy Secretary David Towson and Assistant Secretary Pat Devery.

On 28 May, training for eight reps from the Central Coast was held at Gosford Golf Club.

Sixteen experienced reps attended advanced training



IEU members and supporters joined the Hunter Workers May Day parade through the streets of Newcastle.

on 11 September in Newcastle. Assisted by Newcastle organisers, Branch Secretary Carol Matthews and Assistant Secretary Pat Devery, they worked to develop the practical skills and strategies needed to support members, build membership and strengthen the union's presence in their schools.

Hunter Workers

IEU delegates to Hunter Workers in 2026 are Carlo Rendina (Executive), Mark Wilson, Raelene Maxworthy, Jim Hall, Amanda Wood, Isabella Rendina and Sarah Gardiner.

Sarah Gardiner is the IEU representative on the Hunter Workers Women's Committee (HWWC).

IEU members participated in Hunter Workers events, including:

- **International Women's Day:** The HWWC march and rally were held on 8 March at Gregson Park, Hamilton. Victorian Trades Hall Council Assistant Secretary Wil Stracke helped launch the ACTU's reproductive leave campaign.
- **International Workers' Memorial Day:** This was commemorated on 28 April at Newcastle Foreshore Park. Jeff Tougher, whose paramedic son Steven was stabbed to death at work in 2023, advocated for the introduction of "Steven's Law" to protect frontline workers.
- **May Day Dinner:** This was held on 1 May at Wallsend Diggers Club. ACTU historian Dr Liam Byrne discussed how every union win, big or small, is a step forward.
- **Hunter Workers May Day parade:** This was held on 3 May. Workers and their families marched from Newcastle Museum to the Newcastle Train Sheds at Foreshore Park for the Solidarity Carnival. Retiring ACTU President Michele O'Neil spoke about the Hunter Valley's industrial history and strength, and its importance to Australian unions.

The Newcastle office thanks the IEU Executive and communications department for supporting a full-page spread in the Hunter Workers' *Union Town, May Day* 24-page lift-out published in the *Newcastle Herald* on 25 April.

Jim Hall Organiser
Veronica Lang Office Administrator
Raelene Maxworthy Organiser
Carlo Rendina Organiser

Lismore

The Lismore office is responsible for members in schools in the North Coast Sub Branch (Tweed Heads to Yamba) and Mid North Coast Sub Branch (Grafton to Laurieton).

Lismore office staff include industrial officer Carolyn Moore, office administrator Cassie Barnes, and organisers Sean van der Heide and Richard Ryan.

In February, the North Coast and Mid North Coast Sub Branches held their annual general meetings at Lismore and Port Macquarie respectively.

In the North Coast Sub Branch, President Kath Egan (St Francis Xavier Primary, Ballina) was re-elected.

Emily Webster (St Mary's Catholic College, Casino) was elected Deputy President and Jennifer Allen (St Carthage's Primary School, Lismore) was re-elected Secretary.

The Mid North Coast annual general meeting, held at Nambucca Heads RSL, saw President Markus Muschal (St John Paul College, Coffs Harbour) re-elected unopposed.

Tiffany Wishart (St Francis Xavier Primary School, Woolgoolga) was elected Deputy President and Will Pollock (St Paul's College, Kempsey) was elected Secretary.

Branch Secretary Carol Matthews attended the North Coast Sub Branch annual general meeting, while then Assistant Secretary Lyn Caton attended the Mid North Coast Sub Branch annual general meeting. They provided broad insights into industrial, professional and educational issues affecting non-government schools.

Deputy Secretary David Towson and Assistant Secretary Therese Fitzgibbon also attended sub branch meetings in 2026.

The sub branches welcomed and appreciated these visits by our Sydney-based elected officials.

Both sub branches moved meeting locations around to enable members greater access.

North Coast Sub Branch meetings for 2026: Term 1 AGM in Lismore, Term 2 in Ballina, Term 3 in Brunswick Heads, and Term 4 in Lismore.

Mid North Coast Sub Branch meetings for 2026: Term 1 AGM in Port Macquarie, Term 2 in Nambucca Heads, Term 3 in Sawtell, and Term 4 in Port Macquarie.

Activity

Lismore officers organise and service members across the spectrum of schools in the North Coast and Mid North Coast, assisting and providing support to members in the areas of disputes, permanency, reportable conduct matters, flexible work requests, pay and performance issues and issues around parental leave.

This year some common themes emerged in relation to members requiring assistance.

Lismore officers supported members in Catholic systemic schools affected by budget cuts due to the Diocese of Lismore sustainability project.

They also responded to an increase in WHS breaches that have been poorly handled by employers.

There was an increase in incidents of sexual harassment of staff in some schools via online platforms – employers' policies in these instances were not fit for purpose.

Officers also responded to ongoing reports of increasing workloads leading to staff burnout.

Throughout 2026, Carolyn, Sean and Richard met with the Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools HR team to discuss the upcoming restructure of the diocesan education office.

Campaigns

Lismore office staff supported and marched at the Start Strong Pay Fair rallies in Lismore and Coffs Harbour on 6 May.

Reps training days

The North Coast Sub Branch reps training day was held at the Lismore Workers Club on 21 May.

The Mid North Coast reps training day was held on 13 June in Coffs Harbour.

Across both days, 32 reps attended from the Catholic systemic, independent and Christian school sectors.

We thank Assistant Secretary Pat Devery for running this valuable training and Cassie Barnes for her organisation of the reps training days.

Finally, we wish to thank the North Coast and Mid North Coast Sub Branch executives and committees for their activism and support of all IEU members in their sub branches.





Top: IEU members from the Mid North Coast attended reps training in Coffs Harbour in June. Above: IEU members and supporters rallied in Coffs Harbour to support the union's campaign for fair pay in community preschools.

We acknowledge all past and present IEU chapter reps in the region and thank you for your support and contributions on behalf of members in your workplaces, along with your activism in broader union and issues this year.

With your ongoing commitment and support, the union will continue to meet and resolve the matters that arise in your schools in the North West and Mid North Coast regions.

Cassie Barnes Office Administrator
Carolyn Moore Industrial Officer
Richard Ryan Organiser
Sean van der Heide Organising Lead

Wollongong

The IEU office in Wollongong is in its second year of operation, marking an important milestone in the union's commitment to supporting members in the Illawarra and South Coast regions.

The office has become a valued hub for members, representatives and organisers, providing a local presence that has strengthened connections, improved accessibility and enhanced the union's ability to respond to members' needs.

The Wollongong office was established to ensure members across the South Coast had easier access to union support and resources within their local community.

Two years on, members and reps have embraced the benefits of a local office, with many highlighting the increased opportunities for engagement, collaboration and support it has created.

New organiser

Shirley Jancetic joined the IEU as organiser for the South Coast, following the retirement of Tina Smith last year.

After serving as a rep and a member of Council for many years, Shirley brings an extensive understanding of the IEU, its members and the challenges teachers and support staff across the sector face.

Shirley's commitment to union values, combined with her enthusiasm and energy, is a welcome addition to the organising team.

Since taking on the role, Shirley has quickly established strong connections with members and reps throughout the South Coast.

Her prior experience as a rep provides valuable insights into the realities members in schools and workplaces face, allowing her to offer practical support and informed advice.

Members appreciate her approachable nature and passion for advocating on their behalf, while reps benefit from her knowledge and encouragement.

Dedicated union space

Another positive development during the year has been the relocation of South Coast Sub Branch meetings to the Wollongong office.

Members have welcomed this change of venue and embraced the opportunity to meet in a dedicated union space designed to encourage participation and collaboration.

The new meeting venue is a more welcoming and comfortable environment for members to gather, discuss workplace issues and share experiences.

Importantly, it also enhances the social aspect of sub branch meetings. Members report that the space provides greater opportunities to connect with one another, strengthening relationships across schools and workplaces throughout the region.

While the formal business of sub branch meetings is vital, informal opportunities to socialise and build relationships are equally important.

These opportunities help foster a sense of solidarity and community among members, creating stronger networks of support across the South Coast.

As a result, attendance and engagement at meetings is strengthening, with members valuing both the professional and social benefits the new venue provides.

Practical benefits

The Wollongong office delivers practical benefits for organisers and members seeking assistance.

A dedicated workspace in the region provides greater flexibility for organisers, enabling them to spend more time visiting schools and engaging directly with members.

For members requiring individual support, the office provides a private and professional environment where sensitive matters can be discussed.

Whether members are seeking advice on workplace concerns, industrial matters or professional issues, access to a confidential meeting space close to home is an advantage. This accessibility helps ensure members receive timely support when they need it most.

Collaboration with union movement

The Wollongong office creates new opportunities for collaboration with the broader union movement.

Its location enables closer engagement with the South Coast Labour Council and its affiliated unions, particularly when issues affecting workers across the region emerge.

These relationships are invaluable in ensuring a coordinated response to local issues an d campaigns.

By working alongside other unions and community organisations, the IEU can contribute to a stronger collective voice on issues affecting teachers, school support staff and working people on the South Coast.



Organising Lead Emily Cranney spoke at Wollongong's May Day rally, highlighting the IEU's Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises for teachers and educators in community preschools.

The office is not only a centre for member support, but also a platform for regional collaboration and advocacy.

As the Wollongong office continues its second year of operation, there is much to celebrate. It demonstrates the value of having a dedicated local presence.

By bringing members together, supporting organisers in their work and creating opportunities for collaboration across the labour movement, the IEU's Wollongong office is helping to build a stronger, more connected and more effective union in the Illawarra region and South Coast. With these strong foundations in place, the future looks bright.

Emily Cranney Organising Lead
Emma Ford Industrial Officer
Shirley Jancetic Organiser

National and international

The federal union has achieved significant wins for IEU members over the past 12 months, while addressing the challenges education workers across Australia are facing.

Through bargaining, advocacy, research and policy engagement, the union is focused on improving wages and conditions, protecting professional autonomy and ensuring members have a strong voice in shaping the future of education.

As economic pressures, workforce shortages and technological change affect the sector, the IEU's work is critical to securing fair and sustainable outcomes for members.

Wages, cost-of-living and housing affordability

Securing fair wages is an important priority for the union.

Throughout 2026, the IEU carried a substantial bargaining workload across the Catholic, independent and early childhood education sectors.

Members sought salary increases that better reflect the value of their work and keep pace with rising living costs.

Cost-of-living pressures are a major concern for members and their families. Rising housing, food, transport, insurance and utility costs are pressuring household budgets.

While bargaining outcomes have delivered important wage improvements in many workplaces, there is a need to ensure salaries do not fall behind inflation.

Housing affordability is an increasingly important workforce issue.

Across metropolitan, regional and rural communities, many education workers find it difficult to secure affordable housing close to their workplaces.

The situation is particularly challenging in regional Australia, where a shortage of rental properties has pushed prices higher and made it harder for schools and early childhood education services to attract and retain staff.

The union continues to highlight the link between housing affordability and workforce sustainability in education.

Teacher workload and excessive compliance demands

Teacher workload is one of the most frequently raised concerns among members.

Increasing administrative obligations, reporting requirements and compliance demands are placing pressure on an already demanding profession.

The IEU is advocating for a comprehensive approach to workload reduction that addresses the causes of excessive workload before additional initiatives are imposed on staff.

This includes securing improved release time, stronger workplace protections and practical measures that allow teachers and school leaders to focus on teaching, learning and student support.

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on school students with disability is an ongoing area of concern. While the collection of student disability data is important, many members report that documentation and compliance requirements have expanded beyond what is reasonable or necessary.

The union has therefore continued extensive engagement with governments, education departments and policymakers to reduce duplication and clarify expectations.

The goal is to ensure accountability measures remain practical and proportionate while reducing unnecessary administrative burden.

Gender undervaluation, anti-discrimination exemptions and reproductive health leave

The union is pursuing several important reforms.

One of the most significant is addressing the historic undervaluation of work in female-dominated occupations.

Legal and industrial processes are underway to address gender undervaluation affecting workers in early childhood education and care, post-secondary education and school support roles.

These efforts aim to ensure pay and recognition properly reflect the skills, qualifications and responsibilities required in these professions.

The IEU is also campaigning for the removal of outdated religious discrimination exemptions that impact some education workers.

The union believes all employees should enjoy consistent workplace rights and protections regardless of their employer.

The IEU supports paid reproductive health leave for all Australian workers as part of broader efforts to create fairer, more inclusive and supportive workplaces.

Bargaining delivers strong gains

The scale of bargaining undertaken by the union is growing as members seek improved wages, conditions and workplace protections.

Recent industrial relations reforms have created new opportunities for collective bargaining, but barriers remain.

Multi-employer bargaining

Multi-employer bargaining is proving to be a valuable tool in the education sector, where there are thousands of employers.

During 2026, the IEU secured new multi-employer agreements in the Queensland early childhood education and care sector, delivering a more efficient bargaining model for smaller workplaces.

While many employers recognise the benefits of coordinated bargaining, some resist participation or limit employees' bargaining rights.

Current workplace laws still provide employers with considerable influence over bargaining processes and limit access to industrial action in some jurisdictions.

As a result, many members, particularly in Victoria and NSW, are unable to exercise the same bargaining rights available to workers elsewhere.

The union advocates for reforms that provide all members with full and effective bargaining rights.

Supported bargaining

Current negotiations in the NSW preschool sector represent an important extension of the supported bargaining stream.

Building on earlier achievements in long day care, the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign seeks NSW government-supported wage rates that better recognise the skills and contribution of preschool staff.

Despite their vital role in children's development and learning, preschool staff earn substantially less than many comparable employees in schools.

Addressing this disparity is an important objective of current negotiations and broader early childhood workforce reform.

Employer lockout loophole must be closed

The union continues to campaign for changes to workplace laws that allow employers to withhold work and a full day's pay from employees taking limited industrial action.

In several workplaces, including Queensland Catholic schools, members have experienced situations where minor work bans have resulted in the loss of an entire day's income.

The IEU believes these responses are disproportionate and undermine fair bargaining principles. Closing this loophole is an important component of the union's industrial relations advocacy.

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant issues in education.

During the past year, AI adoption has accelerated rapidly as schools, education systems and education technology providers increasingly integrate AI tools into teaching, learning and administration.

The technology offers potential benefits, particularly in reducing routine administrative tasks and supporting non-core functions. However, AI has also generated new challenges.

In many cases, teachers have had to redesign assessment practices and learning activities to maintain academic integrity in an environment where students have increasing access to AI-generated content. These changes have sometimes added to workload rather than reduced it.

There are also concerns about privacy, online safety and the circulation of AI-generated explicit material.

Members have raised concerns about employers introducing mandatory AI programs without adequate consultation or clear policies to guide implementation.

The IEU has actively engaged in parliamentary inquiries, government consultations, workforce forums, AI safety briefings and discussions involving industry, unions and policymakers.

Across these forums, the union has consistently argued that AI implementation must be built on meaningful consultation with workers and their unions.

The union's position is that AI should be introduced through transparent policies, strong privacy protections and effective online safety measures.

Importantly, any productivity gains generated through AI must not come at the expense of jobs, staffing levels or professional autonomy.

International solidarity and action

The IEU's commitment to workers' rights extends beyond Australia through partnerships with education unions and worker organisations around the world.

International solidarity is an important part of the union's mission.

Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA

The union supports APHEDA and its work strengthening workers' rights internationally.

As a UnionLink partner, the IEU provides ongoing support to the Timor-Leste Farm Workers Union and has also contributed assistance to worker organisations and women's groups in Myanmar in 2025 and 2026.

Education International

The IEU is an active member of Education International, the global federation representing about 30 million education workers through 380 affiliated unions worldwide.

Through this partnership, the union contributes to discussions on AI, education policy, human rights and international labour issues.

Education International has also played an important role in advancing implementation of the *United Nations High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession* report.

In October 2026, the IEU will participate in the Education International Asia-Pacific Conference, where delegates will develop policy positions and elect regional leadership representatives.

Council of Pacific Education

The Council of Pacific Education (COPE) provides support and collaboration for education unions across the Pacific region.

In June 2026, the COPE executive met in Samoa, with Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall attending in her role as Assistant to the COPE Women's Network coordinator.

The meeting focused on governance, organisational development and strategic planning.

Key outcomes included the establishment of a finance committee, updated staffing arrangements, implementation of strategic priorities and continued efforts to increase women's and young workers' participation in union leadership.

Participating unions also reported positive membership growth and progress through the *Go Public! Fund Education* initiative.

Federal office

The federal office provides extensive research, policy development and advocacy support on behalf of branches and members nationwide.

During the year, the union participated in a broad range of government reference groups, advisory committees and consultation forums covering school reform, workforce planning, child safety, professional standards, early childhood education and AI.

The IEU also made submissions to numerous government reviews and inquiries relating to education, employment and workforce issues.

Research plays a vital role in supporting union campaigns and bargaining activities.

Analysis of school staffing levels, student enrolments and membership trends has helped inform strategic planning and advocacy.

The union also completed a national Net Promoter Score survey, providing valuable insights into member engagement and satisfaction.

In addition, the federal office worked with ACTU Insights on a major membership research project examining demographic trends, recruitment opportunities and future growth strategies.

Industrial relations advice and support has been provided to branches on matters including bargaining, awards, delegates' rights, anti-discrimination protections, flexible work and workplace legislation.

A substantial body of work has also commenced to update the Federal IEU Rules, including administrative improvements and more complex matters relating to union coverage and membership eligibility.

Union governance and leadership

Strong governance is central to the union's effectiveness and ability to represent members.

Throughout 2026, the IEU has strengthened democratic participation and leadership across the organisation.

2026 IEU election and new federal executive

Federal elections were held in 2026, resulting in the election of a new federal executive for the 2026-2029 term.

The newly elected leadership team includes Federal President Carol Matthews, Federal Secretary Brad Hayes, Assistant Federal Secretaries Veronica Yewdall and Amanda Hioe, Deputy President Terry Burke, Vice Presidents Rebecca Collopy and David Brear, and Executive Members Tim Oosterbaan and David Towson.

The union welcomed Amanda Hioe to the federal executive following her extensive contribution to the NSW/ACT Branch in a range of industrial and leadership roles.

ACTU executive and affiliate committees

The IEU plays an active role in the Australian union movement through participation in the ACTU executive and a range of affiliated committees.

Brad Hayes and Veronica Yewdall represent the union on the ACTU executive and contribute to national committees focused on campaigning, women's issues and AI.

Amanda Hioe represents the union on the ACTU Industrial and Legislation Committee, helping to coordinate national advocacy on workplace relations reform.

The federal office acknowledges the contribution of branch officials who represent the union on a variety of national bodies dealing with professional issues, climate change, First Nations workers, international solidarity, young workers and workplace health and safety.

Together, these representatives help ensure the IEU is a strong and influential voice for education workers across Australia and internationally.

Veronica Yewdall Assistant Federal Secretary

IEU partners

The IEU acknowledges its partners for their support throughout 2026.

Teachers Health

Teachers Health was founded in 1954 by teachers to support the health and wellbeing of the education community.

Teachers Health Group established the TH Union Advisory Committee for its partner unions.

As a delegate to this committee, the IEU values the opportunity to discuss with other unions the challenges members face, as well as the benefits and services that best meet the needs of members in the education sector.

Women's health has always been a key focus for Teachers Health. Teachers Health was the first private health insurer in Australia to provide dedicated peri-menopause support for eligible members through its partnership with UnPause.

This builds on existing support for childbirth, post-natal care, pelvic floor services, mental health, health screenings and other women's health benefits.

Simone Tregeagle was appointed chief executive of Teachers Health Group in 2026.

The IEU congratulates Simone on her appointment and acknowledges former chief executive Brad Joyce for his service to the Teachers Health Group, and wishes him all the best in his retirement.

NGS Super

NGS Super is the industry super fund for non-government education and community-focused organisations.

It was established in 1988 by the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch, Association of Independent Schools of NSW and the Catholic Schools Hierarchy (NSW).

The IEU and NGS have renewed their sponsorship agreement for 2026-2027.

The agreement provides opportunities for the fund to inform union members about NGS services and benefits and educate members on topics such as insurance and retirement planning.

The IEUA NSW/ACT nominee on the NGS board is Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

During 2026, NGS representatives attended workplace visits and reps training days, and delivered seminars and webinars to support members at different stages of their careers.

In April 2026, NGS launched an enhanced advice offering, including expanded member advice services and a virtual adviser available through the fund's website. This complimentary, interactive and personalised online advice tool helps members plan for their future.

Teachers Mutual Bank

Teachers Mutual Bank (TMB) is one of Australia's largest member-owned mutual banks.

More than 60 years ago, a group of teachers came together with a simple idea: by pooling their money and supporting one another, they could build something fairer than the big banks of the day.

Today, TMB is the only dedicated bank servicing employees in the education sector and their families, helping them secure their financial futures.

TMB and the IEU have once again entered into a partnership agreement for 2026-2027.

TMB is the proud sponsor of the IEU's annual Environment Grants. TMB will join us for the the IEU's annual general meeting on 24 October for the announcement of this year's winners.

TMB congratulates all members who entered and acknowledges their commitment to making a difference for the future of their students.

Union Shopper

Union Shopper utilises the collective bargaining power of unions across Australia to provide savings and services to members and their families. Union Shopper is a 100% union-owned organisation run solely to benefit members.

Union Shopper is best known for its electrical goods shopping service, but motor vehicles, travel, accommodation, entertainment and discounted gift cards (including major supermarkets and fuel suppliers) are some of the other services offered to members.

By making one relatively large purchase or a few smaller purchases through Union Shopper, members can make savings worth more than their annual union fees.

Welfare Rights Centre

The IEU has a longstanding affiliation to the trade union program at the Welfare Rights Centre.

The centre assists IEU members and their families, particularly in relation to social security matters.

It also helps unemployed workers generally and people who cannot work because of disability.

Workers Health Centre

For 50 years, the Workers Health Centre has supported workers and their families by providing quality workplace rehabilitation. The IEU is an affiliate union of the Workers Health Centre.

The Workers Health Centre is union owned, not-for-profit and governed by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority.

IEU members can access the Workers Health Centre if they are injured at work. For a referral to the Workers Health Centre, members should contact their organiser.

David Towson Deputy Secretary

Strategic plan

The IEU Council endorsed the union's first strategic plan, *Stride to Grow 2030,* at the 2024 annual general meeting.

During 2026, the union made strong progress in implementing this plan across four key areas: recruiting new members, raising the union's profile in workplaces and the media, optimising operations and winning for our members.

Much of the work completed this year focused on strengthening the union's internal capacity, systems and structures, thereby providing a stronger organisational foundation for growth and campaigning.

Optimising our operations includes holding regular elected officer meetings, appointing a dedicated HR coordinator, establishing an organisational risk register, and regular IT Committee meetings to review systems and workflows.

We have adopted SharePoint as an efficient platform to improve information management and accessibility across the union.

We have expanded our communications capacity through appointing dedicated digital communications and media adviser staff.

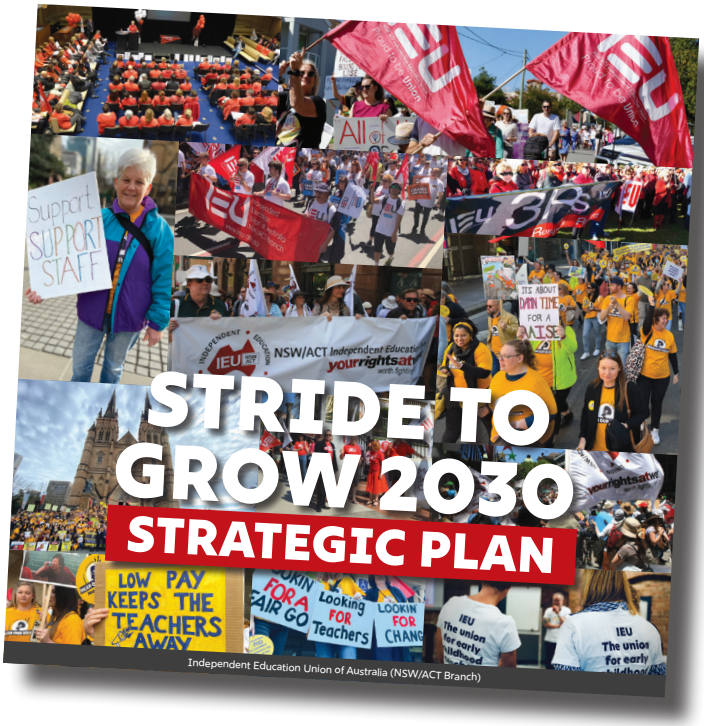
This has enabled greater capacity for media relations and media releases leading to greater exposure across print, radio, television and online platforms. The union is a trusted source on education and industrial issues for major metropolitan and regional media outlets.

Coverage this year has focused on issues at Redeemer Baptist School; the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into Liberal Party branch stacking; anti-discrimination reform; and our ongoing advocacy in the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for fair funding for community preschools (see the Media and communications annexure for full details).

Developing IEU staff is a priority. We have identified training needs among the IEU's professional and administrative staff, updated staff induction materials and reviewed organisational structures to support career development and progression.

The union is improving systems and processes to enable sustainable membership growth.

We established a committee focused on recruiting university students and produced practical fact sheets and recruitment resources for organisers.



We are collecting and analysing membership data to assist organisers to identify opportunities for growth, and to target specific membership classifications.

Alongside these organisational improvements, the union is continuously bargaining for improved pay and conditions, increasing workplace visits, engaging with governments and public authorities, expanding online member information, and strengthening our media and social media presence.

The IEU's progress in 2026 provides a solid foundation to grow our membership, develop staff, increase our public influence and advocacy and, most importantly, deliver stronger outcomes for members.

Pat Devery Assistant Secretary



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