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Education union applauds NSW Government for rejecting One Nation Bill

The Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch – which represents more than 32,000 teachers, principals and support staff in non-government schools – welcomes the NSW Government’s decision to dump One Nation’s dangerous Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill 2020 (NSW).

This legislation purported to enshrine “parental primacy” in law, enabling parents to object to schools teaching ethical and moral standards, political and social values and matters of personal wellbeing and identity, including gender and sexuality.

“In practice, the proposed laws would have put vulnerable students at greater risk, and placed teachers who provide support to these students in danger of losing their accreditation to teach, and therefore their livelihoods,” IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Acting Secretary Carol Matthews said.

“Teachers have always known their professional responsibilities and the duty of care they owe to the most vulnerable students.

“Not only was One Nation’s proposed Bill seeking to solve a problem that didn’t exist, it was in effect insisting that gender-diverse students don’t exist.”

The IEU has campaigned against this Bill for two years, making a submission to the NSW Portfolio Committee (No. 3 – Education) in December 2020. The union then appeared before the Committee’s inquiry in April 2021 to give evidence about the Bill’s unworkability and predictably harmful impacts.

IEU members were deeply concerned about this Bill, with the union’s Council passing two resolutions in July 2021 calling on the NSW Government to reject it. “It is an unwarranted and ill-conceived attack on the professionalism of teachers and an affront to the rights of the child,” one resolution stated.

In prosecuting this unworkable legislation, NSW One Nation leader Mark Latham objected to a Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) class exploring various forms of discrimination, as well as an English class analysing the writing style of an article featuring environmentalist Greta Thunberg.

“We condemn Mark Latham’s deprofessionalising and anti-student wellbeing Parental Rights Bill and call on NSW Parliament to reject it in its entirety for the benefit of students and school staff,” a second IEU Council resolution stated.

Matthews said: “The IEU believes conversations around sexuality and gender diversity belong with students and their families in the first instance, health professionals and, where appropriate, school staff. We are pleased this legislation has finally been dropped – it is a testimony to the power to the collective action of teachers’ unions and the community.”

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 32,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.

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