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Professional development: Teachers know what they need

As the NSW Government announced it would scrutinise externally provided professional development (PD) for teachers, the Independent Education Union of Australia stands proudly by its courses. We believe teachers require and deserve high quality PD.

The union believes teachers are best placed to determine what PD is appropriate for their needs. These needs change over time and teachers are often required to respond to rapidly emerging situations. For example, at very short notice, the IEU presented *Responding to Bushfire Trauma* in Term 1, a session that drew more than 300 participants.

“Teachers are best placed to determine what constitutes effective professional development,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Mark Northam. “The state government need only listen to teachers to know which providers are up to scratch. It is the teachers who know what translates in the classroom and what doesn’t.”

There is an important difference between subject specific PD, and PD that supports general pedagogy. A high level of content knowledge counts for little if a teacher is struggling to manage complex classroom and educational dynamics, be they physical or virtual.

“The IEU provides PD that supports teachers in improving their classroom pedagogy,” Northam said. “This includes making teachers aware of their rights and responsibilities in a heavily regulated environment.”

The union consults widely with its members and provides a range of PD in response to their needs. Our courses are delivered by experts in their field. Every course we are offering this term has been requested by members, and all have a pedagogical focus:

- Women working in boys’ schools (100+ enrolled so far)
- Ten secrets to effective teaching (350+ enrolled so far)
- Responding to extreme behaviour (330+ enrolled so far)
- Managing difficult conversations with parents (330+ enrolled so far)

The most effective way to improve the quality of professional development is through meaningful engagement with the teaching profession.

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 30,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post secondary colleges.

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