



9 February 2024

***Closing Loopholes Bill #2* delivers another round of workplace rights 'Right to disconnect' a big win for IEU members & their families**

IEU members across Australia welcome further improvements to workplace laws passed by the Senate last night. These new laws, contained in the [Closing Loopholes Bill #2](#), build on the significant changes already made by the federal government over the last 18 months.

The cumulative effect of these reforms represent the biggest changes to workplace laws in the last 25 years, and go a long way to restoring fairness and a level playing field for employees.

These improvements didn't just materialise in parliament. They follow years of [campaigning by union members](#) dedicated to ensuring fair wages, secure jobs and better working conditions.

IEU members have been front and centre during debates on all three tranches of these new laws – [sharing their powerful stories with politicians, in Senate hearings and to the media](#) about the changes needed in our schools, pre-schools and kindergartens.

While these latest reforms deliver important gains for workers across dozens of industries, [a new 'right to disconnect'](#) is especially relevant to school staff drowning under unrelenting workloads.

The right to refuse work related contact outside normal hours builds on similar protections won by IEU members in [Western Australia](#) and [Queensland](#) through their collective bargaining action in 2023.

The new federal 'right to disconnect' takes effect later this year and is long overdue confirmation that employees deserve family and leisure time free from work demands and interruptions. Employer requests, parental queries and student contact regularly encroach on the personal time of staff. Concerns have accelerated with the growth of mobile technology and assumed 24/7 connectivity.

Teachers are not permanently 'on call'. They need a break from work. They need valuable down time.

While there is still much to be done to address workload pressures in schools, a 'right to disconnect' will help overworked school staff by providing a right to refuse to monitor, read or respond to employer or work-related contact after hours or on weekends.

We need a major cultural shift in schools to build greater respect for the private time and wellbeing of education professionals. Our school communities - including employers, parents and students - will need to come together to ensure a clear understanding and compliance with these important new parameters.