

ie

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IN FOCUS
**Craig
Foster**

Uluru Statement from the Heart

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. *This is the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle*. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

Endorsed by:



Taryn, Teachers Health and union member



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Cover image: Craig Foster speaking at the Palm Sunday rally and march in Sydney on 24 March 2024; photo by Katie Camarena

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Editorial

Post-sporting career, former Socceroo Craig Foster dedicates most of his time to advocating for human rights. In this edition's In Focus profile (p6), Foster reflects on the importance of education to his advocacy, the value of unions and the power of shared humanity.

These sentiments form the basis of many of this edition's stories. On page 12, we speak to Warumungu Luritja woman and senior lecturer Dr Tracy Woodroffe to discuss the power of education in the Northern Territory and how the sector can improve career pathways for First Nations teachers.

A recent study posits the positive outcomes that parent engagement can have on student wellbeing (p32). Project co-lead Dr Linda Willis explores how mutual respect is foundational to effective parent engagement.

On page 34, we look at principal workloads and the value of a shared leadership model for IEU principal members Michael Chalkley, Gareth Kydd and Peter Fahey.

In the centre of this edition (p17), find a fact sheet from AITSL clarifying what is – and is not – required for compliance with the annual goal-setting process in the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework.

Over the past year, unions have led the way to secure laws and provisions to narrow the gender pay gap (p26) and address workplace violence and harassment (p26).

In education, the rise of AI has called for discussion around the responsibilities governments and schools have in setting the tone in the fight against deepfakes (p22) and pornography in the classroom (p24).

Childcare deserts across Australia keep rural teachers out of the classroom (p10). IEU members Sam and Liz hope that greater awareness and shared humanity will bring more understanding.

We hope this *IE* edition can be an opportunity for reflection and a valuable reference point for your professional practice.

Terry Burke Secretary
Queensland and Northern Territory Branch

National

Historic pay rises for long day care staff

Teachers in long day care centres across Australia will receive a 15% pay rise thanks to a union push leading to a \$3.6 billion funding injection from the federal Labor government.

The historic announcement, made on 8 August, is a union win for members in long day care, whose work providing quality early childhood education and care services to children and parents is invaluable.

The 15% pay rise is above the current rate in the modern award, with a 10% increase in December 2024 and another 5% the following year.

Under the modern award, an experienced teacher in a long day care centre is currently paid \$93,000 a year. The new top rate after the 15% increase will be more than \$107,000.

As part of the pay rise, long day care centres will be required to limit fee increases to parents to 4.4% until August 2025.

The IEU joined with the United Workers Union (UWU) and the Australian Education Union (AEU) to access the supported bargaining stream in new industrial relations laws passed as part of the *Secure Jobs Better Pay Act 2022*.

The pay rise is a vital step towards closing the pay gap for the feminised early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

Federal Early Childhood Education Minister Dr Anne Aly honoured the work of ECEC teachers during question time on 15 August. Their work had gone undervalued, she said.

"These long overdue increases better reflect the valuable work of early childhood teachers in laying the vital foundations for our children's development and lifelong learning," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"Long day care staff, children, parents and the community are all better off because of today's decision." For more see page 11.

New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory

Union of minds: 70 years of solidarity

This year, the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch celebrates its 70th anniversary. On 24 September 1954, a group of male teachers held a meeting at Sydney Grammar School and adopted the draft constitution of the NSW Assistant Masters' Association, reviving an association that had formed in 1919 but ebbed away in the 1930s.

Women teachers in girls' schools were welcomed in 1966, necessitating a name change to the Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association (AMMA). AMMA was renamed the more modern Independent Teachers' Association in 1972 and, in 1994, became the inclusively named Independent Education Union to reflect our coverage of support staff.

Much has been achieved over seven decades, including establishing the first award in 1970, setting up superannuation in 1988 (not mandated until 1992); the first Catholic and independent schools teacher general strike in 1989 (over employers trying to trade off working conditions for a pay rise), successful work-value cases in 1990-91 and again in 2003-04; and two game-changing joint strikes with the NSW Teachers Federation, in 1996 and 2022.

Our 70 years of continuous history show the IEU can be both a progressive industrial union and a respected professional association, and we thank and congratulate every member for making our union what it is today.

Northern Territory

New voice on Teacher Registration Board

Our union congratulates Cassandra Holland who will represent members' voices on the Northern Territory Teacher Registration Board (NT TRB).

IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said IEU member representation on the NT TRB was critical to ensuring the voices of practising teachers continued to be heard.

"Cassandra is an exemplary union activist and chapter representative employed in the NT Lutheran school sector," Burke said.

"I welcome Cassandra to her new role, replacing outgoing NT TRB representative Erica Schultz, who served our union diligently in her role as representative."

Cassandra said she is honoured to represent members on the NT TRB and looks forward to helping improve the lives of fellow educators.

"I am committed to supporting teachers at every stage of their career, from pre-service right through to Highly Proficient or Lead levels," she said.

"Having a full-time practising teacher's voice on the TRB will allow me to contribute meaningfully to the policies and practices that impact our profession.

"I want to help ensure the registration process is efficient, fair and supportive of all our members," Holland said.

Queensland

Principals win 25-year battle for permanent jobs

IEU principal members in the Brisbane, Rockhampton and Toowoomba Catholic Dioceses have won a 25-year battle to secure continuing employment.

IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said members had won a provision in their latest collective agreements for conversion from fixed-term contracts to continuing employment for all principals.

"This is a truly significant achievement for members because fixed-term contracts have been a long-standing concern for principals in the Queensland Catholic Diocesan sector," Burke said.

"To date, employers have had discretion to terminate contracts without any transparency," he said.

Other significant wins for principal members in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Toowoomba during the most recent bargaining include:

- 5% wage increase from 1 July 2024 in Toowoomba and Brisbane, and 3% in Rockhampton – this will realign rates in the diocese with rates paid in other dioceses. An increase in all subsequent years of the agreement in line with the Diocesan Schools Agreement (DSA) plus an additional 1%.
- Cost of Living Payment (COLP): provision of a COLP as applied to those covered by the DSA.
- Employer superannuation contributions increased to 12.75%.
- Remote Area Incentives enhanced consistent with the DSA.
- Parental leave provision enhanced consistent with those that apply to teachers in the DSA.

Tasmania

Deal done in Catholic schools

In September, an in-principle deal was done on a new agreement for staff in Tasmanian Catholic schools just days after IEU members commenced industrial action.

Three years after the previous agreement expired, the employer finally dropped its contentious claim for the forced relocation of staff and agreed to union claims on pay parity with government school staff, low income payments, teacher workload reductions, improved paid parental leave, improved teacher classification progression, job security, leave improvement and increased meal and first aid allowances.

In August, members resoundingly supported 18 potential industrial actions in a protected action ballot, with over 80 per cent support for every measure and six receiving over 90 per cent backing.

The union sought a protected action ballot order from the Fair Work Commission, convinced that the prospect of industrial action was the only way negotiations, delayed endlessly by the employer, could be finalised, and it was vindicated. After just a

day of work bans, the in-principle deal was reached.

Strong media coverage highlighted how the agreement was needed to bring Catholic staff up to speed with their state sector colleagues.

South Australia

Record amounts won for members

This year, the branch has employed two new industrial officers and for the first time, an in-house lawyer.

This has allowed it to pursue pecuniary penalties and contrition payments for breaches of enterprise agreements in a way that was not possible before.

More than \$620,000 has been recovered for members. Wage theft payments of more than \$345,000 make up the bulk of this amount, with employers in each sector making sometimes flagrant breaches, such as misclassification, non-payment of allowances or non-payment of redundancies.

Often, a deed protects the individual member, but also prevents the union from sharing which employer has committed the breaches. The branch is now involved in two significant matters from groups of employees, so watch this space.

Victoria

Bargaining begins in Catholic schools

The branch is preparing for the next round of bargaining for a new agreement in Victorian Catholic schools, with wage increases foremost on the agenda.

The CEMEA "Workload Agreement" was implemented in 2024 after an extended bargaining period and member campaign, and 2025 will be another busy year of campaigning.

General Secretary David Brear said members in the sector will be surveyed by the end of the year.

"Though the agreement does not expire until the end of 2025, we've already informed employers that they must factor in significant wage increases in their forward budgets," Brear said.

"Wage increases will be high on the list of priorities after education unions around the country achieved significant pay increases for their members.

"With a teacher shortage biting and increased cost of living pressures hitting members hard, there must also be wage improvements for staff in Victorian schools."

A 90-minute per week reduction in face-to-face teaching time and the abolition of 'extras' in the current agreement will continue the work of making significant inroads into workload intensification.

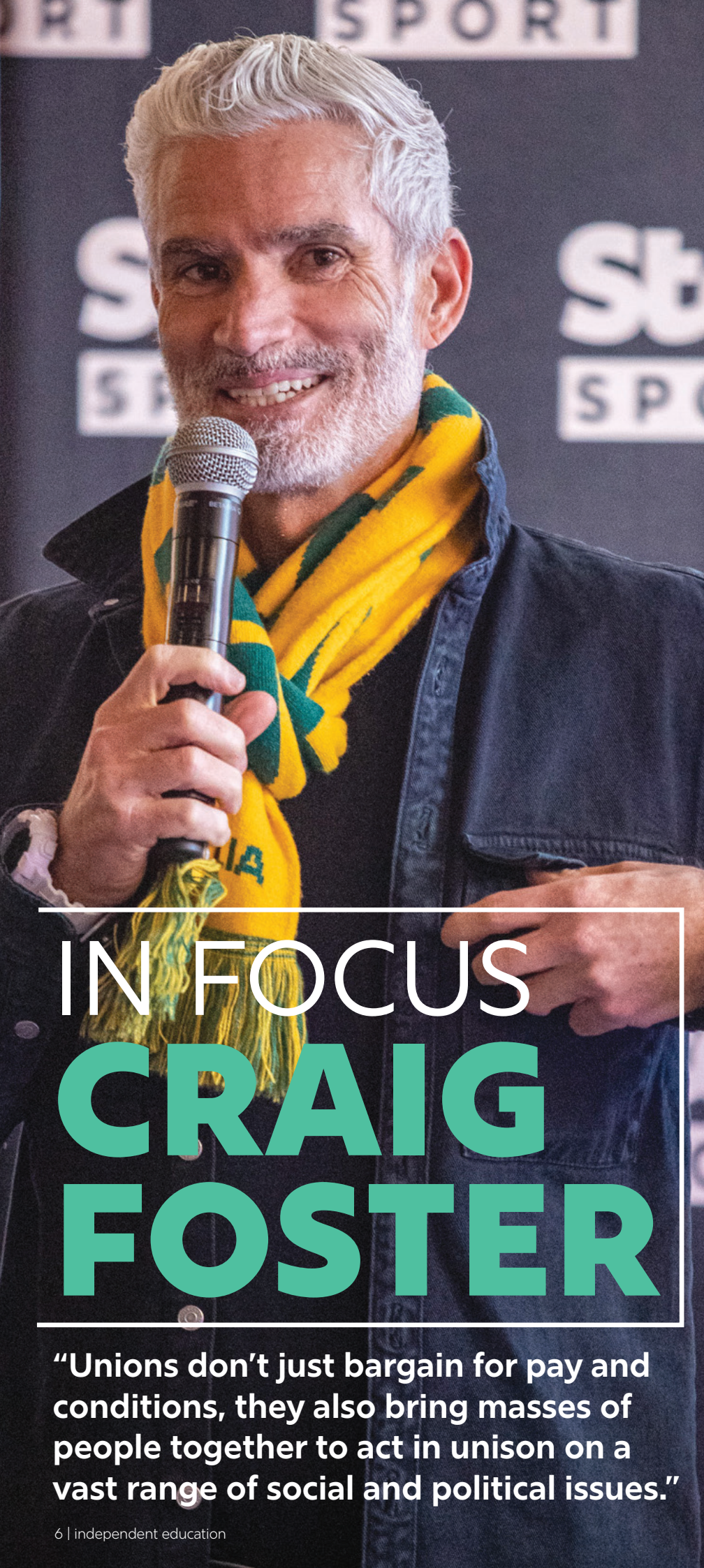
Western Australia

Bargaining underway and other wins for members

This year, IEU organisers have made their way to nearly every town in the state with a non-government school, from Esperance in the south up to Wyndham and throughout the Kimberley, Great Southern, the South West and the Goldfields regions.

We have bargaining under way for better pay and conditions for Catholic support staff, with members in schools represented by the Anglican Schools Commission, members in high-fee paying schools and several Christian schools.

We are working toward good outcomes for individual members, too. In the period from our 2023 AGM to our 2024 AGM, the IEU has won over \$510,488 for members in settlements, entitlements and compensation. It goes to show that being an IEU member pays – literally.



Former Socceroo and human rights advocate Craig Foster AM talks to Monica Crouch about the power of education, the role of unions, our sense of shared humanity, and why he loves the Matildas.

Craig Foster believes teachers deserve greater recognition. "In my view, teachers should be one of the highest paid professions in any country, because they are responsible for and have care of the next generation of society," he says.

"It's a huge responsibility. Our teachers are chronically undervalued and under-supported, and it's something that any country that's deeply concerned about the wellbeing of its future citizens should fundamentally be investing in."

Foster draws a parallel between teaching and his experience coaching young athletes, including some of the Young Matildas. "I was always very aware of and felt a great pressure around the fact that you have an opportunity to mould young people and to support them and protect them and lift them up," he says.

"Whatever you do or say can have a very significant impact on young people as an elder and leader in some capacity."

School plants seeds

Foster attended Goonellabah Public School in Lismore, NSW, then Kadina High School (now part of the Rivers Secondary College), before gaining a scholarship to the Australian Institute of Sport at age 16 and moving to Canberra to complete Years 11 and 12 at Dickson High School (now Dickson College).

In finding his athletic feet, Foster threw himself into cricket, basketball, swimming and football, leading to a constant tug-of-war between school and sport. "I felt pulled in every direction, and I was away a lot – we had championships all over the country," he says. "At the same time, of course, the school was trying to ensure a focus on education."

There were no online study options when Foster was in high school in the 1980s, and he sought extra support from tutors for maths and chemistry. He studied geography for the Higher School Certificate and wishes he could have taken history as well. He took physics and chemistry but would also have loved to study biology.

High school English teacher Tony Quayle, who has since passed away, was a pivotal influence. He suggested Foster explore science fiction texts such as *Dune* and *The Lord of the Rings* rather than literary classics like *Pride and Prejudice*. "I found a form of literature which I was able to connect with and understand and actually enjoy, and that was a turning point in my school life," Foster says.

Schooling planted seeds in Foster that grew into a lifelong love of learning. "I'm constantly trying to understand where

IN FOCUS CRAIG FOSTER

"Unions don't just bargain for pay and conditions, they also bring masses of people together to act in unison on a vast range of social and political issues."



Clockwise from top left: Human rights advocate and former Soccerroo Craig Foster with ACTU Secretary Sally McManus at Sydney airport in 2019, during the campaign to free Bahraini refugee and football player Hakeem al-Araibi from detention in Thailand; addressing the 2024 Palm Sunday rally in Sydney; volunteering at Addison Road Community Centre in Marrickville, NSW, during the pandemic; and playing football for the Socceroos in the 1990s.



I'm lacking and enjoy the process of learning more about human existence," he says. "I'm acutely conscious of the work I still need to do all the time to upgrade my knowledge. And that, I think, is the skill of teaching, that's the skill of education, a skill that is not valued highly enough."

Foster now holds a law degree, which he sees as essential for understanding and influencing law and policy. "All social justice or human rights advocates must go from a passive voice to an active voice," he says. "And the law degree is part of my active voice, it gives me the confidence to understand the issues and advocate for policy change."

Widening world view

Foster says his strong sense of social justice is partly innate and partly shaped by his upbringing in a loving family. "I've always had a very strong central core of seeing and pushing back against injustice – I don't know why that is, but it's just always been there," he says. "And we were a very working class family, but I had everything that I needed, and so I'm very attuned to those who don't have that."

Early exposure to multiculturalism

through sport also played a big role in shaping Foster's world view. "When I was 16, I walked out of Anglo-Celtic Lismore of the 1980s and into the World Game," he says.

"There were all these Italian kids, Greek kids, Serb kids, Turkish kids, Croatian kids and I loved what I saw – I'd found my people, I'd found my tribe. It made sense to me, this diversity of appearance, of opinion, of culture."

Foster first represented Australia in the junior National Team in the inaugural FIFA Under-16 World Cup in China in 1985, and he went on to represent Australia in the Socceroos on 29 occasions, including as captain, travelling the world with the team. Foster considers this experience as central not only to his world view, but also his advocacy work.

On the radar at SBS

After retiring from professional football in 2003, Foster transitioned into a new career as a commentator with SBS, a broadcaster known for its commitment to multiculturalism.

He saw this role as a way to promote multiculturalism and advocate for social justice. "I was one of the few Anglo faces

there, along with [former player and coach] Johnny Warren. We'd come out of the multicultural game, and we believed in multicultural Australia. It wasn't just about a sporting contest – it was about inclusion," he says.

SBS, which began broadcasting in Australia in 1980, is "an extraordinary organisation that Australia can be very proud of", Foster says, as it plays a unique role in providing cultural education. "SBS brings the world to Australia, and it gave me a platform to talk to Australia."

Foster's work with SBS marked another turning point. "It's where my advocacy went from unseen to seen," he says.

Today, Foster is a familiar face across Australia, using his platform to speak on issues such as First Nations justice, homelessness, refugee rights, and the rights of women and children in crisis.

Accepting our history

Foster believes that Australia accepting its history in all its complexity is the inflection point for building a strong, multicultural nation. "But there's something in the Australian psyche whereby we can't admit the injustice at the heart of the first contact – we haven't



Craig Foster with the Afghan Women's National Team, who were evacuated to Australia in 2021 after the Taliban took over Kabul.

internalised the reasoning of terra nullius in an effort to do better," he says.

"Unless you're a First Nations person, we're all immigrants – I'm an immigrant from the boats from England in the early 1800s, and there's nothing wrong with saying that."

He underlines the importance of Australians talking openly and honestly about our history to break the cycle of hostility toward immigrants and refugees.

Education has a role in this too. In September, the NSW Education Standards Authority announced key changes to the history syllabus, so that students in Years 7 and 8 will study Indigenous peoples' experiences of colonisation in Australia, including the Frontier Wars and the Myall Creek Massacre of 1838.

Foster believes Australia only stands to gain from plain speaking about our history. "When we're courageous enough to confront it, to simply state it, 'this is what happened, let's just acknowledge our history', then perhaps we can stop cyclically attacking different cultural groups who arrive," Foster says.

Helping Hakeem

Foster came to national prominence as a human rights advocate during the campaign to free Bahraini refugee Hakeem al-Araibi from detention in Thailand in 2018-19.

A player on the Bahraini national team, al-Araibi fled the country in 2013 as he faced prosecution for attacking a police station during the Arab Spring of 2012, despite TV footage showing he was playing soccer at the time.

He was granted refugee status in Australia in 2017 but was arrested in Thailand while on his honeymoon due to an Interpol alert initiated by Bahrain.

"We have to hear stories of other people around the world in order to really be a genuine, great global citizen."

Foster played a key role in mobilising support from the global football community and, thanks also to pressure from the union movement, human rights organisations and the Australian government, al-Araibi's release was finally secured after 77 days in detention. He was granted Australian citizenship in 2019.

Hakeem al-Araibi's story underscores the importance of humanising refugees. "The main challenge in the early months was making Hakeem human," Foster says. "It's always the same, recognising the equal humanity in others."

Foster believes sport is uniquely placed to highlight international humanitarian issues. "The global game should naturally play a leading role – it makes perfect sense to me that someone who travelled

the world playing for the Socceroos or Matildas, and who plays in a national team that is the most representative of multiculturalism, should be the ones to accept responsibility in this area," he says.

Foster says Hakeem is doing well despite some challenges. "Life is complex after you've been tortured and been incarcerated and feared for your life," he says. "But he's safe and sound in Australia and he's got great plans for the future, one of which includes his young son, who is four, playing for Australia."

Australia welcomes Afghan women

Together with former Afghan Women's National Team captain Khalida Popal, Foster was part of the international campaign to evacuate the team to Australia after the Taliban takeover in 2021.

They still play, for Melbourne Victory, but not in the international arena. The team is challenging governing body FIFA to allow them to compete in exile, and Foster fully supports this.

Also in 2021, Foster joined the campaign to bring a separate group of 15 young Afghan women to Australia from Kabul. All 15 were either school or university students at the time.

In the one-hour documentary *Die or Die Trying*, they trace their journey from hiding and making initial phone contact with community activists in Australia to their dangerous journey to freedom in pursuit of education and equality. Australia granted emergency visas and they were evacuated in October 2021.

"They're like all refugees, they have to internalise massive amounts of trauma,"

Foster says. “We’re still working on bringing their families here, but they have to get on with life at the same time while putting on a veneer of normality.”

Foster sometimes accompanies the women when they speak in schools, and their courageous stories often induce tears in students and staff alike.

“These are the stories Australians need to hear so we can build our muscle for compassion,” Foster says. “We have to hear stories of other people around the world in order to really be a genuine, great global citizen and partner for international law and human rights.”

Mixing sport and politics

Foster challenges the notion that sport and politics don’t mix, highlighting sport’s deeply political nature throughout history. He talks about Pierre de Coubertin, a founder of the modern Olympic Games, who used sport to promote imperialism.

“He felt that young French males were becoming too soft, and he wanted to use sport to keep them fit and healthy for military work,” Foster says. An aristocrat, de Coubertin based the pentathlon for the 1912 Olympics on the skills required of a cavalry soldier (fencing, pistol shooting, show-jumping, swimming and running).

“The history of sport is deeply political, and sport has a very proud history of political activism – apartheid in South Africa is a very good example,” he says.

An international campaign resulted in racially segregated South Africa being banned from the Olympics from 1964 to 1988 and the FIFA World Cup from 1964 to 1992, as well as other sports including rugby, cricket and tennis.

The boycott raised global awareness of apartheid and was instrumental in pressuring the South African government to end the practice in 1990.

“Life is political,” Foster says. “We have a lot to deal with in Australia and we can tell some of those stories through sport. Athletes are some of the most respected public figures and we can and should champion human rights.”

Matildas hold up a mirror

The rise of the Matildas tells us a great deal about Australia, Foster says. The nation’s most successful soccer team, the Matildas reached the quarter-finals of the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup in Canada and the semi-finals of the 2023 World Cup in Australia and NZ.

The Matildas made fans of millions of us. They may have lost their semi-final to England 3-1, but the match became Australia’s most-watched television event, with 11.15 million viewers at its peak.

Foster says the Matildas’ struggles and successes reflect a larger issue of gender equality in Australia. “I want all the men who were so against women’s sport to see the Matildas holding the World Cup

trophy,” Foster says. “I really want for the team to lead that conversation.”

Off the field, the Matildas have also been champions of gender equality. The players are members of their union, Professional Footballers Australia (PFA), and in 2015, they went on strike for better pay and conditions.

At the time, Vice-Captain Joey Peters also worked as a cleaner to support herself while training. The strike led to annual salaries of \$41,000 (up from \$21,000) as well as better conditions.

But it didn’t end there. In 2019, the Matildas again broke new ground by negotiating equal pay with the Socceroos through a joint collective bargaining agreement with the Socceroos and Football Australia, one of the first of its kind in the world.

“This new deal is enormous,” player Elise Kellond-Knight said to the ABC at the time. “As a female footballer, it’s kind of what we’ve always dreamed of. We’ve always wanted to be treated equal.”

“Refugees are people, they’re human, they have families, they have children – they’re just like us but under different circumstances.”

Socceroos step up

Foster believes unions play a crucial role in bringing about social change. “The human collective is the most important vehicle we have for progress, change and protection of people everywhere,” he says.

The Socceroos have a proud history of taking a stand, going on strike in 1997 at the FIFA Confederations Cup in Saudi Arabia over pay and conditions and highlighting human rights issues in the host nation. “It sparked the professionalisation of the game in all aspects,” Foster says. “And it educated a new generation of players on human rights.”

The team also made strong statements ahead of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, advocating for the rights of migrant workers and the LGBTQI community.

Foster says unions are essential in balancing the power of capital, enabling workers to shape their society. “Unions don’t just bargain for pay and conditions, they also bring masses of people together to act in unison on a vast range of social and political issues.”

World game, global citizens

One word comes up over and over in conversation with Foster: global. “The world is coming closer together, not getting further away, and Australia has to see ourselves as global citizens,” he says.

As climate change accelerates, creating more refugees and necessitating greater global mobility, he warns against insular movements such as Trumpism and Brexit, which emphasise exclusion and difference rather than similarities and inclusivity. “There’s only so much fence and so much barbed wire we can possibly put up,” he says.

In this increasingly interconnected world, he says, Australia can help create a compassionate global community through strengthening our sense of shared humanity.

“We have to hear stories of other people around the world,” he says. “Refugees are people, they’re human, they have families, they have children. They’re just like us but under different circumstances.”

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Exiled Afghan women’s football team scores goals in Australia, UNHCR, July 2023: bit.ly/3MPFujq

Die or die trying: Escaping the Taliban, bit.ly/4eBmYqL

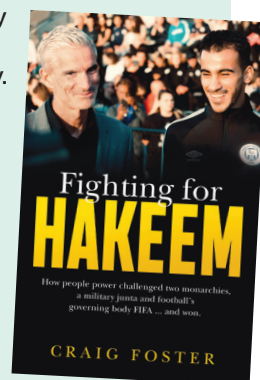
Win a copy of **Fighting for Hakeem** by Craig Foster

We have one copy of Craig Foster’s book to give away. In 2019, the world game united to help save the life of one of its own, promising young soccer player and Bahraini refugee Hakeem al-Araibi.

Read how people power challenged two monarchies, a military junta and football’s governing body FIFA – and won.

Foster’s memoir shows the best of what soccer and united communities – with an unswerving belief in human rights – can achieve.

To enter, email giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the book’s title in the subject line by 11 December; include your address and membership number in the body of the email.





Teaching in a childcare desert

The inaccessibility of childcare in rural and regional parts of Australia is keeping some school teachers out of the classroom, writes Lucy Meyer.

Sam* had been on maternity leave for a year when it became clear that she wouldn't get a day care place for her son before she returned to work.

The secondary school teacher, school leader and IEU member had been calling the two childcare centres in her small town every week. With time running out and no family around to help, she was becoming increasingly desperate.

It got to the point where "the office lady said to me, 'Look, I think you need a plan B. It's not going to happen,'" Sam says.

Sam is one of many school teachers around the country struggling with the inaccessibility of childcare in rural and regional communities. According to an August study by Victoria University, 700,000 Australians have virtually no access to childcare.

Researchers mapped the country's 'childcare deserts' – areas with more than three children per childcare place. They found that 24 per cent of the population live in a childcare desert, with most of these falling in regional or remote parts of Australia.

The teacher shortage in the early education and care (ECEC) sector is having a knock-on effect on teachers in primary and secondary schools.

The Parenthood, which advocates for affordable early childhood education for all Australians, consistently hears from teachers and principals struggling to get care for their children, says CEO George Dent.

The difficulty in securing childcare is causing some school teachers to delay or modify their return to the classroom, an experience Dent says The Parenthood hears about regularly.

The economic burden

For Sam, not being able to get care meant she couldn't return to teaching three days a week, as planned.

"My husband and I had to sit down and have a really serious and emotional conversation about just what we were going to do and what was financially possible for us," the first-time mother says.

Sam's husband makes a little less than her and he drives to the next town for work. The cost of fuel was another financial strain. They decided Sam would work full time and her husband would stay home with their son.

"It's honestly been tough for us," Sam says. "You know, if we were given the opportunity, we would swap in a heartbeat."

While she loves her job and is grateful her husband has had the time to bond with their son, Sam wishes she'd had a choice in her child's care.

Living on one income is tough for the young family. "You know I wouldn't say we're thriving by any means, but we're surviving," she says.

According to a September report from The Parenthood, 86 per cent of regional, rural and remote parents surveyed are experiencing financial difficulties because they can't get the childcare they need.

A shared experience

Sam knows she's not alone in dealing with the economic hardships, emotional stress and work pressure of being unable to access care.

"This isn't just an experience that I'm having as a first-time mother, it's an experience every woman in this town and across the state in rural areas, is having with every child," she says.

Like Sam, fellow-IEU member and teacher Liz struggled to find childcare in time for her return to work. "Most people I know, and it's generally the women, don't return to work in the

"Most people I know, and it's generally the women, don't return to work in the capacity that they need to because they don't have the care."

capacity that they need to because they don't have the care," says the mother of three.

Liz had accepted a full-time role as a teacher and subject coordinator at a Catholic school in the large country town where she lives.

Having put her children's names down for 10 different centres far in advance, Liz thought she'd be fine. With no places available, she managed to find a spot at a different daycare centre she hadn't heard about. But Liz soon learned why they were the only available centre around.

She went by the daycare early one day to find her daughter "strapped into a pram screaming two metres away from a TV, which is incredibly distressing", Liz says.

She reported the centre and pulled her children out, but she was once again without care.

Liz's husband travels for work and she has no familial support. She hired a nanny, at a huge expense, while she called all the centres as often as she could.

From the time she first put her children's names down, Liz waited almost two years for a spot for her three children. "And you know, it's like that for a lot of people," she says.

Communities left behind

It's been over three years since Liz moved to the town, and in that time, four childcare centres have been built, she says. "But the problem is, they've built them, and they can't staff them, so rooms aren't opening".

The supply of early childhood education and care places around the country has increased by about 70,000 since 2020, says Associate Professor Peter Hurley, the lead author of Victoria University's study. Childcare is more accessible, but "it's

still grown in the places that already had relatively high levels of childcare, mostly metropolitan areas," he says.

While more needs to be done to invest in the ECEC sector, the government is taking important steps to recognise the value of such "a critical workforce", says Dent (see box below).



CEO of The Parenthood
Georgie Dent

Shining a light

Both Sam and Liz feel there isn't enough awareness of the impact the childcare shortage is having on essential workers in country towns. They want to see more dialogue, more action from politicians, and more understanding from employers.

When Sam's son was eight weeks old, her employer began calling, asking what days Sam would return to work. She was empathetic with her school's need to plan, but in the wait for childcare, she simply didn't have the information they needed.

"I found that really tough to be fielding phone calls and feeling like I was letting them down because I was unable to give them answers," says Sam.

Teaching in a childcare crisis is proving too much for some, with the stress of balancing pick-ups, drop-offs, school hours and the inaccessibility of care, says Liz. "I know so many people who are leaving the profession because of the challenges."

For Sam, there are no easy answers to the childcare shortage in rural and regional Australia, but she's grateful to have a forum to talk about the impact on teachers like her.

She believes greater awareness will make a difference. "So, I think just bringing this up is hopefully going to create more understanding."

** Last names and locations have been withheld to protect privacy*

Historic changes set to alter the landscape

After sustained union campaigning and negotiating, the federal Labor government is making changes aimed at increasing access to early learning, lifting pay and alleviating the workforce crisis, writes Monica Crouch.

Historic pay rises for long day care staff

On 8 August, the federal Labor government announced that staff in long day care centres across Australia would receive a 15% pay rise over two years thanks to a much-needed \$3.6 billion federal funding injection. In September, the government introduced legislation to enact these pay rises, which are tied to caps on fee increases for parents.

This was the result of the IEU joining with the Australian Education Union and the United Workers Union to lodge a supported bargaining application in the Fair Work Commission, and negotiating for pay rises at a federal level.

On introducing legislation to enact these pay rises, Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly said on Radio National on 12 September: "This two-year, 15% wage increase is in recognition of the workforce crisis out there and the need for retention of workers, and an increase in the number of early childhood education and care workers."

Education Minister Jason Clare said on the *Today Show* (Nine): "Our early educators do really important work. Every mum and dad who's getting their kids ready to go off to childcare this morning knows that. But you wouldn't know it from what they're paid – they're some of the lowest paid workers in the country. And that's what this legislation will fix. We're doing two things: not only are we giving them a

pay rise, we're also making sure that we keep prices down for parents, because for the childcare centre to get the extra money for their workers, they won't be able to increase fees over the next 12 months by more than 4.4%."

Revolutionary pay rise claim for preschool staff

In July, as part of its Unite for Change campaign, the NSW/ACT Branch of the IEU filed an historic application with the Fair Work Commission to lift the pay of teachers and educators in more than 100 community-based preschools.

"We need a 25% increase for beginning teachers and more for experienced teachers to help address the workforce crisis," said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "A successful outcome would be a game changer. Teachers, children, parents and the wider community only stand to gain from a strong community preschool sector."

Report on universal access to early learning welcome

The IEU welcomes the Productivity Commission report, *A path to universal early childhood education and care: Inquiry report*, released on 18 September, which recommends every child gain access to affordable, high-quality education and care three days a week over the next decade.

"This report is an important step towards improving outcomes for children and their families," said Matthews.

"A strong, high-quality, accessible early childhood education and care sector is crucial to increasing workforce participation of parents, particularly women."

First Nations teachers

Why we need better career pathways

The 2020 Australian Teacher Workforce Data Survey estimates there are 6577 registered teachers throughout Australia who identify as First Nations People, Emily Campbell writes.

In the Northern Territory (NT), there is a rich and diverse tapestry of cultures, where about 40 per cent of students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; however, this is not reflected in the NT's teaching workforce, with only 4.6 per cent of registered teachers in the NT identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

A researcher at Charles Darwin University (CDU) has been investigating why there is a shortfall of First Nations teachers in the NT.

Lack of First Nations teachers

Dr Tracy Woodroffe, a Warumungu Luritja woman, is a senior lecturer in Indigenous knowledge at CDU's Northern Institute and an experienced classroom teacher.

She was recently granted a year-long First Nations Fellowship from the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) at Curtin University to undertake the project.

With over 20 years of experience educating students in early childhood, primary and secondary settings, Dr Woodroffe says the Australian teacher workforce is characterised by a distinct lack of parity between the number of First Nations teachers and their non-First Nations counterparts.

"We know that there is an astounding teacher shortage at the moment, especially out in remote communities and teachers are coming from interstate," Dr Woodroffe says.

"These teachers are responsible for the teaching of First Nations students, but they have a different culture, different ideas about teaching and learning and there are language barriers."

Benefits to education system

Dr Woodroffe says there would be many benefits from increasing the number of First Nations teachers in the NT, including strengthening the local community.

"Having more First Nations teachers could really help increase First Nations student engagement numbers, help to apply more First Nations educational approaches, and help create more role models in the community," she says.

"It would mean a greater number of people within our workforce that are local, not transient, who would understand First Nations People and cultures and be able to relate to First Nations students.

"Consider the benefits of having First Nations cultural knowledge and additional skills, strategies, content or abilities to boost the quality of our education system."

"Teachers do get culture shock, especially if they are not from the NT and they can find it challenging, so most do not tend to stay for very long," she says.

Cultural responsiveness training can help but is not a panacea.

More First Nations teachers in the NT workforce would also inspire more First Nations students to pursue a career in teaching.

Dr Woodroffe says First Nations People understand the importance of quality education and the need for more First Nations teachers.

"Consider the benefits of having First Nations People with their cultural knowledge and additional skills, strategies, content or abilities to boost the quality of our education system," she says.

Surveying students and teachers

Essential components of Dr Woodroffe's research process were an understanding of the perceptions of First Nations high school students about a teaching career as well as First Nations teachers' perspectives about teaching and how to promote it.

She contacted about 40 schools across the NT in urban and remote locations to ask First Nations students in senior years and First Nations teachers to complete an anonymous survey.

"Out of all the student responses, one-third said they were interested in teaching as a potential career pathway, and two-thirds said they were not interested," Dr Woodroffe says.

"The interested students indicated they wanted to give back and support their community and some could see local examples of First Nations People employed as either teachers or assistant teachers who were role models and motivated them."

For those who were not interested, three key reasons emerged.

"First, some students indicated they felt unwelcome within their school or like they did not belong," Dr Woodroffe says.

"It really distressed me to read that in 2024 we still have First Nations students feeling like they are a minority or do not belong – why would they want to stay in a school setting then?

"Another reason was because they saw their teachers look unhappy and not appearing to be enjoying their jobs.

"The third reason was students did not want to deal with poor student behaviour," she says.

Dr Woodroffe says students should be informed they would be taught about classroom and behaviour management as part of their initial teacher education and training, to allay these fears.

"We also need to reinforce to students that apart from the occasionally unpleasant aspects of teaching, which every job has, there are going to be so many fantastic things that outweigh the negatives and make for a rewarding career," she says.

The survey responses from teachers reinforced the importance of role models.



Clockwise from top left: Dr Tracy Woodroffe, a Warumungu Luritja woman and senior lecturer in Indigenous knowledge at Charles Darwin University and an experienced classroom teacher; a school and community in the NT; Alice Springs, NT.

“What stood out for some was their positive experiences in school, having teachers who encouraged and engaged with them, which motivated them to want to be teachers,” Dr Woodroffe says.

“There was a flipside though – not all First Nations teachers said they had good teachers or examples, so they were determined to become teachers to do better and support future generations of students and combat any potential racism.

“We cannot change systems from being outside of them – we have to engage and be part of it,” Dr Woodroffe says.

Improving visible pathways

Dr Woodroffe has found there needs to be more clarity and communication about possible pathways into teaching and the rewarding aspects of a career in the education profession.

She spoke to a range of people such as education lecturers, support staff, career education teachers and staff at the NT teacher registration board to understand the pathways available.

“My study specifically focuses on promoting teaching as a career of choice

for First Nations People and to ultimately improve educational outcomes for First Nations students,” Dr Woodroffe says.

“There are potential study pathways, including through Vocational Education and Training (VET), for First Nations senior secondary students to enter into teaching, but unfortunately, these are not clearly articulated or widely known.

“If we are going to increase the number, we need a coordinated approach to change processes and practices to improve pathways and better support First Nations students,” she says.

Dr Woodroffe says the findings from both cohorts surveyed highlight the importance of role models providing face-to-face information about what it takes to study teaching but also presenting what is positive about a career in teaching.

“One of the main things we need to improve, which is the main outcome of my current project, is promoting teaching,” she says.

“We need it to be more visible and for more First Nations People to know what their options are, so they can move along suitable pathways.

“Scholarships and financial support are very important, but so are the

simple practicalities of knowing what the pathway into a teaching degree is.”

Promoting the teaching profession

Dr Woodroffe says the research outputs will assist the NT government with meaningful workforce development and help universities to increase First Nations enrolments in teacher education.

She hopes the results of this study can inform a framework that can be used Australia-wide.

“We have harnessed the perspectives generously provided by First Nations students and teachers so now we are at the stage of completing analysis and making recommendations,” Dr Woodroffe says.

“Following the recommendations, the next phase is about resource creation and asking: How are we going to better promote teaching? How are we going to approach promotion in a way that is inclusive of First Nations perspectives and understandings and to cater to a First Nations audience?

“The NT and Australian education systems can only benefit and improve from having more First Nations teachers,” she says.

HEAR HER VOICE

An oral history of women in unions

Women have been overlooked in the history of the Australian union movement, but an inspiring project is helping to change that, writes Lucy Meyer.

"I truly believe if Fran were a man, there'd be bronze statues in her honour."

Prominent unionist Natalie Lang is talking about activist and organiser Fran Hayes, who she worked alongside at the Australian Services Union (ASU), where Lang was Secretary of the NSW Branch.

Hayes and her union colleagues were behind an historic campaign that helped transform the industrial landscape for workers in service industries, including teaching, firefighting, and social work.

And yet, if you stopped unionists in the street and asked them who Fran Hayes was, Lang says, "I reckon 90 per cent would say: 'Fran who?' And that just breaks my heart." Hayes passed away last year.

Too often, "women are written out of history", says Lang, who is now Director of Education and Capacity Building at the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

That's why she decided to join the women union leaders, activists, and rank-and-file members taking part in Australian Union Women: An Oral History Project.

Correcting an imbalance

The online digital archive was created by two industrial relations academics: Associate Professor Cathy Brigden from RMIT and Dr Sarah Kaine, who was then at UTS and is now a NSW Labor politician.

Freely available online, the ongoing project features interviews with women who have played important roles in Australia's union movement, including Lang, Hayes, politician and former President of the NSW Legislative Council Meredith Burgmann, plus the first woman President of the ACTU, Jennie George.

The idea for the initiative came to Brigden and Kaine when they were chatting at a conference, fantasising about their dream project. As academics, feminists and unionists, they wondered how they could combine their shared passions.

"And we said, well, how many fantastic women, particularly rank-and-file women, have we met over our time, over the years," says Dr Kaine, "and how many stories out there just aren't captured?"

The purpose of the project is to celebrate the contributions of these women and to help correct an imbalance in the way the story of Australia's unions has been told. As explained on the website, "The recorded history of the Australian union movement has been dominated by stories and personal histories of the men who have led it."

Stepping into the spotlight

With women's voices missing from the narrative, the decision to make this an oral, rather than written historical record, was deliberate. The interviewers play background roles because, as Dr Kaine explains, "there's something really powerful about listening to people's stories in their own words".

And yet for some of the women, it was an unnerving prospect or, as Lang described it, "crazy daunting".

After years as a union organiser and elected official drawing attention to members and campaigns, Lang was used to writing herself "out of the story".

For women and unionists, "we have a whole life of conditioning about not talking about ourselves, and that's really hard to reprogram", she says.

Lang was not alone in her discomfort in the spotlight. Many of the rank-and-file members interviewed wondered why they were even being asked, Dr Kaine says.

"They would say something like 'I'm not a leader, I'm just a cleaner' ... and it's like, well clearly, you're not," recalls Dr Kaine. They may not have been unions officials, but they led nonetheless.

So, there was a "real humility in the telling of their stories that I found immensely touching every time I spoke to them because these are women who showed just the kind of day-to-day bravery, which is the kind of inspiration for wanting to talk to them", Dr Kaine says.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, the first woman to hold the title in the branch, says it's important to highlight the work of women members, "who push for change within the union movement", not just elected officials.

"And let's face it, as unionists, we don't really operate as individuals – we always operate as part of a team," Matthews says. "So, to focus on well-known women is useful, but it's only a small part of the story."

Recording what could be lost

Capturing the stories of women unionists before it's too late was one of the aims of the archive, Dr Kaine says. Fortunately, Hayes was interviewed in time.

Her story is especially significant to teachers and support staff, Lang says. And that's something Lang understands – her father was an IEU member and her mother was in the NSW Teachers Federation.

The David and Goliath campaign Hayes helped lead saw the Australian Social Welfare Union take on the government and big business on a shoestring budget and win, culminating in a landmark ruling in the High Court in 1983.

As Lang says, before the Child and Youth Support Services (CYSS) campaign, for workers to be considered workers in the federal industrial relations system, they had to produce a tangible good, such as a bolt or a widget, which meant people working in service industries like teaching weren't recognised in the same way and didn't have the right to a federal award.

The CYSS campaign paved the way for the rights that many workers, including teachers and support staff, have today, says Lang.

The lessons of history

For unionists working in feminised industries such as education, learning the role women have played in the nation's labour movement is especially meaningful, says Pam Smith, a 40-year IEU member who worked for the union for almost 30 years, most recently as an Assistant Secretary of the NSW/ACT Branch.

"When we look at some of that history, it is empowering for women who may be in their own workplaces, facing some of these sorts of struggles," Smith says.

For example, approaching a school principal alone about a workplace matter can be challenging, Smith says, but by drawing inspiration from the women who came before, unionists can see that "if I act collectively with my colleagues, then that's the strength of the union" in achieving the best possible outcome for all.

With the NSW/ACT Branch celebrating its 70th anniversary



Clockwise from top: Unionists Fran Hayes, left, and Natalie Lang; NSW Labor politician Dr Sarah Kaine, who co-founded the project; members of We Are Union Women at a 2018 rally in Melbourne; and IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews speaks at a media event in July 2024.

this year, the time is right for reflecting on the history of unions and women's place within it. But while the past holds lessons for the fights ahead, looking back is not something the union movement tends to do, Dr Kaine says.

There's no time to think about what has been when you need to focus on what's next. Put simply, "we've got stuff to do", Dr Kaine says.

Matthews agrees, adding, "as women, but anyone in unions, we don't tend to look at ourselves as historical figures, we just tend to get on with the job", she says.

Watch this space

The online archive is a project that will continue to develop. When Dr Kaine left academia for politics, she passed the baton to another academic at UTS, Dr Mihajla Gavin, who has spearheaded it since 2019. While Dr Kaine regrets not being able

to continue with the project, she is grateful it's still going strong.

Dr Gavin's research focuses on gender equality in industrial relations, so she is passionate about the archive. She is collecting more stories and wants to hear from a diverse range of women unionists.

Women in the labour movement can "undersell or undervalue the contributions we make", she says, but every interview highlights an important campaign, struggle or reflection.

For women unionists, the wins may not be obvious in the moment, Dr Kaine says. But when you stand back, you can see the progress women in the union movement have made over time. Even when you "can't see the benefit immediately, that doesn't mean the fight isn't worth having", she says.

To learn more, see Australian Union Women: An Oral History Project: www.womeninunions.org

A global effort

Ending violence and harassment at work

The International Labour Organization's Convention 190 aims to eliminate violence and harassment at work, with unions playing a key role, writes Katie Camarena.

In November 2022, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese committed to tabling the International Labour Organization Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work (No. 190) in Parliament.

This was a crucial step towards ratifying the Convention and addressing violence and harassment in Australian workplaces. Australia has now ratified it and it came into force in June 2023.

"We commend the Albanese government for taking this important step to making our workplaces safer for women and all workers," ACTU President Michele O'Neil said in a media statement in June.

What is ILO Convention 190?

Known as ILO C190, this Convention explicitly recognises everyone's right to a 'world of work' free from violence and harassment. It is the first international treaty of its kind.

ILO C190 provides a broad definition of violence and harassment that encompasses both physical and psychological harm, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence. It also seeks to fill gaps in existing national legislation.

It also covers violence and harassment that may occur while commuting to and from work, and violence and harassment enabled through communications technologies.

ILO C190 is groundbreaking because it protects workers regardless of their employment status, so it includes

volunteers, apprentices, interns, job seekers, job applicants and casual workers.

Adopted at the International Labour Conference in June 2019, the negotiation and adoption of ILO C190 was the result of more than a decade of activism by women in the global union movement and other women's organisations. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) was involved in the standard-setting discussions in 2018 and 2019.

A union-led global approach

ILO C190 provides clear and comprehensive definitions of violence and harassment that help close legal loopholes in countries that have, or are developing, policies on these issues. By using principles within ILO C190 in collective bargaining agreements, unions have a global framework to create safer workplaces.

International union federations play an important role. IndustriALL, a global union representing 50 million workers, successfully campaigned for the Philippines to ratify C190. Argentina also ratified it after pressure from a union-led campaign involving more than 100 unions. In Indonesia, unions are incorporating C190 principles into bargaining agreements despite the country's non-ratification status.

Addressing the issue in Australia

Australia has had sexual harassment legislation for more than 30 years, yet violence and harassment at work are still prevalent. Statistics show one in three people have experienced sexual harassment at work in the past five years with some industries, including education, experiencing higher levels.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which released its final report in September 2024, revealed a disturbing pattern of women being routinely assaulted, harassed, intimidated, and humiliated by colleagues in the workplace.

A range of reforms have been introduced to address violence and harassment in Australian workplaces including the Respect@Work amendments in 2022 which enshrined a positive duty obligating employers to proactively prevent sexual harassment.

Most recently, the Costs Protection amendment, which passed the Senate in September 2024, makes it easier for victim-survivors of workplace sexual harassment to seek justice through the 'equal access' costs model.

The road ahead

ILO C190 affirms that every worker deserves the right to perform their job free from violence and harassment. The work to ensure effective implementation of ILO C190 is only just beginning. Countries that have ratified the Convention, along with the global union movement, are essential in turning the promise of C190 into a reality and creating safer workplaces where violence and harassment are not tolerated.

References and resources

ILO C190 ACTU Submission, Dec 2022, bit.ly/c190actusubmission

UNI Global Union C190 Training Guide bit.ly/unic190training

Grim reality women face in ADF, SBS News, 11 Sep 2024: bit.ly/3zhjx9Q

"We commend the Albanese government for taking this important step to making our workplaces safer for women and all workers."



Workloads

Better practice, less process

Is the annual goal-setting and professional development process at your school too demanding? Get the facts from the AITSL Australian Teacher Performance and Development Fact Sheet, developed in collaboration with the IEU in 2024.

Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

The IEU has worked with the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to clarify what is – and is not – required for compliance with the policy intent of the annual goal-setting and professional learning process in the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (ATPDF). The ATPDF was implemented in 2012.

As with many other policies and frameworks, the quantity and type of documentation demanded of teachers has intensified exponentially over time, thereby increasing teacher workloads unnecessarily.

The ATPDF Fact Sheet follows on pages 18 and 19.



ABN 17 117 362 740

1 MAY 2024

Brad Hayes
Federal Secretary
Independent Education Union of Australia
PO Box 177
DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600

Dear Mr Hayes

On behalf of AITSL, I would like to thank the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) for their support in the development of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development - Fact Sheet*.

Since it was agreed by Ministers in 2012, the *Australian Performance and Development Framework (P&D Framework)* has underpinned a commitment from employers and schools to support the ongoing development of their teachers, with quality teaching a key driver to improving student outcomes across Australia.

AITSL, as custodian of the P&D Framework on behalf of all Education Ministers, is committed to supporting effective implementation of the policy. In this regard, I thank the IEU, and in particular Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall, for raising concerns around variation in interpretation, and suggesting the development of a fact sheet to help clarify the policy intent. I am also appreciative of the time and feedback provided by the IEU as the fact sheet was drafted.

AITSL has published the fact sheet on its website, and agrees for the IEU to share it with their members and stakeholders as appropriate.

We believe the fact sheet will help support rigorous, but not onerous, implementation of the P&D Framework. Where possible, actions taken to implement the P&D Framework should be embedded within teaching practice, should add value to teaching quality, and not create duplicative or unnecessary workload demands.

Thank you once again for your support.

Yours sincerely

Danny Pinchas
General Manager – Teaching and School Leadership

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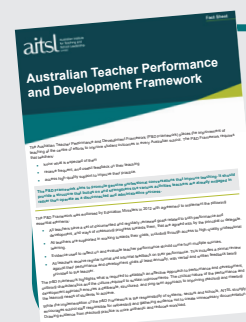
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How did we get here?

Members identify excessive workloads associated with the annual goal-setting and professional development process, which occurs under various names in each school.

The IEU investigates the origins and authority for any requirements related to the annual goal-setting and professional learning process and identifies the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework overseen by AITSL.

The federal office of the IEU seeks to collaborate with AITSL on a Fact Sheet to clarify what is and is not required for compliance with the policy intent of the ATPDF.



The AITSL ATPDF Fact Sheet is published in April 2024.

Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (P&D Framework) places the improvement of teaching at the centre of efforts to improve student outcomes in every Australian school. The P&D Framework requires that teachers:

- know what is expected of them
- receive frequent, and useful feedback on their teaching
- access high-quality support to improve their practice.

The P&D Framework aims to promote genuine professional conversations that improve teaching. It should provide a structure that builds on and strengthens the various activities teachers are already engaged in rather than operate as a disconnected and administrative process.

The P&D Framework was endorsed by Education Ministers in 2012 with agreement to implement the following essential elements:

- All teachers have a set of documented and regularly reviewed goals related to both performance and development, and ways of measuring progress towards them, that are agreed with by the principal or delegate.
- All teachers are supported in working towards their goals, including through access to high-quality professional learning.
- Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance should come from multiple sources.
- All teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their performance and development goals at least annually, with verbal and written feedback being provided to the teacher.

The P&D Framework highlights what is required to establish an effective approach to performance and development, outlining characteristics and the culture required to sustain improvements. The cyclical nature of the performance and development approach ensures a deliberate, structured, and long-term approach to improving teaching and meeting the learning needs of students to achieve.

While the implementation of the P&D Framework is the responsibility of systems, sectors and schools, AITSL strongly encourages school staff responsible for requesting and gathering evidence not to create unnecessary documentation. Drawing evidence from teaching practice is more authentic and reduces workload.

The P&D Framework is not an alternative to the performance management of staff or an employer's concern about unsatisfactory performance. This process should be managed as a separate process to implementation of the P&D Framework, adhering to any relevant legislation and employment agreements.

Implementing the P&D Framework as intended will have the following benefits for teachers and school leaders:

Benefits for teachers

- structure to support teacher and school improvement aimed at improving student outcomes
- flexibility to align with school improvement goals
- increased professional growth through instructional coaching
- enhanced professional satisfaction
- formal recognition of professional achievements
- access to networks through school and system wide collaboration.

Access to and participation in:

- relevant professional learning
- targeted career goal setting
- effective reflection and feedback
- collegial networks

Benefits for school leaders

- structure to drive teacher and school improvement aimed at improving student outcomes
- flexibility to align with school improvement goals
- promotes collaboration and collegial endeavour
- encourages leadership at all levels
- promotes a shared commitment to excellence
- provides a shared understanding of effective teaching.

Demonstrating performance and development

Judgements about the effectiveness of teaching have the greatest validity when based on multiple sources of evidence. Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance should include:

- data showing impact on student learning
- information based on direct observation of teaching
- evidence of collaboration with colleagues.

Examples of evidence that can be used to reflect on teacher performance include:

- formal or informal student assessments demonstrating impact of teaching on student learning
- evidence from an observation of teaching, such as notes from a peer observation discussion
- evidence of the teacher's impact on colleagues and the school as a whole, such as staff feedback after a professional learning session
- teacher self-assessment
- feedback from students, peers, supervisors and parents
- evidence of participation in professional learning and reflection on its impact.

Note, this is not exhaustive or intended to act as a checklist but instead, provide an idea of the multiple forms evidence can take.

What can effective performance and development look like?

Term/ Focus area	This could look like ...	Processes likely to be duplicative or excessive ...
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a demonstration of growth and development through informal measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> peer or lesson observation notes video clips from team teaching unit/lesson plans demonstrating use of a variety of teaching strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a formal review including external assessors classroom observations across an entire staff that are frequent or summative and do not involve a collaborative planning process (i.e. not focussed on the development of teaching practice).
Goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a process that addresses both teacher performance and development and ties together the various activities teachers are already engaged in. Effective goal setting can consist of the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> brief and concisely displayed (2-3 pages) only need to be a small number of challenging and achievable goals to be effective (2-4 goals is normally enough) aligned to school plans and school-wide approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a separate/additional process involving extensive paperwork outlining a wide-ranging array of goals documentation to explain the alignment between a school's annual improvement plan and a teacher's plan, where the alignment is clearly evident.
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an ongoing collection of materials taken from ordinary duties/participation built upon through routine. Effective evidence can come from teaching activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> written reports lesson/unit plans formal and informal student assessment activities student work samples development of individual learning/education plans effective evidence can come from multiple sources, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> peers student data parent feedback self-reflection be informal and arise from self-reflection, for example, it could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence of collaboration with colleagues lesson observations (either own lessons or from peer observations) be built through team/s observation and evidence, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> record of report moderation between teaching colleagues minutes of professional committee meetings evidence of online discussions, blogs, courses, and professional learning communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a dense portfolio including additional work designed for the purpose of the portfolio only (established as a one off) narrative or explanatory texts that describe evidence that is clearly understood by the professional reader or audience the collation of evidence into a single document or location.
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a continuous feedback cycle is established as part of a school-wide culture and shared commitment toward understanding what effective teaching looks like. For example, this might look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a professional discussion with a colleague brief reflection notes following a lesson watching a recording of a previously held lesson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> occurs only in performance evaluation processes a performance management or counselling process across a whole staff written teacher responses to reflective questions or prompts, especially in preparation for a professional discussion with a colleague or member of the leadership team.

Emphasis (bold) added by the IEU

What should you do if you're directed to undertake duplicative or excessive practices related to the ATPDF?

Ask: Who requires this documentation or practice?

Draw the attention of the school leadership team to the AITSL ATPDF Fact Sheet.

Consult your union organiser and meet as a chapter and/or sub branch to request a review of practices based on the official advice in the Fact Sheet.

Invite non-members to join the union and support their colleagues in this important work.

Eliminate duplicative and excessive practices, one Fact Sheet at a time.

If you believe the current ATPDF process in your school or system is unnecessarily onerous, talk to your colleagues and contact your organiser to discuss options.

The IEU has requested that employers consult with IEU members as they look to evaluate and amend their ATPDF processes.

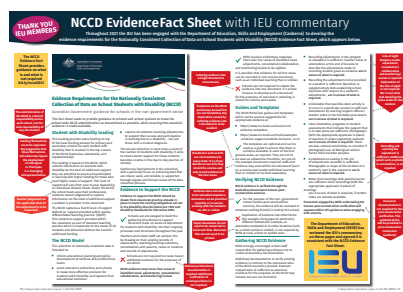
Let us know what's happening in your school by contacting your organiser.

An ongoing process

The ATPDF Fact Sheets form part of an ongoing process the IEU has undertaken with a number of government and regulatory authorities, with a view to addressing, at a structural level, processes that lead to excessive teacher workloads.

The NCCD Evidence Fact Sheet

The first of these was the NCCD Evidence Fact Sheet. The IEU approached the Department of Education to raise the concerns of IEU members struggling to manage unsustainable workloads and who were alarmed by the impact of excessive documentation on the delivery of practical support for students with disability, the purpose for which the NCCD was designed. The NCCD Evidence Fact Sheet addresses unnecessary practices and was developed in a collaboration of the federal Department of Education and the IEU. In many schools, the NCCD Evidence Fact Sheet has been used to review and dispense with unnecessary processes and documentation.



- IEU NCCD fact sheet with commentary: bit.ly/4bmcwbw
- Australian Government Department of Education NCCD Factsheet: bit.ly/nccd2021

The AITSL ATPDF Fact Sheet

The AITSL ATPDF Fact Sheet continues this important work of aligning the official advice from regulatory authorities with the on-the-ground experience for teachers, ensuring that systems, schools, or individuals within schools are not inadvertently creating workload issues for teachers and support staff.

bit.ly/AITSL-ATPDFfactsheet

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

The IEU has been working with ACECQA to bring some much-needed balance to the administrative and work processes in the early childhood education and care sector.

Access the information sheets here:

- Educational Program Documentation for Educators and Teachers – Early childhood - bit.ly/Educatorteacherfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Educators – School age care - bit.ly/schoolfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Approved Providers – Early Childhood - bit.ly/ECprovidersfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Approved Providers – School Age Care - bit.ly/schoolprovidersfactsheet

The NESA Curriculum Fact Sheets

For NSW members: The IEU advised the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) that members were being asked to undertake many administrative processes in the name of 'compliance', despite NESA confirming it did not require many of these processes at all.

At the union's urging, NESA produced its School Registration and Programming and Record Keeping Fact Sheets, which clearly state what is and, most importantly, what is not required for compliance purposes.

Members have reported that the NESA Fact Sheets are beginning to have a positive impact in reducing unnecessary workload practices.

- IEU NESA fact sheet: bit.ly/ieunesacompliance
- NESA fact sheet: bit.ly/nesafactsheet2023

Your union Making a difference

The common theme running through all these documents is that a teacher's professional judgement should be paramount in determining what constitutes an appropriate level of documentation for teaching and learning, administrative, and data collection processes.

The IEU is constantly working with employers, regulatory authorities and governments to achieve positive industrial and professional outcomes for members. Encourage your colleagues to join their union to ensure the voice of the profession is heard at every level and in every forum.

A day in the life

Music secretary and lab technician Jennifer McMillan

Lab technician, receptionist, principal's assistant, maintenance officer, music secretary, WHS rep, teacher's aide – Jennifer McMillan has done it all, writes Sue Osborne.

Long-time IEU member Jennifer McMillan started her career in education at Trinity Anglican College in Thurgoona, NSW, 22 years ago. At the time, the school had only 14 students.

She had previously worked as an optical dispenser, so lab technician was a natural fit for her. But she is also the school's music secretary.

"I started with the science department in 2014. Before science, I worked in the front office, working with the inaugural principal, doing student services, first aid, marketing and giving tours of the college," Jennifer says.

"I have an active interest in music, I played at school myself. I also did a lot of voluntary work over the years. Six years ago, I was offered the opportunity to not only work in the science labs but also in the music department."

Jennifer has watched the school grow to its current cohort of more than 1000 students.



Jennifer McMillan in her role as music secretary, middle row, fourth from left.

Music secretary

As music secretary, she could be doing anything from hiring instruments, ensuring instruments are serviced regularly and helping bands with sheet music to ordering music and equipment, cataloguing scores, organising music camps and eisteddfods and helping with timetabling and in-services. She can also be found playing trumpet with the wind bands.

Music secretary: My perfect day

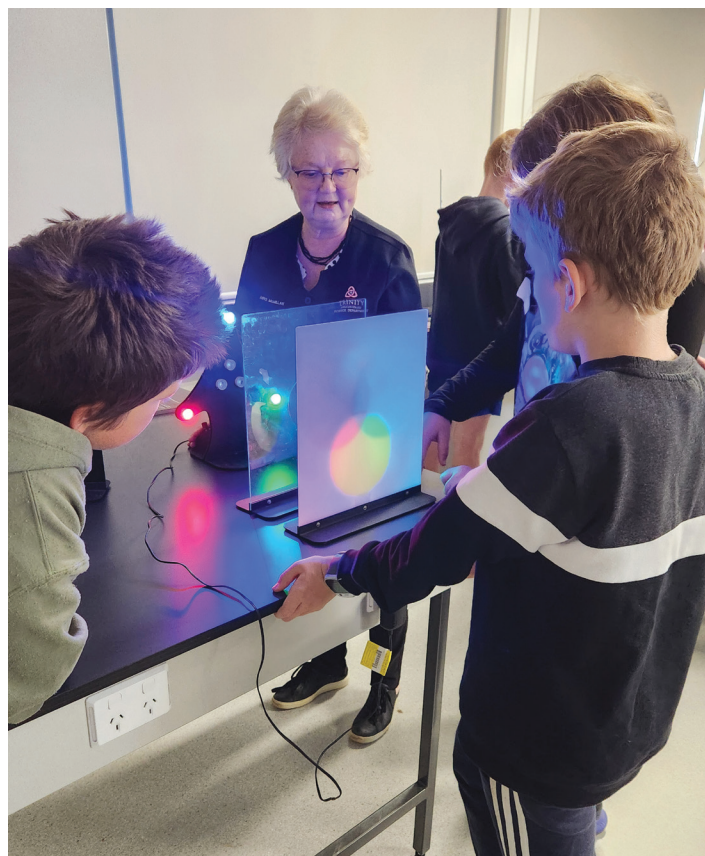
Jennifer describes what she may have planned as music secretary:

- 7am – set up rehearsal room for wind band rehearsal with visiting tutor
- 9am – have a trumpet lesson myself
- 9.30-3pm – general admin duties, which currently includes cataloguing 50kg of music scores, welcoming a visiting band followed by a performing arts evening, and
- 3pm-5pm – assist with training a band and playing with the trumpet students; ensure all students are collected by parents at the end of the session.

Music secretary: My typical day

Jennifer describes what's more likely to happen on a typical day as music secretary:

- unexpectedly called on to help with other music tasks, organise catering for an event, follow up students who have forgotten to bring their music
- help wherever needed, for example, restringing a guitar, looking for an appropriate electrical lead, and
- may be called to the science department to be on hand for a senior practical.



Jennifer McMillan in the lab with students.

Lab technician

As lab technician, Jennifer has to ensure the labs are ready for use each day, coordinate the preparation of all practicals, make sure all labs, classrooms, storage and office areas are clean and ready for day-to-day operation. She sets up apparatus, maintains equipment and organises repairs where necessary. She also checks stock and orders chemicals, as well as ensuring chemical storage and other WHS lab tasks are carried out correctly.

Lab technician: My perfect day

Jennifer describes a day she may have planned as a lab technician:

- checking risk assessments for pracs to be prepped
- ensuring all labs are ready for classes and nothing has been broken
- feeding the fish, watering the plants
- packing away completed pracs
- working on our lab grand plan – the complete 'where is it' list of lab equipment and storage, and
- pot a plant cutting.

Lab technician: My typical day

Jennifer describes a typical day as a lab technician:

- going to Bunnings and the Reject Shop for materials for 125 Year 7 students to build a rubber-band boat and for 115 Year 8 students to construct a mousetrap car
- grabbing equipment for the Year 9 students' rocket launch
- packing away radiators and aluminium cans, and
- cleaning, sorting and classifying equipment.

Jennifer says no two days are ever the same. "I love the wonderful colleagues I get to work with – and the sheer wonder of their musical knowledge and virtuosity," Jennifer says.

"In science, there are never enough hours in the day," she says.

Online safety

When students cyberbully staff



New technologies create ethical grey areas but, in education, one thing is black and white: cyberbullying of staff must be taken seriously, writes Will Brodie.

Cyberbullying is online harassment. It is bullying using digital technologies including mobile phones, email and social media. It includes:

- nasty text messages or offensive emails or spreading damaging rumours
- setting up websites to attack an individual
- anonymous, mocking or threatening phone calls
- publishing online someone's private, personal or embarrassing information without permission
- assuming someone's identity online and representing them negatively to damage their reputation or relationships
- creating hate sites or implementing social exclusion campaigns on social networks, and
- forwarding or sharing embarrassing images without consent.

Cyberbullying is extremely damaging because it is invasive, difficult to escape and can happen at any time. Harmful material can be widely and rapidly shared to a large audience on public forums or by being sent to many people at once. It can stay harmful long after the initial harassment has ceased.

Cyberbullying has long been a concern in schools, but with the advent of publicly accessible generative artificial intelligence (AI) in the past two years, students are increasingly using it against teachers. In June, *Guardian Australia* reported that Australia's eSafety Commission was receiving 175 reports of online 'sextortion' and revenge porn a week.

The Age has reported that an estimated 95,820 deepfake videos were

online in 2023, and that this was "550 per cent more than in 2019".

What is a 'deepfake'?

A deepfake is an image or video in which a person's face or body has been altered to make it appear like they're doing or saying something that never happened. Earlier this year, researchers defined deepfakes as "AI-generated image-based sexual abuse".

"Students must be made aware that this sort of vile behaviour is criminal and that it will be reported to police."

In October 2023, Australia's eSafety office warned schools to overhaul their safety policies because deepfakes were coming.

This year they have proliferated.

In one instance, a boy was expelled from a Melbourne Catholic school after he created fake sexual images of a female teacher that were circulated throughout the school.

However, such firm action is unfortunately the exception.

IEU organisers hear many stories about cyberbullying that don't make the media and are not met with appropriate action by schools.

At another Victorian boys' school, a group of students was caught creating pornographic images of staff. The perpetrators were briefly suspended and

told they could not bring smartphones to class.

But when they returned to lessons, they defied the smartphone ban without penalty. Then friends of the perpetrators physically harassed staff who had spoken out about the misbehaviour.

Accountability is essential

Lack of accountability creates a learning environment that can exacerbate bullying behaviour towards both staff and students.

Many teachers throughout Australia have had their image violated or reputation smeared by vindictive students on social media.

As IEU Victoria Tasmania General Secretary David Brear said in response to the recent 'deepfake' exploitation of a member: "Schools must make it an immediate priority to educate students about the responsible, lawful use of AI and social media.

"Students must be made aware that this sort of vile behaviour is criminal and that it will be reported to police. These discussions should take place as part of a broader discussion around respect for others – in particular respect for women."

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes says women members around the nation have experienced "disgusting verbal, and even physical, attacks and intimidation" and are reporting "increased examples of inappropriate behaviour seemingly fuelled by online 'anti-feminist' activists".

This network of online misogynist influencers has been dubbed the 'manosphere'.

Considering solutions

The federal government has brought forward a review of Australia's online safety laws by a year "in a bid to address new and emerging digital harms".



However, legal options are often tortuous for victims and don't address the fundamentals underlying online harassment.

A study from Monash University more directly engages with the plight of educators. Project lead Dr Naomi Pfistner contacted the IEU seeking input from members into a study that will "critically examine and address the influence and impact of the manosphere upon young boys' and men's practices of masculinity that are harmful to women, girls and gender diverse people".

Dr Pfistner told the IEU: "Gender-based violence is a national emergency. It is also preventable, and educators and schools can play a pivotal role in promoting cultural change and ending gender-based violence.

"Sexist and misogynistic discourses expressed in the manosphere are gaining traction in Australian schools."

Dr Pfistner's project is "solutions-focused", working in partnership with educators and young people to "develop a professional learning program to support secondary school teachers to address the influence of the manosphere in schools".

Nothing less than "social change" is required to address gender-based violence, Dr Pfistner says, meaning "comprehensive effort across every setting in our community".

"This requires work in early childhood with educators and parents to build children's resilience to rigid gender stereotypes," Dr Pfistner says.

"And this work needs to continue in adolescents to address the harmful influence of the manosphere and online misogyny on young boys' and men's practices of masculinity. To create lasting change, we have to challenge and disrupt traditional gender roles and stereotypes at every age."

Preventative strategies

Our Watch, an independent, not-for-profit organisation set up to counter gender-based violence, agrees, saying prevention of cyberbullying requires "a holistic approach involving on-the-ground efforts that engage individuals and communities; whole-of-setting approaches in organisations and institutions and change to laws and government policies".

To help school staff and students in schools, we must use primary prevention, which has been successful in combating public health issues such as smoking and road safety.

Professor Daryl Higgins and Gabrielle Hunt from the Australian Catholic University (ACU) say primary prevention measures recognise that sexual abuse and harassment is a gendered issue.

"Women, girls and gender-diverse individuals are disproportionately affected," the researchers say. "And men and boys are overwhelmingly more likely to perpetrate these crimes."

ACU primary prevention recommendations

1. Training and resources for staff

Staff need clear policies and procedures on how to respond effectively and report to the relevant authorities when there is sexual harassment, assault or child abuse.

2. Comprehensive sex education

Sex education needs to include consideration of pornography, sexting and online safety. It can help prevent harmful behaviours by teaching children and young people about healthy relationships, boundaries and informed and enthusiastic consent.

3. Strong school leadership

Leaders must take a zero-tolerance approach to anything that normalises stereotyping, degrading comments, violence or misogyny. Children in a school should be empowered to raise concerns to adults and know they will be listened to and believed.

Hayes says schools must address misogyny and sexual harassment, but they are "serious issues across our entire society", and we need parents and the wider community to also call out bad behaviour and mentor positive role models for boys and young men.

Schools alone cannot eradicate sexual harassment. But they have a crucial role to play and it starts with making it clear that cyberbullying of staff will not be tolerated.

If this article has raised issues for you, or you're concerned about someone else, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732. For online safety advice go to the eSafety website: www.esafety.gov.au

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SEX EDUCATION

Countering pornography's insidious influence

Consent education is part of the curriculum, but its efficacy is being undermined by students accessing pornography at an increasingly young age, Sue Osborne writes.

In NSW, consent education was recently introduced into the new primary curriculum, starting in kindergarten. There are also age-appropriate resources about consent for early childhood teachers.

Speaking in the NSW Parliament on 6 August, Education Minister Prue Car said, "It's about empowering people to recognise their autonomy, to hear 'no', to accept 'no'.

"I think we can all agree... that young people need that empowerment more than ever.

"Young women need it. Young men also need it. All members of our society need it in a time of hate online, exposure to harmful material for our young people and of insidious domestic and family violence. This is the biggest change to the curriculum in 50 years."

Easily accessible and overly influential

Yet despite these curriculum updates, it is difficult for teachers to combat pervasive online pornography, which many students first witness at school.

Pornography includes a high rate of non-consensual and violent acts, leading students to believe this is normal, accepted and even expected.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has reported that young people also have a belief that sex that does not include such acts as strangulation is dull or 'vanilla sex'.

In her book *Consent Laid Bare: Sex, Entitlement and the Distortion of Desire*, Teach Us Consent campaigner Chantel Contos writes that pornography has become sex education.

"Porn is shaping the brains and tastes of generations who were born into a world where it is easily accessible," she writes.

She says when she visits schools some of the anecdotes teenagers tell her "make her skin crawl".

"Learning how to have sex from watching pornography is like learning to drive from watching Formula 1," Contos writes. "The world would be a very dangerous place for drivers if this was the case, and these anecdotes reflect the treacherous landscape for girls and women when pornography is used as sex education."

Undermining respect and consent

Pornography education expert Maree Crabbe develops resources for schools to empower teachers to tackle the effects of pornography on their students.

"Sixteen years ago, my colleague [David Corlett] and I identified the need to address pornography's influence with young people in schools, and for public conversations about pornography to help people understand the scale and extent of pornography's impacts on young people and the need to support them," Crabbe says.

"There was this strong sense that young people were navigating this emerging, incredibly accessible content, alone," she says.

Crabbe cites Australian research that shows 48 per cent of boys have seen porn by the age of 13 and 48 per cent of girls have seen it by the age of 15. Fifty-six per cent of young men report using porn weekly and 17 per cent use it daily; 15 per cent of young women use porn weekly and 1 per cent use it daily.

Sixty per cent of young men and 41 per cent of young women have used pornography as a source of information about relationships and sex in the past 12 months.

The kinds of messages conveyed through pornography are also reinforced in other online settings. Reporters at *Guardian Australia* conducted an experiment, creating a fake social media profile for a 'generic' 24-year-old male. Despite not posting anything on that profile, within just three months, the Facebook and Instagram algorithms had directed misogynist and sexist material to that profile.

"Pornography's influence has serious implications for young people's capacity to develop a sexuality that is safe, respectful, mutual and consenting," Crabbe says.

What schools can do

"I would never suggest that teachers alone should be responsible and not parents," Crabbe says. "We need the input of a whole range of stakeholders and parents are a key group who have a role to play."

Nonetheless, Crabbe believes that teachers, like other adults in young people's lives, need to address the real-world influences that are shaping young people's experiences.



Teach Us Consent campaigner and author Chanel Contos. (photo courtesy Paul Riddell)



Researcher Maree Crabbe develops resources that aim to empower teachers to address pornography's influence.

"Pornography's influence has serious implications for young people's capacity to develop a sexuality that is safe, respectful, mutual and consenting."

"There are lots of reasons why schools have an important role to play," she says. "Schools are an effective site for health promotion. They have the capacity to contribute to the education of a broad audience and are key contributors to young people's sexuality education. We also know that many parents aren't having conversations about pornography or sexuality with their children."

"Schools often mandate the use of the very devices that children see pornography on, and that brings accompanying responsibilities."

How to start the conversation

Support from school leadership is crucial, Crabbe says. "It's not up to individual teachers to single-handedly incorporate content about pornography into their teaching," she says.

"There needs to be a considered, careful, whole-school approach to addressing this issue."

Crabbe says she has worked with many independent schools, including faith-based schools of various denominations, that identify addressing pornography as aligning with their core values.

"For many schools, values such as kindness, respect and equality are part of their philosophy," Crabbe says. "Although it is a challenging and sensitive topic, schools are often aware of young people being harmed by pornography."

Teachers need support to deliver the consent curriculum. Schools need to engage with their parent communities to help them understand why this needs to be addressed so their children can engage in the world safely, effectively and respectfully.

"Pornography makes it even more important that we're doing good consent education, as well as addressing broader popular culture influences that undermine consent messages," Crabbe says.

AI exacerbates the issue

The impact of pornography has been further complicated by the recent development of apps that can use AI to 'nudify' people. There have been cases of students' faces and teachers' faces being used in these apps.

Legislation has not caught up with technology and these apps are not illegal.

Australia's eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant recently appeared at a Senate Inquiry into legislation to criminalise

deepfake pornography. She has now sent a transparency notice to tech giants including Apple, Microsoft and Google, asking them what they're doing to tackle AI-generated child abuse material.

Resources at the ready

Crabbe's website, 'It's Time We Talked', provides information about her resources including *In the Picture*, a secondary school resource on explicit imagery.

She also provides parent education and professional development for teachers and other school staff.

Crabbe and her team have developed school resource packages, one of which includes 10 curriculum activities for use with young people in schools, along with professional learning for school staff.

There are shorter versions for the whole staff community that support a whole-school approach, and a longer course for health teachers and wellbeing staff.

Crabbe says there is a need for more resources, particularly tailored approaches, aimed at students with a disability and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

She has recently developed a resource designed to support autistic young people.

"You don't need to hear many stories about how pornography is harming young people to be compelled to address this in a coordinated way and integrate it into school-based education," she says.

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Gender equity at work

Making progress but more to do

We have a long way to go and must never let up, but unions are making good progress on closing the gender pay gap and achieving equity in the workplace, writes IEU member and former rep Richard Linton.

It has been just over six years since the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Secretary Sally McManus addressed the National Press Club to launch the Change the Rules campaign. Central to the campaign's goals were gender equality provisions on salary, superannuation, paid parental leave and domestic and family violence leave.

How has the country fared? How have the preschool and school education sectors fared?

Pay gap data published

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) Gender Pay Gap (GPG) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) GPG are the primary sources of research and data into pay inequity in the workplace.

WGEA publishes four different figures related to the pay gap, and a thorough exploration of pay equity, more specifically pay inequity, would include an in-depth analysis of ABS and all four WGEA metrics.

For simplicity, the ACTU recently used the ABS Gender Pay Gap, so references to headline gender pay gap refer to this. As the ABS does not provide sector-based gender pay gap data, it is sourced from WGEA Median Total Remuneration GPG. Nationally, the current pay gap is 11.5% and in the preschool and school education sector it is 8.3%.

Causes of the pay gap

The gender pay gap can largely be attributed to the under-representation of women in higher-paid management and executive positions in the education sector, and the significant over-representation of women in traditionally lower-paid positions such as clerical and administration and teachers' aides roles.

"Gender equity affects all workers, and all workers need to take up the challenge to fight for this."

These lower-paid positions are vital in the operation of preschool and school settings yet are undervalued by employers and under-represented in union membership. This is a challenge for state and national union branches, but one that can be supported at a local level.

In my time as an IEU rep, non-teaching membership density at my school increased because I built on existing relationships by listening to the concerns of staff, which helped amplify their voices to improve working conditions.

Through building the capacity and activity of our membership base, we

can continue to advocate and fight for improved conditions, especially for our lowest paid members, who are overwhelmingly women.

Paid parental leave

Paid parental leave (PPL) entitlements are varied in the non-government education sector across Australia. While the length of PPL is consistent with the statutory minimum, the rate of pay is not.

Some IEU branches have been successful in negotiating PPL at the employee's nominal rate of pay, as opposed to the national minimum wage. While this inconsistency exists, industry progress in winning conditions above the statutory minimum is positive.

The 2024 Budget announcement that PPL will gradually be extended to 26 weeks by 2026 is in line with claims from the Change the Rules campaign: a big win for the union movement.

The challenge for the IEU across Australia is for branches who have negotiated PPL at the employee's nominal rate of pay to maintain that level, and in states where the statutory minimum is paid, that the union and its members continue to fight for improved provisions for PPL.

Retirement savings

The ACTU has been campaigning for many years to prevent women retiring in poverty.

At a national level, there has not been the same conversation around the gender gap in retirement savings.

Largely, traditional family dynamics remain, with women still the primary

carers for children, resulting in extended periods out of the workforce and therefore lower superannuation balances at retirement. This is exacerbated as the average lifespan of women is longer than men and thus women must make do for longer with less.

The federal government announcement that superannuation will be paid for the entirety of PPL is certainly a welcome improvement for all workers.

However, this is paid at the minimum wage as opposed to an employee's nominal salary and for up to 26 weeks (by 2026). Does this sufficiently recognise the invaluable role a parent fulfills in raising a child? Should a parent be disadvantaged in retirement for raising a family?

Thankfully, unions across the country are committed to improving women's retirement savings by winning entitlements above the statutory minimum. Across IEU agreements, provisions relating to payment of superannuation on PPL and Unpaid Parental Leave vary between the statutory minimum and superannuation paid for up to 52 weeks.

During the current cost-of-living crisis, retirement savings may not be foremost in our minds, but it is something that impacts us all, specifically our quality of life in retirement.

Family and domestic violence leave

As of 1 February 2023, all Australian workers became entitled to up to 10 days per year of Family and Domestic Violence Leave (FDVL). This was a huge step forward for those escaping domestic and family violence – overwhelmingly women.

The previous Coalition government was steadfast in its refusal to adopt FDVL as a universal right in the National Employment Standards. The Attorney General at the time, Michaelia Cash, claimed it would “lead to fewer women being employed and act as a perverse disincentive for employers”. But what was perverse was the Coalition government's commitment to avoid FDVL mandates for businesses at the expense of victims of family and domestic violence.

However, is 10 days enough time to pack up a life, escape to a safe setting and begin to rebuild? Some IEU branches have negotiated FDVL beyond the statutory minimum. The extended safety net provides (mainly) women with greater time to escape and begin to heal and rebuild.

National reckoning

How are we doing as a nation? Much of the progress on the gender equity provisions in the Change the Rules campaign has been made under a Labor federal government. All its provisions have either been implemented or legislated for future implementation.

How is the education sector faring with collective bargaining? The gender pay gap is narrowing, but there is still more work to be done.

Entitlements relating to paid parental leave and family and domestic violence leave vary across the country. The variation in superannuation payments on paid and unpaid parental leave is significant.

In many agreements, the IEU has negotiated entitlements over and above statutory minimums and this must be celebrated. However, much work still needs to be done on gender equity to ensure no one is left behind.

The reality is that gender equity affects all workers, and all workers need to take up the challenge to fight for this. We must continue to recruit, organise and amplify our collective voice to progress towards gender equity.

IEU member and former rep Richard Linton is the School and Early Childhood Program Co-ordinator at the Teacher Learning Network. Richard has 17 years'

experience in the classroom and in 2023 he won the IEU Victoria Tasmania HSR Award for his work on gendered violence. He is nearing completion of a Graduate Certificate in Industrial Relations at Charles Sturt University.

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OECD survey

Are schools equipped for social and emotional learning?

Schools are perfect hubs for social and emotional learning, but a 2023 OECD survey raises questions about whether they're ready for the task, writes Katie Fotheringham.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey on Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives gathered responses from principals and teachers in nine cities from different countries and regions.

Results indicate that schools aim to develop social and emotional skills in students as much as they promote academic skills. However, the former are less commonly evaluated than the latter.

Schools mainly embed social and emotional promotion into their general practices, while activities and lessons focusing on learning these skills are less common.

Active promotion of social and emotional learning in schools as well as extensive learning opportunities for teachers on relevant topics provide fertile ground for effective social and emotional education.

They boost teachers' self-efficacy, use of active learning pedagogies, and quality relationships at school.

Vital for school and social cohesion

IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke says social and emotional skills are indispensable for the cohesion of our schools and, more broadly, our societies.

"While we are seeing increased rates of challenging behaviour, violence and harassment against our teachers and principals, it is more important than ever that students are equipped with the skills to manage and process their emotions in a healthy way," Burke says.

"Studies have proven that social and emotional skill levels predict important life outcomes in various domains, such as academic achievement, employment and health."

Burke says teachers play a key role in creating a school and classroom environment that nurtures student social and emotional development.

"Teachers can provide students with opportunities to work and debate in groups, be creative, and feel and express joy and pride while learning," he says.

"They can mentor and guide students on how to resolve conflicts that inevitably arise along the way and draw students' attention to the needs of others.

"However, with ever-increasing workload and work intensification pressures, it is paramount that any additional expectations of social and emotional learning are managed in a way that does not contribute to teacher stress and burnout," he says.

Evaluating skills

The OECD report indicates that although many countries have incorporated social and emotional skills development into their education curricula, there is often a gap between stated goals and their implementation in schools.

Burke says the report indicates that schools need to systematically evaluate and assess students' social and emotional skills to bridge the gap between written and attained curriculum goals.

"Assessments help teachers tailor their teaching methods to individual student needs and improve overall learning outcomes," Burke says.

"Data indicates that schools with systematic recording of student test results and graduation rates perform better academically.

However, Burke says there is a disparity between academic and social and emotional assessments. "While most schools evaluate academic progress, fewer assess social and emotional skills," he says.

Closing this gap is crucial for fostering social and emotional learning in schools, Burke says, "but any additional evaluations that could increase workload pressures must be closely monitored".

Active promotion, diverse approaches

Burke says the effectiveness of enhancing social and emotional skills in schools depends on active promotion, with various approaches showing promise.

"These include specific programs, activities targeting these skills, and extracurricular activities," he says.

"Data from the OECD survey suggests that embedding the promotion of these skills into existing school practices is prevalent.

"For over 80 per cent of students, social and emotional skills are promoted through general school practices, disciplinary rules, teacher efforts, providing feedback to parents, and inclusion in educational plans.

"This approach is widespread across cities involved in the study, indicating its prevalence in enhancing social and emotional learning," he says.

Reference

Social and Emotional Skills for Better Lives: Findings from the OECD Survey on Social and Emotional Skills 2023: bit.ly/3TAe3y3

Education in an age of crises

Rediscovering the importance of dignity

There is a strong need to re-engage with the fundamental concept of dignity – for the sake of the teaching profession, writes the University of Nottingham's Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Howard Stevenson.

In 1968, Martin Luther King addressed striking sanitation workers in Memphis, but his words will resonate with teachers around the world today: "Whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity and it has worth."

Tackling what UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] has called "the global crisis in teacher supply", as set out in the mandate given to the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, we must return to the concept of dignity – something teachers in many parts of the world do not believe they experience in their work.

Dignity is inevitably a complex concept, but in the thematic background paper I prepared for the UN High-Level Panel, I argue that it rests, fundamentally, on three foundational elements: recognition, agency and rights.

The problems experienced today in relation to teacher supply exist because in many contexts these foundational elements of dignity have been progressively eroded.

Recognition is not limited to material factors, but remuneration and working conditions are tangible reflections of recognition.

Teachers losing agency

In many jurisdictions, teachers are paid less than average graduate earnings, and working conditions are poor. In relation to both factors, there is clear evidence of a poor situation deteriorating.

However, the trends in relation to agency and professional autonomy are, if anything, more dramatic.

Teachers find themselves subject to increasing levels of prescription and surveillance, with diminished capacity to act in ways that acknowledge professional experience and expertise.

High-trust environments are being replaced by low-trust systems and the growth of cultures of compliance.

Furthermore, the rights that are essential to protecting teachers' access to good working conditions and professional autonomy are also being undermined. Not always, and not everywhere – but in far too many places.

Giving teachers a voice

In my contribution to the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, I provide a conceptual framework for thinking about how re-engaging with the concept of dignity can help make teaching the job it deserves to be – working in the best interests of students, as well as making teaching an attractive job for prospective educators.

Such an approach would begin to tackle the long-term, global trends in the teaching profession that have created the current crises of teacher supply and that are undermining educational advance in so many parts of the world.

"Strong education trade unions are not only a source of dignity (by providing a powerful, independent voice for teachers) but, crucially, they act as guarantors of dignity in work."

The model is based on the foundational elements of recognition, agency and rights which, in turn, ensure fairness and justice in employment, a democratic

professionalism, decent working conditions and a real voice for teachers in relation to all aspects of their work.

This 'voice' can assume many forms, for example, authentic teacher leadership and collegial governance, but it is important to recognise that there can be no genuine teacher voice without the existence of strong, independent and democratic trade unions capable of representing the collective views of the profession through social dialogue.

In such circumstances, strong education trade unions are not only a source of dignity (by providing a powerful, independent voice for teachers) but, crucially, they act as guarantors of dignity in work by asserting the rights needed to underpin the status of an independent and valued profession.

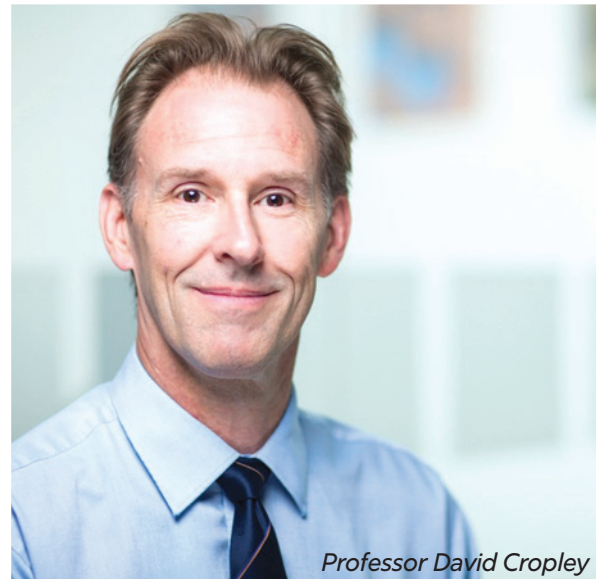
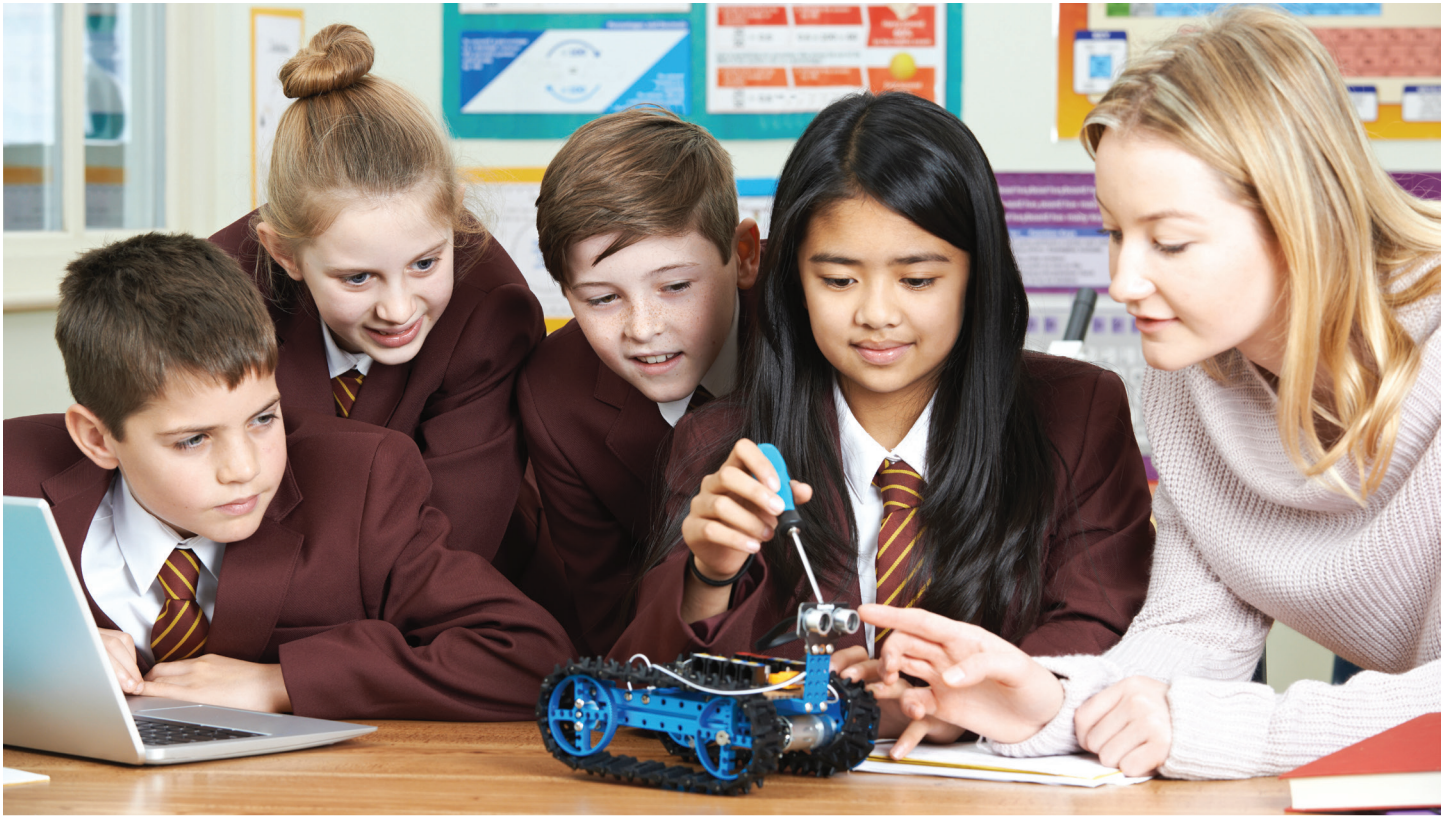


Howard Stevenson is a Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. This article is an abbreviated extract from a blog published by Education International in September 2023.

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Read the full article by Professor Howard Stevenson: bit.ly/4dPXmXw

UN High-Level Panel on the teaching profession: bit.ly/4exfAwz



Professor David Cropley

PISA results

Australian students excelling at creativity

Australian school students have been ranked among the highest in the world for creative thinking performance in the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, writes Emily Campbell.

Released in June 2024, the PISA results analysed data from more than 81 countries and economies around the globe, with Australia placing fourth in overall country performance for creative thinking – behind only Singapore, South Korea and Canada.

New assessment area

Professor David Cropley, an internationally recognised expert on creativity and innovation from the University of South Australia, says assessment of creative thinking is new to the PISA test.

“Action to develop a creativity test within PISA has been in the pipeline for several years, and its inclusion mirrors the rise of an interest in creativity in education more broadly over the last decade,” Professor Cropley says.

“It is closely connected to the fact we have entered an age of digitalisation in industry and economy, driving a renewed interest in creativity.

“Schools and education systems have picked up on this and know they must prepare students better for this sort of future work environment,” he says.

Australia performed far better than predicted in creative thinking when factoring in past PISA results in mathematics and reading performance.

Creative thinking in curriculum

Professor Cropley says an obvious explanation for Australia’s high score in the 2022 PISA test is that the creative thinking general capability defined by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is leading to changes in Australian classrooms.

“This means more opportunities for creative thinking are being given to students across the curriculum,” Professor Cropley says.

"It is beneficial that Australia did well on this test because it demonstrates a direct link between paying attention to creativity within the curriculum and seeing a positive outcome.

"I can only speak about Australia, but I suspect the other highly ranked countries have also prioritised creativity more specifically within their own curriculum systems.

"I also think the countries on the top of the PISA test tend to be wealthier countries and they prioritise and put great resourcing into education," he says.

Preparing for the future

Creative thinking is vital for students to learn as more jobs are automated and the employment landscape becomes increasingly digitalised.

The types of jobs suited to automation or using artificial intelligence (AI) are predictable and algorithmic, where machines can be programmed to do it, Professor Cropley says.

"We have entered an age of digitalisation in industry and economy, driving a renewed interest in creativity."

"As we move further into this age of digitalisation, computers are increasingly performing the routine tasks and that leaves the creative, unpredictable and non-algorithmic jobs that humans are ideally suited to," he says.

"Those are the aspects that computers and robots struggle with, so students have to be prepared for the future workforce landscape with creativity."

Creativity can be learned

There is a widely held misconception by the general public that creativity is a fixed trait, or that it cannot be learned; however, Professor Cropley says that in

his experience, most school teachers know this is not the case.

"For many people, there is still this ingrained belief that creativity is associated with the arts and music, so people assume because they do not play an instrument or can't draw well they are not creative," he says.

"It's an idea that creativity is something you either have or you don't.

"This is the type of response you would get asking an average person, but my colleagues and I have conducted studies with teachers in Australia and overseas and have found teachers by and large do not hold this misconception."

Teaching with creativity

There are three key things teachers can do to encourage students to develop creative thinking.

"Firstly, they must model creative thinking as a teacher, whether the subject area is arts, music, physical or maths," Professor Cropley says.

"Teachers should demonstrate, through their practice, their attitudes and how they conduct themselves in the classroom that they are open to creativity.

"We call this teaching with creativity, which sends an important signal to students.

"I am not talking about creative thinking only, but creativity more generally, which includes aspects of a teacher's personality and the environment they're working in.

The other two ways are about teaching for creativity.

Professor Cropley says students must be given opportunities to use creative thinking in class so they can practise and develop this skill.

"The thinking element of creative thinking, we can equate to thinking divergently," he says.

"The key is to ask a different kind of question. So, instead of looking for one right answer to a question, teachers should ask questions that allow for many possible answers.

"This allows students to think divergently rather than convergently."

For example, rather than asking, 'What is two plus two?', where the correct answer is four, teachers can flip the question and ask, 'How many different ways are there to arrive at the correct answer of four?', Professor Cropley says.

"The student can practise divergent thinking, because it could be two plus two, but could also be 10 minus six or the square root of 16," he says.

There are many possible answers to achieve the same educational outcome, but also provide students with the chance to think creatively.

"In history, for example, instead of asking, 'On what date did World War II start?', where there is one correct answer, teachers could try a different approach and ask, 'What were the events and reasons behind the outbreak of World War II starting in 1939?'," he says.

"It means reframing questions as open-ended and having more than one possible answer."

Professor Cropley is not suggesting teachers should do away with teaching convergent thinking. "There needs to be a rebalancing because both types of thinking are essential to problem-solving," he says.

"Students need to be able to think convergently and divergently at the right times."

Employer support essential

Enabling teachers to effectively teach with and for creativity requires ongoing support and resourcing from school employers and governments.

Professor Cropley says creative champions are necessary in any system or workplace that is trying to foster creativity.

"For creativity in any situation, whether in an engineering firm or a school classroom, a supportive environment is one of the most important aspects you can work in," he says.

"Championing creativity is one obvious way employers, governments and school leadership can nurture creative thinking in schools."

Providing teachers with resourcing is essential to a supportive environment, and championing creativity, which means reducing workload and work intensification.

"There is a common mantra in creativity and innovation: time, support and resources," he says.

"You must give teachers additional time to teach with and for creativity, which will likely be more time-consuming than traditional ways of teaching.

"They must also be given the moral support and the physical resources because people simply cannot be creative if they are under immense pressure."

School leaders at various levels should ask how they can better support and advocate for teachers, and be prepared to challenge the status quo, Professor Cropley says.

"If teachers want to be more creative in the classroom, they need support and resourcing," he says. "Professional development (PD) and training on how to teach creative thinking is an important part of the support and resourcing required."

Professor Cropley says Australia's 2022 PISA results are promising in relative and absolute terms.

"The details remind us there is still significant work to be done regarding the creative thinking of girls versus boys," he says.

"We need to continue prioritising creativity across the curriculum at all stages, especially in Years 11 and 12."

It takes a village

Maximising parent-teacher partnerships

A landmark longitudinal study shows that parent-teacher partnerships are an untapped resource for schools to expand learning opportunities, writes Ella Doyle.

The three-year Engaging Parents in Curriculum (EPIC) project found that engaging parents in teaching resulted in positive outcomes for students, parents* and schools.

Running across 10 diverse independent schools in Queensland, EPIC 2021-2023 is a collaboration between Independent Schools Queensland, Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network and Griffith Institute for Educational Research.

Project leads Dr Linda-Diane Willis and Professor Beryl Exley are experienced classroom teachers and current academics at Griffith University.

The EPIC project draws on over 60 years of scholarship, highlighting the social and academic benefit engaging parents can have on students in day schools, boarding schools and distance education, including:

- increased confidence and motivation
- improved school attendance, and
- enhanced wellbeing and academic outcomes.

Dr Willis said engaging parents features prominently in the Australian Professional

Standards for Teachers (APST) so it should be front of mind for all schools.

Untapped resource

The EPIC report recognises teachers as facilitators of knowledge rather than the fountain of all knowledge.

"It's about reframing from a school-centric mindset to a child-centric one," Dr Willis said.

"Teachers can't be expected to know everything."

Dr Willis said children have been learning since birth and come to school with years of experience.

"Children don't come to school as blank slates and parents can help



integrate knowledge of their child in the classroom,” she said.

The value of parent-teacher partnership also extends into the curriculum.

“A parent might be an expert in a classroom topic and be available to share real-life knowledge and examples with students,” she said.

“Children don’t come to school as blank slates and parents can help integrate knowledge of their child in the classroom.”

Dispelling myths

Dr Willis said engaging parents took an active approach.

“To put it simply, parent engagement is about bringing parents closer to what their child is learning,” she said.

“Engaging parents is more than just responding to a complaint or attending a music performance.

“It’s a continuous process that allows parents to actively connect with the school and their child.

Dr Willis said another common myth in engaging parents is that as a child gets older, parents get less interested.

“Our research showed parents across all year levels are invested in seeing their child thrive,” she said.

“Parents don’t just suddenly lose interest in their children.

“We sometimes operate on the assumption that because we don’t see a parent regularly, they’re disinterested and disengaged.

“When in fact they could just be reading the school’s social media and newsletter and don’t see the point in contacting teachers if there are no issues.”

In these instances, Dr Willis recommends teachers re-evaluate how they engage with parents to see if there are other opportunities to connect.

Starts from the top

For parent engagement to be most effective there should be buy-in from the entire school community.

School leaders set the culture of a school and thus should be looking at school-wide (macro) ways to embed parent engagement in all they do.

Some suggestions include providing

professional development to all staff, embedding parent engagement into policy and curricula, creating advisory committees involving the school community and addressing barriers inhibiting parents from getting involved.

“Throughout the project, we developed Parent Engagement Leadership Teams (PELTs) comprised of school community members which were highly successful in working towards macro-level changes that were relevant and reasonable for schools and parents.”

Small steps

In the age of workload intensification, Dr Willis said engaging parents does not mean adding extra work.

“I understand teachers may feel like they don’t have the time to engage parents but our research demonstrated parent engagement often involves a small switch in existing practice,” she said.

Dr Willis encouraged teachers with concerns to look at their situation and do what seems manageable or sustainable at a micro (classroom) level.

“Our research highlighted that effective communication with parents should be **Short, Sharp, Often, Optional**, with a **Purpose** and **Personalised** to the parents and their child (**SSOOPP**),” she said.

The SSOOPP (pronounced soup) framework is a tool Dr Willis and Professor Exley created to help teachers examine their practice when engaging with parents.

“It may seem daunting but ‘souping it up’ is about looking at what you normally do and seeing if anything can be adapted,” Dr Willis said.

“It can be as simple as leaving an invitational space on the week’s homework for parent feedback on the things their child enjoyed or found easy/challenging or asking students to ask their parents/families a question related to a lesson/topic.

“We need to bridge the gap so parents are closely aligned with what their children are learning,” she said.

Another framework Dr Willis and Professor Exley have developed is the **Connections, Home-school alignment, Agency, New and different roles, Generative collaboration and Empathy** framework (**C-H-A-N-G-E**).

For leaders and teachers looking for macro and micro-level strategies and examples, Dr Willis recommends reading the latest EPIC report.

Right to disconnect

Last month, new Right to Disconnect laws came into effect meaning members have the right not to read emails, take phone calls or respond to parents after school hours.

When asked about how teachers can

balance their time off with engagement with parents who may also work full-time, Dr Willis said teachers absolutely should set and communicate boundaries.

“There are a lot of nuances,” she said.

“We need to respect that teachers deserve and need their time out to be the best teachers they can be but also recognise that sometimes parents need to contact teachers.

“It’s about using professional judgement and common sense.”

Dr Willis recommends schools set policies and procedures so that teachers and school leaders know what reasonable contact is in line with the Right to Disconnect provisions.

“These should be communicated to students and parents through newsletters and school-wide events like assemblies,” she said.

“I know one school has created a traffic light system to categorise the priority of response to calls.

“That way teachers know whether a call or email is urgent,” she said.

Dr Willis also re-emphasised that engaging parents is not about creating extra work outside school hours.

“Regular communication with parents will also help teachers and school leaders learn about parents’ schedules,” she said.

She offered an example of parents who are shift workers.

“Once you know this information you will be able to exercise professional judgement about how and when you respond,” Dr Willis said.

“Both parent and teacher want the best for the child so it’s about building genuine dialogue built on empathy for the other,” she said.

Resources and references

EPIC resources for teacher and school leaders: bit.ly/4d6jO8D

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: aitsl.edu.au/standards

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** Parent is described generally to include carers and families and broadly to include communities with the responsibility and care for a student’s learning and wellbeing.*



Two heads (of school) are better than one

Is being a principal now a job that is too complex and demanding for one person? With burnout so rife, shared leadership has appeal, writes Will Brodie.

Retiring IEU stalwart Michael Chalkley was the interim principal of Catholic College Bendigo in regional Victoria for a year in 2014 but found the “massive” role – overseeing two campuses, 2000 students and 278 staff – wasn’t “life-giving”.

However, Chalkley did end up being a principal, spending the final five years of his career sharing the role at St Peter’s Primary School.

“I’ve loved the aspect of sharing the role with Jenny Roberts. I’ve always seen myself as a team player so the idea of sharing the role was fantastic for me.

“It’s a model that we think would work in a lot of other schools. I think there’s a lot of people who are reluctant to take on a role on their own, but if they have an experienced mentor to help them for a couple of years, the transition can be a lot smoother. There are many people who would like to lead but they just need the encouragement of having someone walk alongside them.”

Walking together

Not far from Bendigo, at St James’ Parish School, Sebastopol, co-principals Garth Kydd and Peter Fahey have walked alongside each other as co-leaders.

Kydd says, “A shared role allows for the wellness of the leader.”

A healthy, coping leader can “connect deeply with all aspects of the school environment” and help maintain the wellbeing of the school community.

Kydd says shared leadership “allows for change to happen more effectively, for voices to be shared more openly, and for decisions to follow a far more rigorous and timely discernment process”.

He was partly inspired to give shared leadership a go because of a “transformative leadership shift” at a previous school.

A lone principal who had been “shouldering the strain of the system and community”, became unwell.

“This was a period where shame and isolation were prevalent,” Kydd says.

However, when two principals took on the leadership responsibility, there was “positive change”.

“What resonated with me was the value of perspective.

This model allowed for change to happen more effectively,

for voices to be shared more openly, and for decisions to be made that followed a far more rigorous and timely process of discernment. As an emerging leader, I felt this model was perfect for developing my leadership skills.”

Kydd’s co-leader, Peter Fahey, believes few individuals possess all the expertise necessary to effectively address his school community’s diverse challenges. Shared leadership offers a “compelling opportunity to partner with another experienced educator, leverage complementary strengths, and collectively lead our school towards sustained improvement and excellence,” Fahey says.

Fahey began his journey into co-principalship with a “deep-seated belief in the power of collaborative leadership”, having reached a point in his career where

he aspired to expand his impact “beyond the confines of a traditional administrative role”.

“Educational leadership today requires navigating many challenges, from fostering inclusive school cultures to managing rigorous academic standards and integrating technology effectively,” Fahey says.

“I saw co-principalship as a strategic approach to distribute leadership responsibilities more equitably, enhancing our capacity to innovate, adapt, and meet the evolving needs of our students, staff, and stakeholders.”

On a personal level, co-principalship offered Fahey “a pathway for continuous professional growth and development”.

“By sharing the job with a trusted colleague, I envisioned



Co-principal Peter Fahey

opportunities for mentorship, mutual learning, and collaborative problem-solving. Co-principalship broadened my leadership skills, expanded my support network, and I gained fresh perspectives on educational leadership practices.”

Fahey specialises in instructional leadership, curriculum development, and staff support, while Kydd excels in organisational management, community relations, and strategic planning.

Fahey outlined the following advantages of shared leadership:

Shared decision-making and problem-solving

Regular dialogue, consultation with stakeholders, and joint deliberation on critical decisions ensure that diverse perspectives inform decisions, align with the school's mission and values, and prioritise the best interests of their students.

Continuity and stability

In absences, transitions, or unforeseen challenges, co-principals can coordinate their efforts to maintain operational continuity, uphold established policies and procedures, and sustain momentum towards strategic goals.

Professional support and development

Partners can share insights, mentor one another, and collaboratively problem-solve, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth.

Challenges: Communicating with the school community

Kydd says the school staff and community had to be convinced that the shared role was “balanced”.

“While we had moments when roles were defined, most of the time the tasks were emergent and therefore, the leaders were interchangeable. What was most fascinating was how families and staff attempted to play the leaders off against each other. They would ask the same question to both leaders in the hope of finding a varied response and, therefore, a chink in the message to take advantage of.”

Communicating within the partnership

The two leaders must “consciously make time to share interactions so that wires didn’t get crossed”.

“This took time. While trust was implied and valued deeply, there were moments when messages were missed, and misunderstanding grew across the community.”

Role clarity

Fahey says establishing clear roles and responsibilities has been another significant challenge in co-principalship to ensure timely communication of efforts and gaps in leadership coverage.

Building trust

Fahey says he and Kydd share a mutual respect and commitment to their shared goals, but navigating differing perspectives requires “sensitivity and proactive engagement”.

“Building trust among staff, students, and stakeholders is also essential for cultivating a cohesive school community and promoting a culture of shared responsibility.”

Kydd says “see a need, fill a need” was the motto that drove the success of the St James collaboration.

Fahey says by leveraging their diverse skills and experiences collaboratively, they maximised their collective impact.

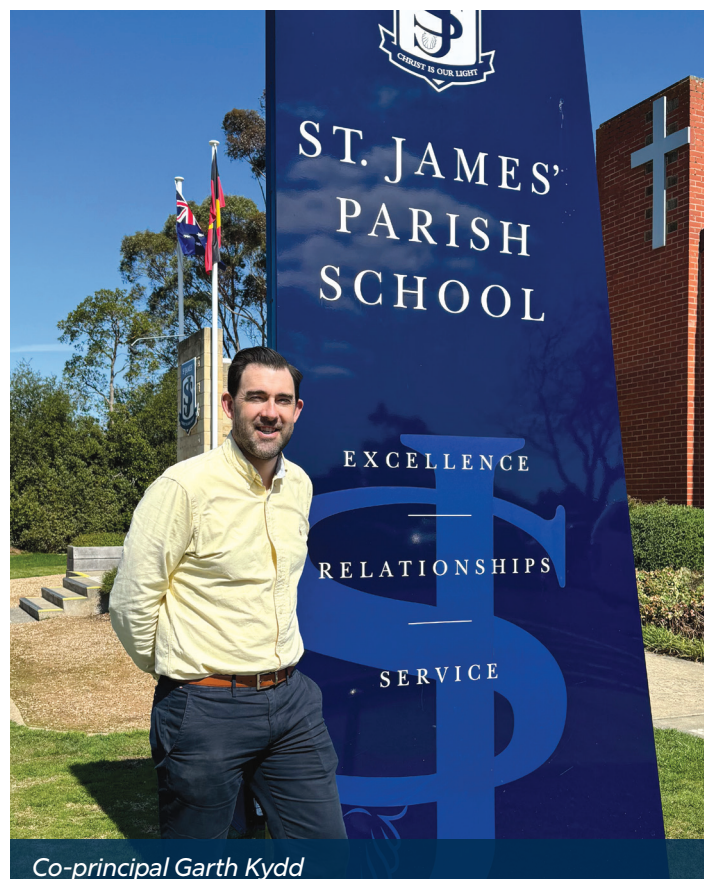
“Shared values are more critical than distinct skill sets. My co-principal and I are committed to student-centred leadership, equity, and continuous improvement, which serve as the foundation for our collaborative efforts, guiding our decision-making processes”.

Distributed leadership

Business magazine *Forbes* reports that in recent years the importance of hierarchical structure has declined, and shared or ‘distributed leadership’ has gained favour.

“Shared leadership is defined as ‘a dynamic leadership style that distributes authority, decision-making, and responsibility across a team or organisation,’” the magazine says.

“According to studies, there is a positive correlation between shared leadership, where team members actively contribute to decision-making processes and take ownership of their roles, and effectiveness.”



Adherents include American principal Will Gibson, who embraced a shared leadership model during the pandemic to “open lines of communication, sustain student engagement, and even increase teacher retention”.

Several years later, the shared leadership model remains, enriching classroom instruction, improving teacher satisfaction, establishing strong community engagement, and even improving teacher retention.

“At its heart, a shared leadership model is about giving a voice to students and teachers,” Gibson writes.

“Sharing leadership responsibilities allows students and teachers at all levels to contribute their perspectives to the school's overall mission.

Gibson's leadership team consists of committees from each grade level working in tandem to “contribute to a school identity based on shared goals”.

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