

Community preschool staff

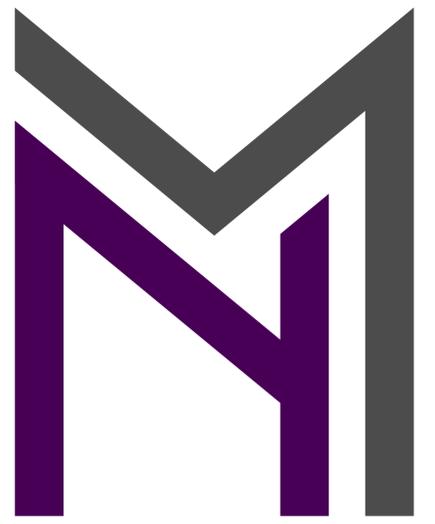
START STRONG PAY FAIR

Rally top of Martin Place
Wednesday 6 May 10am
Make signs and wear your best bright pink!
(See page 9 for more info)

news month

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WORKLOAD TRANSPARENCY

Enforcing your hard-won right in independent schools



“Transparency is a vital step towards fairer and more sustainable workloads for members.”

Carol Matthews
Secretary



Members in independent schools deserve to know the key elements of the workload required of them.

Workload transparency was a crucial win of the IEU’s ‘Now’s the Time’ campaign in 2024 for better pay and conditions for teachers and support staff in independent schools.

Schools must comply with the new workload transparency requirements in clause 16.5 of the *Independent Schools (Teachers) Cooperative Multi-enterprise Agreement* (the MEA) by advising teachers about the usual face-to-face teaching hours per week or per cycle.

Schools must also outline the general requirements for extracurricular duties and the release time provided for teachers in Leadership Level 1 and Level 2 positions.

Transparency is a vital step towards fairer and more sustainable workloads for members.

Face-to-face load fundamental

In Catholic systemic schools, workload expectations are governed by Work Practices Agreements negotiated by the union with each diocesan employer.

Face-to-face teaching hours are set in the industrial award applying to teachers in NSW government schools.

Previously, some independent school employers refused to disclose the usual face-to-face teaching load in their schools.

This meant it was impossible for part-time teachers to know if they were being paid correctly because part-time teachers are paid based on their teaching load compared to the full-time load at their school (see clause 7.12 of the MEA).

For full-time teachers, the issue was that they did not know

whether they were underloaded or overloaded compared to other teachers.

This made it difficult to judge whether requests from schools to take on additional duties – such as extras, playground duties or pastoral care classes – were reasonable compared to other teachers.

The MEA had always stipulated that face-to-face teaching hours should be contained in letters of appointment, but many schools simply referred to the full-time equivalent (FTE) load of the teacher, not the actual teaching hours.

Schools must comply

For the first time, the Association of Independent Schools (now Independent Schools NSW) agreed to the union’s demand to include a workload transparency clause in the new MEA.

Under clause 16.5, employers must now inform teachers on appointment and from time-to-time of the following:

- the usual number of face-to-face teaching hours per week or per cycle for a full-time teacher
- the general requirements in relation to extra-curricular activities
- any reduction in face-to-face teaching hours for teachers in Leadership 1 and 2 positions.

This clause imposes obligations that employers must follow.

Many schools provide additional information about teacher workload (for example, the number of extras that teachers may be required to take in a term in secondary schools and release from face-to-face teaching in primary schools).

However, the union was unable to achieve a more expansive and prescriptive clause incorporating these elements in the MEA because of employer resistance.

IEU reps should keep a copy of the workload requirements for your school to assist with member enquiries.

Some reps have told the union they are unsure if their school has complied with the MEA. As this is obligatory for new appointments, please check with any teachers appointed this year to be sure. Schools that have not complied are in breach of the MEA.

The MEA has other provisions about workload. Under clause 16.4, the school should advise staff of term dates and required teacher attendance dates by the end of Term 3 in the preceding year.

Clauses 16.6 and 16.7 require the school to give maximum possible notice of school-designated professional development, training and meetings during term time and, where practicable, include the dates in the annual school calendar.

Our campaign for transparency

IEU organisers are engaging with members in independent schools to ascertain whether their employer is fulfilling their legal obligations. The union offers resources to empower chapters to require employers to comply, including a pro forma letter to formally request information from school leaders (see below).

More information

- Pro forma letter: ieu.asn.au/ais-workloads
- Full campaign info: ieu.asn.au/nows-the-time-campaign

Is your workload clear?

Has your school employer provided clear information?

If your employer is not complying with the workload transparency clause, we urge members to contact the union via your organiser.

If we are unable to obtain information that confirms the school is complying with its legal obligations under the MEA, the union will not hesitate to act, including seeking the assistance of the Fair Work Commission.

Anti-Bullying Framework **What it means for members**

The NSW Anti-Bullying Framework was presented as a major step toward greater consistency in how schools prevent and respond to bullying of students when it was released in December 2025.

For IEU members, the question is more practical: will the framework make day-to-day management of incidents clearer, fairer and better supported?

Members know bullying is rarely a straightforward policy issue. It is the student who quietly withdraws. It is the repeated

emails from families seeking answers. It is the matter reported through the proper channel that somehow returns to the classroom unresolved.

The IEU will be monitoring the implementation of the framework to ensure it strengthens systems and does not add to already heavy workloads.

A broader reform

The NSW framework is part of national reforms underway across all education sectors.

Education ministers initiated the Anti-Bullying Rapid Review in 2025 to examine existing approaches and identify gaps.

In February, ministers endorsed an Implementation Plan and renamed the proposed national standard as the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian Schools.

Schools are expected to align policies and procedures by Term 1, 2027 and make them publicly available.

The national framework sets an expectation

that schools begin to respond within two school days of becoming aware of a bullying matter.

The timeframe refers to initiating action to ensure safety, contact families, and engage wellbeing supports (not resolving complex issues within 48 hours).

The distinction is important. Prompt responses must not rely solely on individual staff absorbing additional work.

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Workload intensification It's a sustainability issue

Suzanne Penson
President



Across non-government schools, members consistently identify workload as a defining industrial issue of our time. And the evidence supports what teachers are saying: that work has intensified in hours, pace and complexity. Solutions are needed.

Sobering statistics

Research presented to the NSW Parliament, drawing on large-scale teacher surveys, found that classroom teachers in NSW work an average of 46.4 hours a week. This statistic reflects the reality of teaching in contemporary schooling environments.

International comparisons reinforce the pattern. Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey 2024 shows that Australian teachers spend 26.4 hours a week on non-teaching tasks. This is the second highest number of hours of any OECD country.

Expanding administration, compliance reporting, data entry, documentation cycles, accreditation processes – these all take time away from lesson preparation, assessment feedback and meaningful student support.

Workload is also directly linked to teacher wellbeing and retention. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Teacher Workforce data reports that 34 per cent of teachers experience high to severe stress levels, with workload manageability strongly influencing whether teachers intend to remain in the profession.

In a climate of teacher shortages, this is not just a personal wellbeing matter, it is a system sustainability issue.

In non-government schools, our workload intensification takes on many forms.

Compliance frameworks, faith formation requirements and layered reporting systems add responsibilities. Parent communication expectations, co-curricular commitments and enrolment accountability pressures intensify work even more.

In all school contexts, teachers report that new requirements are regularly added without older ones being removed.

Union gains to ease the load

The IEU has consistently campaigned on the principle that administration and accountability must not create unsustainable workloads. This highlights a simple industrial truth: if workloads increase, protections are needed.

Practical measures, such as protected preparation time, limits on meeting loads

and clearer boundaries around after-hours communication have been hard won in union-negotiated work practices agreements. Members may need to ensure that schools adhere to them.

Workload clarity, specifically around face-to-face teaching hours, was a key breakthrough in the IEU's 'Now's The Time' campaign in 2024 for better pay and conditions for teachers and support staff in independent schools (see page 1).

Members also report that union-negotiated protections contribute substantially to preventing workload intensification.

The union calls on employers to ensure that any new compliance tasks replace rather than add to existing ones.

High expectations and strong standards are important. But they must be matched with realistic and sustainable working conditions.

If we want to retain experienced teachers and protect the quality of education in our schools, workloads must be within safe levels and protections implemented.

Workload is the issue members raise most often with me, it must remain central in improving the sustainability of our profession.

Catholic systemic school principals: **Strong gains in new EAs**

Lyn Caton
Assistant Secretary



Three new enterprise agreements (EAs) negotiated by the union came into force in February, with better pay and conditions for Catholic school leaders in NSW and the ACT.

The union negotiated the EAs for principals in NSW and the ACT (excluding Broken Bay Diocese) in 2025.

The negotiations addressed key priorities identified by principals, including salary growth, workload, leave entitlements, wellbeing and professional responsibilities.

In December 2025, principals voted in favour of all three agreements, strongly endorsing the negotiated outcomes.

The EAs were lodged with the Fair Work Commission at the end of Term 4, 2025, received formal approval in February and are now legally enforceable.

The three EAs, covering a three-year term, include a 3% annual salary increase for principals – maintaining alignment with teacher and support staff increases.

In addition, a one-off Cost of Living Adjustment may be triggered if the Consumer Price Index exceeds 4.5% during the agreement period, further safeguarding principals' remuneration.

The union also won important improvements in parental leave provisions.

Superannuation will now continue to be paid during employer-funded parental leave, and primary caregivers have greater flexibility to share leave entitlements within the first two years following the birth of a child.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and ceremonial leave of up to three days a year has also been introduced.

Workplace wellbeing and safety measures have been strengthened. Principals are now entitled to at least one uninterrupted 30-minute meal break daily.

Travel allowances have increased to \$0.84 per kilometre, with the previous 100-kilometre cap removed.

And access to delegates' rights has been enhanced, reflecting updated *Fair Work Act* provisions.

Proposals such as a reduction in the 10-week notice period were not adopted due to the complexity of principal roles. But diocesan employers have indicated a willingness to consider supplementary arrangements in areas such as workers' compensation.

Long service leave and classification for teaching principals in small schools remain matters of ongoing attention, with the union continuing to advocate for improvements.

With the agreements now in place, principals in NSW and the ACT have stronger pay parity, improved conditions, and enhanced workplace protections – a significant collective achievement for Catholic school leaders.

Guard your goodwill: **Co-curricular demands**

Liz Heggart

Vice President Systemic



School staff understand the value of getting to know our students in settings outside of the classroom such as camps and retreats.

Staff also attend events such as liturgies, masses, gala days and carnivals, contributing to school culture.

It is important to consider how these events impact on our time as teachers and support staff.

The pressures are only growing and the standard comebacks of "Oh, but you have to do it for the kids" and "we're a student-centred community" overlook the professional demands placed upon us each day.

Primary teachers

The Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Framework for the Work of Teachers and Trade Instructors states:

Where any part of the Weekly Allocation (of RFF) is foregone because of an activity organised by the school on the scheduled

day (eg a sports carnival or professional development day) or a scheduled public holiday, a process will be established at the school so that any part of the Weekly Allocation not taken that week is rescheduled to another time.

We urge you to ensure that any arrangement of this kind in your EA or WPA is upheld.

It is sometimes easier to forgo your release time but this sets a dangerous precedent for other teachers, including you, when you do want to take the RFF time you are entitled to.

This time is precious and the union is calling for it to be increased.

Secondary teachers

The loss of planning periods for secondary teachers is, unfortunately, less clear cut.

Should your planning time fall on the swimming carnival day or an assembly runs over time into your only free lesson for the day, it may not come back to you.

Sure, the WPA might say that you are expected to help and attend these events, but the question remains: When does the work get done?

It gets done after school. Or after you've put your own kids to bed at 8pm. Or on the weekend. These ad hoc losses of time add up.

We need a serious conversation about protecting our time.

Teacher aides

Teacher aides are increasingly being asked to supervise sport and undertake playground duties, which eats into the time they need to complete their own tasks, such as recording support they've given in class, compiling evidence for personal plans and other tasks needed to support diversity teachers.

We need to genuinely consider support staff workloads so we safeguard the staff who provide the backbone of support for teachers.

What you can do

When teacher and support staff time is stretched beyond sustainability, passion becomes exhaustion and vocation becomes attrition. Guard your goodwill at all costs.

And meet with other members at your school to see what measures could be implemented to address these issues.

Continued from page 1

Anti-Bullying Framework

What it means for members

Next steps

This year, schools are expected to:

- review and update anti-bullying and behaviour policies
- refine reporting and tracking systems
- clarify staff and leadership responsibilities
- embed prevention strategies across the whole school
- strengthen communication processes with families
- provide professional learning to support consistent practice.

For many members, this is when change will be felt with revised procedures, updated documentation, new templates or clearer timelines for action.

The union's position remains consistent: new processes must be workable, adequately resourced and clearly explained.

Shared responsibility

Managing bullying incidents is rarely simple. Behaviour concerns, wellbeing issues, online interactions, family dynamics and classroom management often overlap.

Effective responses require:

- time to investigate and record accurately
- collaboration between classroom teachers, leaders and wellbeing staff
- clear communication with families
- monitoring beyond the initial incident
- support for affected students – and staff.

The framework emphasises four areas: prevention, response, implementation and partnership with families and the community.

If embedded properly, this should result in:

- clearer reporting pathways
- visible leadership follow-up
- consistent escalation processes
- incidents tracked at a whole-school level rather than remaining isolated.

If embedded poorly, it risks adding administrative requirements without reducing ambiguity or pressure.

During rollout, schools are expected to:

- maintain clearer records of incidents and actions
- address urgent matters without delay
- involve wellbeing teams earlier
- integrate bullying prevention within broader behaviour planning.

This may influence how documentation is completed, how concerns are escalated and how quickly leadership becomes involved.

Safe schools rely on safe systems, which must protect staff as well as students.

A framework does not improve practice on its own. Its value lies in how it operates within each school.

Strong implementation should include:

- clear communication of expectations
- time allocated within workload to follow procedures properly
- leadership intervention when matters escalate
- acknowledgement that bullying incidents affect staff wellbeing and safety.

The IEU will continue advocating to ensure implementation supports professional practice rather than increasing complexity.

Questions for your workplace

As changes are introduced, members should consider:

- Is the reporting process clearly understood?
- Who follows up incidents, and within what timeframe?
- Are escalation pathways consistent?
- Are staff genuinely supported through the process?

Raising issues early through leadership or your IEU chapter helps ensure systems are practical and sustainable.

Policies alone do not improve schools. Clear processes, accountable leadership and collective voice do.

What members can do

- Review your school's updated anti-bullying policy.
- Familiarise yourself with reporting and escalation pathways.
- Access employer guidance materials or professional learning related to bullying prevention and response.
- Speak with your IEU organiser if processes are unclear or unworkable.

The effectiveness of the NSW Anti-Bullying Framework will be measured not only by compliance in 2027, but also whether our members feel supported. When bullying happens, staff need systems that function in practice not simply policies on paper.

Christina Ellul Professional Engagement Lead

Model A schools

Real gains on pay as members resist inferior paid parental leave

Amanda Hioe
Assistant Secretary



As bargaining resumes for new multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) for teachers and support staff in Catholic independent Model A schools, union members are using collective pressure to deliver real gains in pay and improved working conditions.

- Members in these schools have locked in increases of 10.5% over the next three years (that is, 3.75%, 3.5% and 3.25%).
- These increases follow an impressive 10% increase over the last two years delivered under the current MEAs.
- The new proposed MEAs will also secure payment of superannuation on paid parental leave and introduce two days of paid cultural and ceremonial leave.

Other improvements achieved in bargaining include:

Teachers

- a new six-step classification structure with two additional steps in Band 2, but retaining the existing Band 3 teacher arrangements. During the transitional period, teachers will continue to receive annual increases until their salary catches up to their relevant step
- a workload transparency clause to ensure that teachers are made aware of their workload expectations on engagement, and from time to time
- a new professional allowance recognising Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers.

Support staff

- broader coverage, which will now include counsellors and psychologists
- fairer evidence requirements for personal/carer's leave in line with teachers in the same schools
- retention of competitive pay and classification structures.

Strong collective action at Mater Dei Early Childhood Education has resulted in a meeting between the union and the employer. While these employees will not be covered under the proposed MEAs, the union has requested to commence bargaining for a separate enterprise agreement.

Paid parental leave

While all other claims have made significant progress, one major unresolved issue in bargaining is paid parental leave.

Model A schools proposed to move away from existing arrangements that offer 14 weeks of paid parental leave for the initial primary carer, which do not include non-term time.

Instead, the schools are offering 16 weeks of paid parental leave, which would include non-term time.

This appears to be an increase in paid parental leave, but the inclusion of non-term periods means many workers would receive less paid parental leave when the non-term time exceeds the additional two weeks on offer.

For the non-initial primary carer, Model A employers propose only 12 weeks of paid parental leave, including the existing two weeks available at the time of birth (or placement in the case of adoption).

This falls below the standard already set in government, Catholic and independent schools across NSW.

Members stood strong through collective chapter action to resist inferior paid parental leave entitlements. Through this active engagement, Model A employers have agreed to the IEU claims and bargaining will now progress to drafting the new agreement.

See also: Model A: Good pay rises as sticking points resolved, page 5.

NSW backs Victorian teachers in fight for fair pay

David Towson
Deputy Secretary



A graduate teacher in a Catholic systemic school in NSW has a starting salary of \$90,177, while an experienced classroom teacher at the top of the seven-year scale receives \$129,536 a year. In the Broken Bay Diocese, the pay rates are even higher.

In contrast, graduate teachers in Catholic schools in Victoria are paid \$79,589 a year. Experienced classroom teachers at the top of the scale earn \$118,063 a year.

This means experienced teachers in Victoria earn about \$440 less each fortnight compared with their NSW colleagues.

Further, teachers in NSW Catholic systemic schools will receive a 3% pay rise in October this year, and support staff gain a 3% increase in July.

Denied right to strike

The IEU Victoria Tasmania Branch (IEU VicTas) has made a claim for a 37% salary increase for staff in Victorian Catholic schools over three years.

This claim is an attempt to address the glaring pay discrepancies between NSW and Victoria.

Members of the Australian Education Union (AEU) Victorian Branch, which represents staff in Victorian government schools, are also campaigning for decent wages.

AEU members voted to take industrial action and stop work for 24 hours on 24 March if the Victorian government does not make an acceptable offer to resolve their wage claim.

IEU members in Victorian Catholic schools are currently denied the right to ballot for protected industrial action.

Fair bargaining

Teachers in Victorian government schools have a single employer (the state government). In the Victorian Catholic sector, there are more than 30 employers.

To enable coordinated fair bargaining across all these employers, IEU VicTas is seeking a Single Interest Authorisation (SIA).

The Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA), on behalf of employers, opposes the union's request to bargain under an SIA.

This prevents IEU VicTas members from striking alongside the AEU on 24 March. It stands in stark contrast to 2022, when the IEU's NSW/ACT Branch and NSW Teachers Federation members rallied together in their thousands so successfully.

As a result, IEU VicTas has had to campaign for an SIA by demonstrating to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) that there is majority staff support for fair bargaining across the sector.

Three officers from the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch went to Victoria to assist with this campaign last October.

Standing in solidarity

After the VCEA stated its workforce comprised 35,000 employees, IEU VicTas last year gathered 20,000 employee signatures as part of its application to the FWC.

The VCEA then told the FWC it had 45,000 employees – 10,000 more than previously stated – to sow doubt about the level of support for the union's campaign.

How does an employer make a miscalculation of that magnitude? Did they employ an extra 10,000 employees towards the end of 2025?

Right to take action

The right to take industrial action is fundamental. Catholic school employees in every other state and territory enjoy this workplace right.

The IEU does not take industrial action lightly.

Industrial action may ultimately not be required, but our colleagues in Victoria deserve the right to access it.

We stand in solidarity with our colleagues in Victoria and wish them every success in their campaign.

Members meet federal MP



The Northern Beaches Sub Branch welcomed federal independent MP Dr Sophie Scamps to its annual general meeting on 24 February at Dee Why RSL.

Before she was elected to federal parliament in 2022, Dr Scamps (pictured back row, third from left) was a general practitioner.

She brought crucial clinical skills to both her election campaign and the sub branch meeting.

“Our superpower was listening,” she said. “When you’re a GP, listening is 90 per cent of everything you do before you lay a hand on a patient, before you do an investigation. Listening is key.”

“People appreciate when you really try to hear and represent the people in front of you and around you. And if you can do that in a genuine way, that’s what motivates people.”

Listening to our members

The Northern Beaches is one of 19 geographical IEU sub branches across NSW and the ACT, in addition to the Principals’ Sub Branch.

Sub branch meetings are the principal forum for the union to listen to our members.

They are a vital way for union reps and members from various schools to come together once a term to discuss key workplace issues, share insights and stay informed about union campaigns and developments.

The meetings provide a supportive and collaborative environment where members have the opportunity to:

- represent and advocate for your chapter on important workplace matters

- stay up to date on industrial changes, negotiations, and union initiatives
 - connect with teachers and professional and support staff from other schools in your region and build a strong support network.
- Sub branches meet four times a year (once per term). We invite all reps to attend. Most meetings are followed by dinner and drinks for all meeting participants.

See also: *Term 1 Sub branch reports, pages 16-18*

RESPECT @Aspect

Survey reveals serious safety issues, low morale

The union met with Aspect representatives on 4 March to discuss serious safety issues and unfair pay raised by IEU members employed as teacher aides.

Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia) is a large autism-specific services provider.

It operates schools across NSW as well as employing staff to work in satellite classes attached to government and non-government schools.

The union’s survey of IEU members employed by Aspect revealed serious safety issues and concerns about unfair pay.

More than 60 per cent of members who responded to a survey said they had been injured at work.

Sixty-four per cent reported they had not been provided with paid time to write an incident report but had to complete it in their own time.

Worryingly, 84 per cent said reporting an incident felt pointless because the employer fails to act.

The survey also found many members undertake higher duties without additional pay.

Aspect staff deserve fair pay

The survey was conducted in 2025 as part of the union’s campaign for fair pay and conditions, following an earlier survey of members in 2024.

Under the Independent Schools NSW (Professional and Operational Staff) Multi-Enterprise Agreement (MEA), Aspect teacher aides are paid about 14% less than their counterparts employed in NSW government schools and Catholic systemic schools.

The annual full-time MEA rate for an Aspect teacher aide is more than \$10,000 less than the full-time rate for their counterparts in Catholic systemic and government schools.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews in December outlined the union’s concerns about this pay disparity in a letter to Aspect.

Matthews said members had told the union it was “demoralising not to be paid fairly” and “Aspect do not value their staff or the work we do”.

“This pay disparity is particularly concerning

considering Aspect teacher aides work in environments which are more demanding and require greater skill,” Matthews said.

Financial documents lodged with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission show Aspect recorded a surplus of \$28 million in 2024 – and received \$130 million in revenue from taxpayers.

Union calls for pay rise

Matthews and IEU officers met with Aspect representatives on 4 March to discuss members’ concerns, including low pay rates.

The union asked the employer for an interim pay rise before the new MEA begins in 2028.

Matthews said staff should be paid for performing higher duties even when the period is less than a full day.

She also raised concerns that members are not paid for additional hours worked when covering higher duties during teacher absences, due to an Aspect policy requiring prior approval for extra hours.

“Teacher aides should be paid for all additional hours worked when they perform higher duties,” she said. “Additional hours required at short notice when a teacher aide is not acting up should also be paid.”

The union sought further information on measures to address work health and safety issues and underreporting of incidents.

These matters will be pursued at a follow-up meeting in Term 2.

Membership means strength

Strong union membership means the union has greater bargaining power. The union urges staff in Aspect schools to join.

“It all starts with a solid membership base,” Matthews said.

“We aim to drive meaningful change through a strong grassroots campaign. We encourage everyone to join the union and get involved.”

International Women’s Day 2026



On International Women’s Day (IWD), and every day, the IEU continues to fight for equality for women in salaries and conditions.

IWD is not a day to gather round and enjoy cupcakes provided by employers.

It is a call to action to continue our progress towards equal pay, gender equity and a fairer, more just world for all women and girls. With the IEU’s membership comprising 76 per cent women, the union is committed to fighting for gender equality and enhancing working rights for women.

Newcastle

IEU members joined the IWD rally in Newcastle on 8 March. Gathering in Gregson Park, Victorian Trades Hall Council Assistant Secretary Wil Stracke said IWD was rooted in working women demanding equality at work in the early 1900s.

Today we can look back and celebrate how far we’ve come. But Wil said IWD is also a day of protest because women are still not safe, respected or equal in the workplace.

“Two-thirds of working women have experienced gender-based violence in

the workplace,” she said. “One in five has left the workplace because we do not feel safe.

“We are less likely to be promoted and more likely to be in casual and insecure work.

“Around half of us have experienced some form of workplace discrimination.

“And we are not yet equal because we won equal pay in the 1970s, but do we have equal pay? No. There is still work to be done.”

After her rousing speech, Wil joined other union and community leaders to lead the march through the streets of Hamilton.

A strong IEU contingent marched along singing what has become the annual IWD anthem, a sea shanty with the chorus ‘hoo-ray and up she rises’.

The rally was loud, proud and colourful with union flags jostling for space between umbrellas, banners and megaphones. The rain came in hard as we made our way back to Gregson Park, but the IWD spirit was far from dampened.

This year’s IWD rally in Sydney was held on 13 March after Newsmonth went to press.



Education degrees

How to attract the best and brightest into teaching

Denise McHugh
Deputy President



Every year when university offers are made, the same moral panic emerges: students with low ATARs are being offered places in teaching degrees.

This year's headlines follow the same tired script — breathless, alarmist and light on facts.

What is the ATAR?

The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is not a measure of intelligence, character or teaching potential.

It is a ranking of Year 12 results against a cohort, shaped by subject choice, scaling, school resources and life circumstances.

At its core, it is a way of rationing scarce university places by deciding who gets into which course at which university.

That is why the ATAR cut-off for law at Sydney University sits around 99.50, compared to 86 for the same degree at the University of New England. It reflects demand and competition for places, not the inherent "quality" of students.

Treating ATAR as a proxy for quality ignores the complexity of the system and the uneven playing field students face.

Degrees of knowledge

Some students with ATARs under 50 have been offered places in teaching degrees.

These offers do not mean standards have collapsed or students are waded into classrooms based on a single number.

University entry no longer depends on a single number represented by the ATAR. Instead, offers reflect adjustment factors, alternative entry pathways, bridging programs and targeted equity schemes.

Alarmist headlines also ignore the point of enrolling in a degree.

Teaching requires students to pass literacy and numeracy tests, complete professional experience placements and meet accreditation standards to progress and graduate.

Capability is tested repeatedly before anyone is allowed into a classroom.

Make teaching attractive

But the real question is why so many students with high ATARs do not choose teaching degrees.

High-achieving students look at teaching and see unsustainable workloads, endless compliance, rising behavioural complexity with shrinking specialist support, public blame for systemic problems and starting salaries that lag

behind professions with comparable responsibility.

The NSW Labor government has sought to address these issues by reducing teacher shortages, converting temporary contracts to permanent roles, improving conditions in hard-to-staff schools and investing in wellbeing and behaviour supports.

Teacher vacancies are down, permanency is up

and workforce stability is improving. None of this fixes everything overnight — but it shows that policy settings and political will make a difference.

Anyone who has worked in schools knows that great teachers bring far more than exam scores: communication skills, cultural understanding, empathy, classroom presence and the grit to keep showing up when the work is hard.

If we are serious about teacher quality, the conversation needs to move beyond cheap headlines and towards making teaching a profession that high-achieving students choose because it is respected, supported and sustainable.

“Anyone who has worked in schools knows that great teachers bring far more than exam scores.”

Model A: Good pay rises as sticking points resolved

Helen Templeton
Vice President Non Systemic



It's hard to believe we've only been back teaching for a matter of weeks, because the pace and intensity of Term 1 have already made it feel more like months.

Between reacquainting ourselves with classes, re-establishing routines, and attempting to complete in weeks what realistically requires far longer, the start of 2026 has been characterised by both momentum and exhaustion.

Amid this, however, a sense of long-awaited progress is emerging, with the Model A Catholic independent schools agreement finally nearing resolution.

Sustained member pressure throughout the bargaining process has resulted in several important wins for both teachers and support staff. These include annual pay increases of 3.75% (2026), 3.5% (2027) and 3.25% (2028), superannuation payable on paid parental leave, and two days of cultural and ceremonial leave.

For teachers, the introduction of a six-step Model A classification structure, a workload transparency clause, and a new Highly Accomplished/Lead Teacher allowance are meaningful strides toward recognising the profession's complexity and expertise.

Importantly, all current teachers will transition to the expanded pay scale without disadvantage, ensuring continuity and clarity.

Support staff have made strong progress, with broader coverage to include counsellors and psychologists, improved personal/carer's leave evidence requirements, and pay structures that remain competitive with other sectors.

Sticking points over paid parental leave provisions are now resolved through member action. Model A employers proposed to change paid parental leave for initial primary caregivers which would have resulted in reducing the current entitlement.

Equally concerning was the inferior offer of paid parental leave for non-initial primary carers compared to other sectors.

Those two issues have now been resolved, bringing Model A schools more in line with other school sectors.

As bargaining continues, we urge members to keep informed of union updates and be engaged with the union to ensure teachers and support staff at your schools are receiving conditions which align with sector-wide standards.

More information

Real gains on pay as members resist inferior paid parental leave, page 3.



In the media

Teachers are more than an ATAR

The release of university admissions data in February prompted another round of teacher bashing in the media.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that hundreds of students with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) below 50 had been accepted into university teaching degrees in 2025.

Appearing on 9News, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Deputy Secretary David Towson told host Deborah Knight the figures represented only 2 per cent of students enrolled in education degrees.

David said the data also showed more students were applying to study teaching degrees, "which is critically needed across the nation, so this is not entirely bad news".

He pointed out that roughly the same number of students with an ATAR above 90 also chose to enrol in teaching degrees last year.

"It's not that the standards are being lowered," he said. "It is a rigorous course to become a teacher."

Teachers must meet minimum requirements in literacy and numeracy to complete their degrees as well as fulfil a series of practical components.

"I think it's fair to say that it's more important what comes out of the universities in terms of: Are they qualified teachers? And will they offer a decent education for our children?"

David also said the IEU's success in achieving better pay and conditions for teachers in non-government schools had led to greater interest in the profession.

Union resources

For various resources, including recruitment posters, fact sheets on rights and responsibilities, resources for reps, women and equity resources, and calendars, visit: www.ieu.asn.au/resources



Can't afford to join the union? Or can't afford not to ...

Did you know the IEU advocates for better pay and conditions, and provides individual support to members?

Don't leave yourself unprotected. And remember, union fees are tax deductible.

Find out why joining the union is something you can't put off.

Just started teaching? Here's what you need to know ...

So, you've just landed your first teaching job. Congratulations, you've taken your first steps into a rewarding profession.

While starting a new job is exciting, it can also be overwhelming, and there may be things you're unsure about.

The IEU is here to answer your questions and to provide support and assistance as you navigate your new career.



Independent Education Union of Australia New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory Branch

ELECTION NOTICE - E2026/19 and E2026/29

Scheduled/Insufficient Nominations/Casual Vacancy Elections
Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009

Nominations are called for:

E2026/19

Sub-Branch Delegates to Council from the following Sub-branches: (Scheduled)

Central Coast	(6)
Central Metropolitan	(6)
Central West	(6)
Cumberland	(6)
Hunter Valley	(6)
Ku-ring-Gai	(6)
Lansdowne	(6)
Metropolitan East	(6)
Mid North Coast	(6)
Monaro	(6)
North Coast	(6)
North West	(5)
Northern Beaches	(5)
Northern Suburbs	(6)
Penrith/Blue Mountains	(6)
Principals	(4)
Riverina	(6)
South Coast	(6)
South East	(5)
Southern Suburbs	(6)

E2026/29

Assistant Secretaries (Casual Vacancy)	(2)
General Executive Members (Insufficient nominations)	(3)
Financial Officer (Insufficient nominations)	(1)
Vice President for Early Childhood Education and Care (Insufficient nominations)	(1)
Delegate to Federal Council (Insufficient nominations)	(1)

Nominations, which must be in writing and comply with the registered rules of the Organisation, may be made at any time from **17/03/2026**. Additional forms are available from the Returning Officer. *Prospective candidates and nominators should verify their financial status and any other qualifications required by the Organisation's rules prior to lodging nominations.*

Nominations must reach the Returning Officer via the lodgement method(s) stipulated below **not later than, 4pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) on 7/04/2026**.

How to lodge nominations, nominations must be lodged via the following method(s):

By Email: A properly completed nomination form including all necessary signatures and attachments may be scanned and submitted as a **PDF** file to **IEBnominations@aec.gov.au**

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Emails to the AEC inbox that appear to be spam may be blocked. *It is the responsibility of senders to ensure that their email reaches the AEC before the deadline for nominations.*
2. In order to be able to be received by the AEC, emails (including attachments) should be no greater than 6 MB in size.
3. You may call 03 9285 7111 to enquire about the status of your nomination.
4. You will be sent an acknowledgment of receipt of your nomination by Email.
5. The subject line of your email should read: **"E2026/19 and E2026/29 IEUA NSW/ACT Branch - Nomination [insert name]"**

Acknowledgment

You will be sent an acknowledgment of receipt of your nomination by email.

Candidate Statements

Candidates may submit a statement to be included with ballot material. Such a statement must not exceed **two hundred (200)** words containing only the candidate's personal history and/or policy statement, may include a passport size photograph and be in **Microsoft Word format**. Only statements which comply with the rules and are received by the Returning Officer by **4pm (AEST) on 7/04/2026** are accepted.

Withdrawing Nominations

Nominations cannot be withdrawn after **4pm (AEST) on 14/04/2026**.

Recall of Insufficient Nominations

 (applicable to Sub Branch Delegates to Council positions only)

Recall of insufficient positions open on **14/04/2026** and close at **4pm (AEST) on 21/04/2026**.

Voting Period

The ballot, if required, will open on **06/05/2026** and closes at **12:00 noon (AEST) on 03/06/2026**.

Scrutineers

The appointment of scrutineers opens **17/03/2026** and closes at **12:00 noon (AEST) on 03/06/2026**. A form is available from the Returning Officer for the purposes of appointing Scrutineers.

Replacement Voter Pack

If the postal vote pack is not received by 12/05/2026 voters may contact the AEC to request a replacement voter pack by calling 02 9375 6366 or 03 9285 7111 or by sending email to **IEBEvents@aec.gov.au** If you are on the roll of voters, a replacement ballot pack will be sent by regular mail.

Other Information

Changed Address? Advise your Organisation now. The postal vote pack will be sent to your current postal address as provided to the AEC by your Organisation.

Privacy

The AEC handles personal information in accordance with our Privacy Policy. Further information can also be found in the relevant AEC Privacy page and the IEB collection notice.

Post-Election Report

A copy of the AEC's post-election report can be obtained from the organisation or from the returning officer after the completion of the election.

Hanish Gupta - Returning Officer

Telephone: 03 9285 7111

Email: **IEBEvents@aec.gov.au**

Stronger together: How the IEU works

Here is the organisational structure of the Independent Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch. We're the union for teachers and professional, operational, administrative and support staff and principals in Catholic schools, independent schools, early childhood education and care centres and post-secondary colleges.

Sub branches

The IEU has 20 sub branches: 19 geographical sub branches (listed below) and one for principals. All the reps from a particular geographical area meet once a term at their sub branch, along with their union organiser.

Sub branches elect a president, deputy president, secretary and committee once a year. In Term 1, Sub branch meetings are a way for reps and members to provide feedback to the union about what's happening on the ground in their workplaces, and to meet and talk to reps from other schools and sectors. IEU organisers also attend to share union updates and information.

All chapter reps and IEU members who would like to develop their union activism are warmly invited to attend their region's sub branch meeting. Each sub branch is represented by four to six delegates to Council (see right).

IEU sub branches: Central Coast; Central Metropolitan; Central West; Cumberland; Hunter Valley; Ku-ring-gai; Lansdowne; Metropolitan East; Mid North Coast; Monaro; North Coast; Northern Beaches; Northern Suburbs; North West; Penrith/Blue Mountains; Riverina; South Coast; South East; Southern Suburbs; and Principals.

Reps

Each chapter elects a union representative (or rep, sometimes called a delegate). Some chapters have more than one rep: one for teachers and one for support, administrative and operational staff. Some chapters elect a committee.

The rep arranges chapter meetings, keeps members informed of union issues and liaises with your union organiser. They are the first port of call for IEU members in the workplace.

Chapters

A chapter is the group of IEU members in each school or early childhood centre (excluding principals, who have their own chapter). Chapters are the union's foundation. When new staff join the workplace, members should personally invite them to join the union.

The chapter elects one or more reps (see above) and may also elect a chairperson and a secretary.

Members

The IEU has more than 32,000 members in non-government schools, preschools and long day care centres, colleges and other educational institutions throughout NSW and the ACT.

Our members are teachers, principals, administrative and support staff, learning support and wellbeing staff and maintenance and operational staff. They are administrative staff, Aboriginal Education Officers, teacher's aides, laboratory assistants and library assistants, canteen staff, nurses, counsellors, boarding-house supervisors, bus drivers, grounds-keepers, archivists and many other non-teaching employees in the non-government education sector.



Council

Council is the ultimate governing and decision-making body of the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch, bringing together up to 115 members elected by our 20 sub branches every two years. IEU Council also includes 22 members of the IEU Executive (see below), who are elected by the full IEU membership every three years. This means there can be up to 137 members of Council.

Council meets four times a year in Sydney, on a Saturday, including an AGM in October, at which the union's Annual Report is presented. These meetings are an opportunity for members and union officials to exchange information and ideas and to consider and decide the business of the branch (excluding financial management: see Executive, below) in the interests of members. IEU officers (organisers, industrial officers, some professional staff) also attend Council but do not have voting rights.

Each sub branch elects delegates to Council every two years (while the number of delegates is determined by the size of the sub branch, most are entitled to elect five or six delegates while principals elect four).

Executive

The Executive consists of 22 members who are elected every three years, with current financial members entitled to vote. The Executive is responsible for the branch's financial management and for overseeing strategic priorities between quarterly Council meetings.

The Executive includes the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and two Assistant Secretaries who oversee the union staff in the day-to-day running of the union, and negotiate for pay and conditions in enterprise agreements for members. These are paid, full-time positions.

The Executive also includes honorary positions, including the President, who chairs Council meetings and Executive meetings, a Deputy President and five Vice Presidents who represent the interests of members in the ACT, Catholic systemic schools, independent schools, support staff and early childhood services. The Executive usually meets in Sydney on the first Friday of the month (except January). Additional meetings on urgent matters may occasionally be held online. Members of the Executive are also automatically voting members of Council.

Staff

The IEU has about 75 staff across our six offices in Canberra, Lismore, Newcastle, Parramatta, Wollongong and our main Sydney headquarters.

We have about 30 organisers and eight industrial officers as well as professional staff including our accounts team, membership team, IT, reception and administrative staff, media and communications team and professional engagement, policy and child protection staff.

Advisory committees

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch also has several advisory committees:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee
- Early Childhood Education and Care State Council
- Environment Committee
- Professional Engagement Committee
- Women and Equity Committee.





Aunty Mary Atkinson, pictured with Wagga Wagga Mayor Dallas Tout, was named 2026 Wagga Wagga Citizen of the Year.

Aunty Mary Atkinson

Union Elder named citizen of the year

The IEU congratulates Aunty Mary Atkinson on being named 2026 Wagga Wagga Citizen of the Year.

An Elder on the union's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee, Aunty Mary was honoured for her contribution to education over 25 years, including with the Diocese of Wagga Wagga's Catholic schools.

Aunty Mary said she felt honoured and humbled to be named citizen of the year.

"I was a little bit overwhelmed because of the number of people on that stage with me who all deserved the same award," she said.

"All the way through my life and my journey, it's been about giving back to community."

Aunty Mary said she had received many congratulatory messages and hugs from young people whose lives she has touched since receiving the award in January.

"I've even had messages from young ones who have grown up and their children are coming to school," she said.

"They all call me Aunty Mary. They've always shown me respect, and they still do that today."

Aunty Mary said her parents taught her the importance of giving back to the community with kindness and respect.

"You don't do it for the awards," she said.

"You do it to make a difference in people's lives."

City of Wagga Wagga mayor Dallas Tout said Aunty Mary was a tireless advocate for the First Nations community.

"Wagga Wagga holds deep gratitude for the care and cultural guidance Aunty Mary Atkinson has shared with this city and its people over many years," he said.

"For decades, she has used her deep connection to Country and generous spirit to help foster understanding, respect and unity across our community, and her ongoing contribution to building meaningful relationships and a more connected city is profound."

A proud IEU member since 2012, Aunty Mary has helped guide the union in standing in solidarity with Indigenous communities.

IEU Assistant Secretary Lyn Caton said Aunty Mary had made an extraordinary contribution to education and touched countless lives.

"Her unwavering support for teachers, Aboriginal Community Liaison and Families Officers, students and their families reflect deep care, wisdom and commitment to community," she said.

"As a proud Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal Elder, her advocacy for First Nations people has been steadfast and inspiring."

"We offer our heartfelt congratulations, gratitude and love from everyone at the IEU."



Rife in classrooms, new study finds

Women teachers face a resurgence of misogyny in classrooms that new research finds is often expressed openly, aggressively and with apparent impunity.

A survey of Australian teachers found threats directed at women teachers were not taken seriously even though employers have a legal obligation to eliminate unlawful behaviour in workplaces, including gender-based harassment.

The report, *The reanimation of normative manhood acts in schools: teachers' accounts of boys' manosphere-aggravated misogyny*, examined teachers' experiences of sexism and misogyny incidents in the classroom.

Testing of power

Monash University Professor Steven Roberts said teachers highlighted a clear shift in student behaviour in recent years.

"Misogyny in schools has become more explicit, more aggressive and marked by a growing sense of entitlement and impunity among some boys," he said.

"What was once contained to online manosphere spaces is now being acted out in classrooms, often with little fear of consequences and a confidence that authority will not be enforced."

Roberts said this behaviour functioned as "manhood acts" or performances through which boys assert superiority over girls and women and gain status by showing they can defy or humiliate authority.

"Women teachers report not just disrespect, but a deliberate testing of power," he said.

"Students are acting as though they are untouchable and that women's authority does not need to be taken seriously."

Roberts said humour was used strategically, not to soften harm, but to deny accountability. "Just joking" becomes a way to assert dominance while sidestepping consequences," he said.

Monash University researcher Dr Stephanie Wescott, a co-author of the report, said threats that are gendered, sexualised or directed at women are routinely minimised, delayed or managed away by schools.

"Misogyny in schools is not a 'behaviour issue' or a matter of resilience – it is a safety issue," she said.

"When threats, harassment and intimidation of women are treated as low-level, harm is effectively sanctioned.

"This isn't simply poor behaviour, it's a culture where some boys feel entitled to dominate, disrupt and demean, confident that the system will absorb the harm rather than stop it."

Employers have legal obligation

Women's safety in the workplace is a key concern for IEU members.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said schools must implement measures to ensure employees are safe and free from harassment.

"This positive duty imposes a legal obligation on employers to take proactive and meaningful action to prevent unlawful conduct from occurring in the workplace including behaviour by students towards employees," she said.

The Respect@Work reforms, passed by the Albanese government in 2022, impose a positive duty on employers to eliminate unlawful behaviour in workplaces, including:

- discrimination on the grounds of sex
- sexual harassment
- sex-based harassment
- conduct creating a workplace environment that is hostile on the grounds of sex, and
- related acts of victimisation.

The IEU has also called on school employers, through the media, in formal correspondence and in meetings to provide confidential reporting mechanisms, prompt and thorough investigations and appropriate action against perpetrators.

More information

Read the report: bit.ly/4aC8xT9

IEU media release: ieu.asn.au/media-release-violence-in-schools

Mandatory PD

Know your rights

Since 2024, teachers who maintain accreditation at proficient or higher can count mandatory employer training as part of their 100 hours of professional development (PD) requirements.

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) defines mandatory training as any mandated employer course or compliance training.

This includes activities on topics such as anaphylaxis, CPR, first aid, child protection, fraud and corruption, and professional responsibilities.

Catholic systemic schools

The NSW and ACT Catholic Systemic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2025 stipulates "professional development that is a requirement of the Employer, excluding external study, must be offered within designated school time" (clause 11.3).

The self-administered, so-called 'SALT' modules, clearly fall under this category.

Members in Catholic systemic schools should ensure that an appropriate amount of staff meeting time, or time in lieu of staff meetings, is allocated for the completion of these online modules.

If this is not provided, members should contact their organiser.

Independent schools

A part-time teacher in an independent school who is required to attend professional development on a day they do not normally work should be paid for that attendance.

Payment is made at the teacher's usual casual rate, as the duty is in addition to their normal pro-rata hours.

Personal PD log

All teachers should maintain their personal PD log, either as a stand-alone document or by logging it on their eTAMS account.

Your employer does not have the right to access this information unless they are pursuing a performance management program with you.

Please note that NESA is conducting monitoring audits to evaluate how PD is delivered and accessed – and compliance audits to ensure teachers are compliant.

If you are randomly selected to be part of either of these two auditing processes, the union is keen to hear from you about how it is impacting teachers.

Pat Devery Organiser

Start Strong Pay Fair: Campaign ramps up

The IEU is calling on members to pull out your pink t-shirts and bring our fight for fair funding for community preschools to the NSW government with a rally on Wednesday 6 May.

Our Day of Action starts at 9.30am for a 10am rally at the top of Martin Place, near Parliament House.

This is just one of several union events for the Start Strong Pay Fair campaign for pay rises for teachers and educators in community preschools.

It follows the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) recommendation in February that the NSW government boost funding for community preschools to lift pay and working conditions.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews called on the NSW government to respect the FWC's recommendation and fund pay rises that properly value the work of staff in community preschools.

Matthews also wrote to NSW politicians following the FWC recommendation to discuss the urgent need for increased funding to support NSW community preschools.

IEU members and staff wore bright pink and sat in on a Budget Estimates hearings in March at NSW Parliament House featuring NSW Treasurer Daniel Mookhey (see below).

Matthews also invited MPs to discuss the issue with the union at Parliament House on 17 and 18 March.

"The NSW government must pay community preschool teachers and educators what they're worth," she said.

Campaign dates for your diary

- **Wednesday 18 March:** Preschools across NSW will hold a Wear Pink Day to show their support for the campaign and keep it visible.
- **Monday 23 March:** The union will hold a media event outside the FWC in Sydney as the matter is relisted, with the NSW government called back to the bargaining table.
- **Wednesday 6 May:** Rally and Day of Action, Martin Place at Macquarie Street, gather 9.30am for 10am start. Make signs and wear your best bright pink!

Union win

FWC backs pay rises for preschool teachers

The IEU has called on the NSW government to respect the Fair Work Commission (FWC) recommendation and boost funding for community preschools to lift the pay and conditions of teachers and educators.

Umpire's decision

The FWC on 16 February accepted the union's argument that the state government needs to increase funding for community preschools so they can provide long overdue pay rises.

"The NSW government must accept the umpire's recommendation and immediately fund pay rises that properly value the work of staff in community preschools," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"The NSW government has undervalued their work for far too long. This has caused a workforce crisis that must be fixed by paying salaries comparable with teachers in schools."

- Beginning preschool teachers: earn just \$72,497 a year under the applicable modern award, while their colleagues in schools and government preschools are paid more than \$90,000 a year.
- Experienced preschool teachers: under the modern award, the top rate for an experienced teacher is \$93,289 per year. In comparison, a teacher with the same level of experience working in a NSW government school or preschool is paid more than \$129,000 a year.

Matthews was interviewed by media outlets including the ABC, 2GB, 2SM and Triple M about the FWC's recommendation and the need for the NSW government to act immediately to boost funding for pay rises in community preschools.

Matthews told ABC Sydney that preschool teachers were paid substantially less than primary school teachers.

"Employees in preschools are worse off than everybody, and the Fair Work Commission has said, 'Look, the state government is the main funder of these essential services, and they need to fund them better,'" she said.

Politicians from across the political spectrum have called on the NSW government to boost funding to preschools for pay rises.

Upper House Greens MP Abigail Boyd said the FWC made it clear that the predominantly female workforce in preschools was undervalued, and "improving the rates of pay would directly promote gender equality".

Strong campaign

The FWC's recommendation comes four months after more than 1500 teachers, educators and supporters rallied in Martin Place in Sydney as well as in Lismore and Coffs Harbour in support of increased funding for community preschools.

The recommendation was handed down by the FWC in the course of proceedings initiated by the IEU – together with the United Workers Union and employer group Community Early Learning Australia – on behalf of more than 100 community preschools throughout the state.

Matthews offered special thanks to the union's preschool ambassador members who have advocated tirelessly on behalf of their colleagues at the FWC as well as state MPs and the media.

There are more than 700 community preschools across NSW that provide a vital service to families and communities by educating and caring for children aged three to five. The workforce is predominantly female.

Matthews said funding for community preschools is almost solely derived from the NSW government.

"Without an increase to NSW government funding to lift pay and conditions, many community preschools may be forced to cap enrolments, raise fees for families and, in some cases, close entirely," she said.



Members at parliament

IEU members and officers wore pink to a Budget Estimates hearing in NSW Parliament House on 4 March. Treasurer Daniel Mookhey welcomed IEU members before Greens MP Abigail Boyd questioned him about funding for community preschools (see below).

NSW government under pressure over preschools

NSW MPs are taking notice of IEU community preschool teacher members. Below is an exchange between Greens MP Abigail Boyd and NSW Treasurer Daniel Mookhey at a Budget Estimates hearing on 4 March.

Greens MP Abigail Boyd: Let's talk about the Fair Work Commission decision in relation to community preschool workers. And I'll note that in the gallery there are rank and file preschool members with over 150 years of teaching experience.

NSW Treasurer Daniel Mookhey: I welcome you. Very nice to see you. I believe they are IEU members. I congratulate you on being members of your union.

Abigail Boyd: So have you read the Fair Work Commission recommendation?

Daniel Mookhey: I've read a bit of it.

Abigail Boyd: Deputy President Wright issued a formal recommendation on 16 February directing the NSW government to take, quote, "all necessary action, including reviewing and increasing funding to give effect to this agreement". It's not a suggestion, it's a recommendation from the Fair Work Commission. Will you comply with it?

Daniel Mookhey: Well, we are very mindful of the Fair Work Commission's response. We also recognise very much the persistent advocacy of the childcare workers and the IEU

members I've met with. I've met with the union about this issue, and very much respect the fact they are using their rights under federal law to pursue an increase, as well as for the NSW government's immediate response to that recommendation ... I actually don't make the operational decision around our response to that, but I can absolutely let you know we are in dialogue with the [Education] Department about what its response is likely to be ... I'm aware of the recommendation. I'm aware that the issues are being worked through now.



Alarming rise in serious incidents in early childhood settings

The IEU has called for urgent action to address the staffing crisis in the sector as new data reveals ongoing child safety issues.

A Productivity Commission report shows there were 9430 serious incidents at early childhood services in NSW in 2024-25, a rate of 154 incidents reported per 100 centres. A serious incident is one that has a grave impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of a child.

It also reveals NSW's use of staffing waivers (which allow services a temporary exemption from some quality regulations), has more than doubled from 316 in 2019 to 658 in 2024 – the highest in the country.

"This data shows the sector needs urgent changes to rebuild a strong child safety culture," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "Well-trained, properly paid staff are key to solving this safety crisis."

Matthews said children attending centres with staffing waivers are at greater risk of serious harm. The reduction in the proportion of staff who have qualifications also directly impacts the safety of children.

"Well-trained, properly paid staff are key to solving this safety crisis."

"When there aren't enough staff, children aren't properly supervised, and that's when safety breaches occur," she said. "Serious incidents are often the result of inadequate supervision and that is a direct consequence of understaffing."

Matthews said better pay and conditions are key to improving the quality of services and solving the sector's staffing shortages.

Early childhood teachers should have pay comparable with their colleagues who teach in primary schools.

"Our members are constantly telling us that employers and governments need to take child safety seriously by addressing the staffing crisis in the sector," Matthews said.

The Productivity Commission's report also showed the importance of adequate staffing ratios to effectively protect the safety and best interests of young children attending early learning centres.

"Staff-to-child ratios must be reviewed, for example, to ensure that one adult is never left alone with a group of children," Matthews said.

"If one staff member leaves a group of 20 children to assist one child in the bathroom, that leaves one adult alone with 19 children."

SPOTLIGHT ON REPS

IEU reps share how they're building strong chapters. Strong chapters make for a strong union and therefore greater bargaining power for all members.

Brigid Eljed

Mary MacKillop College, Wakeley

Brigid Eljed teaches at Mary MacKillop Catholic College in Wakeley, in western Sydney. A mathematics teacher, Brigid believes "it's important to be a role model" for the girls she teaches.

Beginning her teaching career in 1976, Brigid is in her 51st year in the profession.

She became an IEU member in the 1980s when "someone came along and asked" because industrial action was under way. "So I joined them," she said.

Having stepped into the rep's role over the past few years, Brigid took part in an IEU training day last year.

She had attended her Cumberland Sub Branch meeting the previous evening, which gave her a clearer sense of the diversity of IEU membership.

"I notice the very big differences between the schools this union covers, the different contexts we work in and the different systems – but then there are many similarities," she said.

"I'm fascinated by how we can work together."

At Brigid's school, the chapter has a committee, so union tasks are shared.

"We've got four or five young teachers who are doing a really great job venturing into supporting members, even if

they haven't felt quite ready to take on the rep's role yet," Brigid said.

"We all look around the department we're in and invite each other to join. I'm happy to say in the maths department, I think we've achieved 100 per cent membership.

"It's just about pointing out to people why they might at some stage in the future, when they least expect it, need help from the union – so don't leave it till it's too late."

Brigid also refers to hard-won union achievements such as parental leave that members sometimes take for granted.

"We have to keep putting ourselves out there and protecting the rights we've gained," she said.

A keen traveller, Brigid visited Portugal and Rome in 2025 for the Catholic "Pilgrims of Hope" Jubilee Year.

Brigid also went to England, "then back to New Zealand, where the school I went to was celebrating 175 years", she said.



"We all look around the department we're in and invite each other to join."

Daniel Silva

MacKillop Education

Waranara School, Annandale

Daniel Silva is a science teacher at Waranara School in Annandale. Waranara supports about 100 students in Years 9-12 who have difficulty staying engaged with school.

Many of the students are experiencing mental health issues, trauma or school refusal.

Daniel said a key part of his role is re-engaging students with their education.

"There are definitely some challenging days," he said.

"But as with any individual, there's always a reason for certain behaviours and, luckily for us, we've got a good team who understand that."

The school started with just two small houses and about seven teachers, but has grown to 25 staff, including 12 teachers as well as learning support officers and administration staff.

Daniel became a rep for the same reason he became an IEU member: someone asked him.

"We're such a small school, and we needed someone, and it came down to someone asking if I would be happy doing it," he said.

Daniel had a good role model – a strong rep at his previous school.

"I saw the need for it, and I thought it's a great opportunity now that I'm more comfortable in my teaching career," he said.

"I've been teaching for 11 years now, so I would like to be that person for new staff – to give them the peace of mind that I was provided."

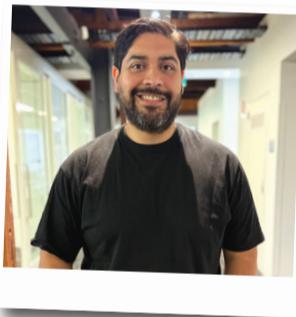
Daniel recalls sound advice from his previous rep, who told him: "At the end of the day, this group is here to support you when you feel isolated or unsure about certain situations."

Daniel, whose parents come from Chile, comes from a union background, with his grandfather having been highly involved in his union.

Daniel's Chilean heritage is an important part of his identity. Growing up, his family visited Chile every third year, as well as family in Norway.

"It's part of that massive canvas of who I am," he said. "I love travel

and culture. Implementing a course in my school about appreciating different cultures is an opportunity I've been able to realise."



"I would like to be that person for new staff – to give them the peace of mind that I was provided."



Sally Lloyd

Wollondilly Anglican College, Tahmoor

Sally Lloyd is a school nurse at Wollondilly Anglican College in Tahmoor, which caters to students from preschool to Year 12.

Sally has membership of both the IEU and the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, which the two unions offer to school nurses.

A registered nurse, Sally said her days are highly diverse.

"It can be anything from meeting students with complex medical needs and talking to their parents to minor abrasions or wounds," she said. "All the things that come to sick bay, like minor injuries, or we get the odd fracture."

"Sometimes someone has vomited on the bus," she said. "There's rashes, hives, you name it."

Then there is preparation for camps, excursions, swimming carnivals "and sometimes it can be as simple as just giving a little bit of TLC", Sally said.

Sally's role includes supporting students with type-1 diabetes, as well as administering and meticulously recording other prescribed medications, such as for ADHD.

With more than 900 students at the school, Sally is one of two nurses.

While she found the decision to leave hospital nursing a tough one, she speaks highly of her school and the camaraderie she has found among her colleagues. And now she's become a co-rep.

"When I became part of the IEU, the other rep mentioned to me that we needed a delegate who could encourage people in support roles to join," she said.

Sally heeded that call, becoming the co-rep with a teacher in 2025 and attending reps training late last year.

Sally's mum was a nurse who was also in her union. Her example led Sally to become the union delegate at Campbelltown Hospital before having her own children.

"When I was at the hospital, nearly everybody was a member of the union," she said.

Sally sought union assistance when her town held a country fair with an anticipated attendance of 15,000.

When the first-aid provider pulled out at the last minute, Sally agreed to run the first-aid station.

It was the union who sorted out who should pay her and at which rate.

"The union can always help if you're uncertain," she said.

Sally has a simple reason for becoming a union member.

"Together, we can be stronger," she said. "Our very existence helps hold employers to account."

Outside of work, Sally loves fishing and the beach.

"The ocean is my happy place, she said. "I love swimming, I could be in the water all day. We go down the south coast a lot. I love Ulladulla and Mollymook."

"Together, we can be stronger – our very existence helps hold employers to account."

Reps' training

Are you a newly elected rep or has it been some time since you last did any union training?

If so, register for reps training now to gain:

- an understanding of your rights and responsibilities as a rep
- strategies for running a successful chapter and for growing membership
- useful skills for supporting members
- an understanding of the current industrial landscape
- an overview of where you derive your entitlements.

We warmly invite newly elected reps or reps who have not attended training in the previous 12 months.

However, only reps who are officially recorded as a rep on the IEU database can attend this training (check this with your organiser).

IEU reps are entitled to reasonable access to paid time during normal working hours for training relating to their role as a union delegate. Please contact the IEU if you have any issues accessing your leave entitlements.

Find out more and register

Don't miss out. Places fill fast, so register now and secure your spot: ieu.asn.au/training-and-meetings

For more information, contact your school's IEU organiser or email repstraining@ieu.asn.au.

Wed 25 Mar	Canberra	IEU office	Phipps Close, Deakin
Thu 26 Mar	Wollongong	IEU office	Lowden Square, Wollongong
Fri 27 Mar	Anglican Schools Corp	IEU office	Wattle Street, Ultimo
Tue 31 Mar	Newcastle	Noah's on the Beach	Zaara Street, Newcastle
Fri 1 May	Aspect	IEU office	Wattle Street, Ultimo

KEEP UP TO DATE

with Professional Development and Reps Training

www.ieu.asn.au



Principal Ursula Jamieson, right, from St Thomas the Apostle Primary School in Kambah, ACT, marks 40 years of IEU membership with organiser Lyn Caton.



Principal Virginia Outred at St Joseph's Catholic School in Narrabeen, with her compendium in recognition of 40 fabulous years of IEU membership.



Brendan Boidin, right, celebrating 40 years of IEU membership with rep Joseph Collins at Trinity Catholic College in Auburn.



Bernadette Sirett receives recognition for 40 years of IEU membership from IEU organiser James Jenkins-Flint at St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Georges Hall.



Members with milestone certificates at Trinity Catholic Primary in Murrumburrah. From left, Ann Burns (20 years), Penelope Lucas (10 years), Rebecca Cooper (10 years), and Leanne Davis (20 years).



Vanessa Ross with her 20-year certificate at Good Shepherd Primary School in Amaroo ACT.



Sonya Huleatt with her 20-year certificate at Good Shepherd Primary School in Amaroo, ACT.



Sally Taurasi with her 30-year certificate at Good Shepherd Primary School in Amaroo, ACT.



Deborah McPherson, left, marks 30 years of IEU membership with rep Nicole Grimwood at St Patrick's Primary School in Bega.



Josephine Krippner, right, receives her 20-year certificate from rep Tiffany Fletcher at St Joseph's Primary School in O'Connor, ACT.



Bernadette Aitken with her 20-year certificate at Good Shepherd Primary School in Amaroo, ACT.



Rep Steph Wise, left, presents Elizabeth Addison with her 20-year IEU membership certificate at Trinity College in Goulburn.



Principal Gilda Pussich marks 40 years of IEU membership at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College in Kensington.



Celebrating member milestones at St Monica's Primary School in Evatt, ACT. From left, rep Susan Carswell, Carmel Rheinberger (30 years), Melinda Brown (20 years), with rep Stephanie Flynn.



Principal Debra Heckenberg celebrates 40 years of IEU membership at St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School, Arncliffe.



Clare Cummins marks 10 years of IEU membership with rep Sam Ross at Trinity Catholic College in Goulburn.

Professional development

Join us for PD in 2026

The IEU offers members a range of professional learning opportunities so you can stay informed about current developments in education and the latest workplace negotiations.

We've got more great professional development coming up in 2026. Check out these courses and register your interest via our website: ieu.asn.au/pd-and-events/

Christina Ellul
Professional Engagement Lead

24 March

My accreditation, my career: Part 2

If you've recently begun your teaching career or you're preparing to finalise your accreditation this year, this session will give you the clarity and confidence to complete the process successfully.

Our Professional Engagement team will be available during the session to guide you and answer any questions you may have. You are welcome to enrol in Part 2 even if you haven't attended Part 1.

What Part 2 covers

My accreditation, my career: Part 2 focuses on the practical, hands-on components of the accreditation process. We explore:

- how to collect and annotate your evidence with purpose and precision
- understanding and accessing your professional entitlements
- approaching and negotiating your observation lesson with confidence
- preparing and submitting your final accreditation portfolio.

Why this matters

Approaching the final stages of accreditation can feel complex, but you don't have to navigate it alone.

With clear guidance, practical examples and expert support, you'll leave this session feeling organised, confident, and ready to complete your accreditation successfully.

Details

Date: Tuesday 24 March, 4.30pm – 5pm
Where: Online via Zoom
Duration: 30 minutes
Audience: Perfect for second-year teachers, those intending to submit their accreditation this year, and the supervisors or mentors who support early career teachers.

13 May

CEMA: Course 1: Foundations of Assessment Literacy for Teachers

In today's educational landscape, making informed decisions about student learning requires teachers to base their judgements on clear and reliable evidence.

This course empowers teachers with the foundational skills to:

- create high-quality assessment tasks that enable students to demonstrate their learning outcomes effectively
- integrate results from summative and formative assessments to accurately track and monitor student progress
- communicate student learning clearly and precisely to various audiences, including administrators, parents, and students themselves
- establish a shared understanding of assessment with a teacher-centric focus.

By enhancing teachers' assessment of literacy, this course aims to improve student outcomes and support more effective teaching practices.

Led by Professor Jim Tognolini, Director of the Centre for Educational Measurement and Assessment (CEMA) at the University of Sydney, the course is designed to enhance your assessment literacy and practices.

Details

Date: Wednesday 13 May, 3.30pm – 5.30pm
Where: Online via Zoom
Duration: 2 hours
Standards: This course provides two hours of professional development, contributing to the 100-hour requirement for maintaining your accreditation. It addresses Standards 1, 5, 6, and 7 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. This course is also TQJ accredited.

More details and register for Zoom links

ieu.asn.au/pd-and-events or contact us at pd@ieu.asn.au



Professional development

Support for the reality of classroom life

IEU members have kicked off the year engaging in practical professional learning designed to support their day-to-day work. As your union, we know the job is more than just one task or title – it's layered, demanding and constant.

Members tell us that while much of their learning in schools is on curriculum and teaching, the challenges don't stop there. They're also looking for support with communication, wellbeing, leadership and building healthy workplace relationships.

Some of our recent professional development (PD) has focused on building confidence in having difficult conversations. *Transforming Difficult Conversations* presented by Sarah Moore provided practical frameworks and clear strategies to approach challenging workplace conversations with confidence. The session focused on moving discussions from avoidance to constructive, solution-focused outcomes.

Members told us in their feedback that they walked away with tools they could actually use. They spoke about feeling more prepared to step into difficult conversations instead of avoiding them, and more confident choosing clear, professional language when things feel tense.

Several members said the session helped them stay calm and steady in the moment and keep discussions centred on practical solutions rather than letting them spiral. One member said how helpful this would be when having challenging

conversations with parents. If you missed this session, keep an eye out as we will offer it again later in the year.

Practical strategies

Inclusivity is another area that has grown more demanding for teachers. In *Starting Well: The Basics of Inclusion* with The Culture Collective, members shared how practical the session was and how they gained strategies that could be used immediately in their classrooms.

The biggest takeaway for many was how manageable the strategies felt as they were grounded in what happens in classrooms. Members valued the practical ideas around tiered supports to meet different student needs and the co-regulation strategies that help build calm and connection.

Many spoke about simple routines and realistic ways to build inclusive practice into everyday teaching, not as an add-on, but as part of what they already do.

The focus remained firmly on strategies that work in real classrooms, within the time and workload pressures our members face.

We always encourage members to share their thoughts. Feedback is important in helping us navigate where to go next so we can ensure our PD reflects and supports the realities of your working life. Let us know at pd@ieu.asn.au.

Christina Ellul Professional Engagement Lead

WELCOMING NEW STAFF

The IEU is pleased to have welcomed new staff to our Sydney and Wollongong offices in the past few months.

Emily Cokely ECEC Organiser



Emily Cokely has been a familiar face in the IEU's Sydney office as part of the Worker Retention Payments (WRP) team, working in the long day care sector to help staff access union-won, government-funded pay increases of 15%.

In February, Emily took on a new role at the union as an organiser in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector where she will play a vital role in recruiting and servicing members.

"To be honest, there is no typical day," Emily said. "But I am usually either in the office mapping services to visit, conducting outreach and having meetings with the ECEC team regarding current campaigns or I am out on the road visiting services.

"Visiting centres is my favourite part of the job and the conversations I have with members and staff are the most important to me."

Dealing with knockbacks and rejection from difficult employers can be challenging, Emily said. "However, finding a way to hold my own in these conversations and establish leverage points that can't be dismissed has been an exciting challenge."

Before joining the IEU, Emily worked in a community-run, outside-school-hours care service and as a primary school tutor while studying at university.

She said these roles gave her a greater understanding of the "tireless work required to maintain a precarious balance among the chaos and the remarkable skill required to connect with children and young people".

Emily follows in the footsteps of several family members who also work in the education sector.

"I always felt I had a front row seat to the intelligence, diligence, nuance and care displayed by those in the teaching profession and a window into how challenging and ever evolving a role it is," she said.

Emily is passionate about the union movement and its capacity to improve people's working lives, fight for justice and enact positive change.

"It is wonderful to share a workplace with dedicated people who share a common cause," she said.

Outside of work, Emily said she picks up and puts down a lot of different hobbies.

"I love anything creative like drawing, painting, knitting and sewing," she said. "Enjoying music and being in the ocean are probably my favourite pastimes but really, I look forward to any excuse to spend time with the people I love."

Shirley Jancetic Organiser



Shirley Jancetic has hit the ground running in her new role as an IEU organiser based in Wollongong.

"So far, I've been visiting as many schools as possible and building positive, professional connections with reps, members, principals and leadership teams," she said.

Shirley has been supporting members by responding to enquiries about workplace matters and helping them better understand their rights under awards and enterprise agreements since becoming an organiser in January.

She is building her knowledge of the awards and agreements that cover schools across the state.

"I'm also adjusting to one small but noticeable change," she said. "Being in control of when I take a break, rather than having it dictated by a bell, as it was for more than 20 years in schools."

Shirley has mainly worked in primary schools in the Catholic systemic and government sectors during her career as well as with the NSW Education Standards Authority.

Her roles included assistant principal, syllabus and support material writer, curriculum adviser,

classroom teacher, specialist creative arts teacher, librarian, middle leader and education officer.

Shirley said the rep at her first school created a strong union culture in the workplace.

"She helped me understand how a collective voice improves working conditions and she shared stories of the wins the union had already made for teachers," she said.

Shirley values the union's role in maintaining and improving working conditions for teachers and support staff, promoting equality and helping ensure that workplace decisions prioritise people – not just profit margins.

"Through collective advocacy and professional support, the IEU works to ensure employers act fairly, transparently and in the best interests of their staff and school communities," she said.

Shirley said the most important part of her work as an organiser is being visible and approachable.

"When trust is established through genuine relationships, everything else flows more effectively: stronger engagement, membership growth, meaningful collective action and informed advocacy," she said.

Outside of work, Shirley spends much of her time in or around the ocean.

"I'm also the mother of three, which means I watch an inordinate number of soccer and footy games," she said.

"I enjoy walks with my beloved toy cavoodle Mali, catching up with friends over good food and wine, visiting art galleries and watching movies.

"I'm also a big fan of trawling through op-shops. There's nothing quite like the thrill of finding something unexpected and wonderful."

AROUND THE GLOBE

Around the globe brings you international news about injustices and workers' rights. If injustice exists anywhere, it exists everywhere.

Situation critical: Thai-Myanmar border

Refugees have been fleeing Myanmar into Thailand for more than 40 years.

After an influx of 10,000 people fleeing major conflict in Karen State in 1984, tens of thousands more arrived in the border region after an uprising against the military regime in August 1988. Among these refugees was Dr Cynthia Maung, a Karen medical doctor who founded the Mae Tao Clinic.

The clinic was set up in 1989 in a dilapidated shack with a dirt floor, tarp for a roof and a rice cooker used to sterilise medical instruments.

Fast forward to 2026, and vital organisations supporting refugees and vulnerable populations on the border are facing one of their biggest challenges yet: the Trump administration's dismantling of USAID funding.

The aid cut comes as organisations on the border continue to grapple with the fallout of the 2021 military coup which has restricted the flow of funding and humanitarian aid.

Dr Cynthia refuses to give up

A recipient of the 2013 Sydney Peace Prize, Dr Cynthia is well known among social justice organisations and the union movement. She is a hero to Karen and Burmese refugees who now call Australia home.

In March 2026, Dr Cynthia visited Australia to raise awareness of the dire situation the clinic faces, highlight the crucial role of border-based health organisations and seek support for people in need along the border.

In Sydney, Dr Cynthia updated unionists on the impact of the health and humanitarian crisis on the clinic, which continues to provide medical care, education and protection services despite the aid cuts.

"Our clinic started in 1989 when I fled to Thailand and that is a very similar situation to today – displacement, malaria, war injury and mental health problems," she said.

Most children in conflict zones close to the border have not had access to vaccinations since before the 2021 military coup. Diseases that had previously been eradicated in Thailand are making a comeback. Meanwhile, access to education is harder than ever.

"They cannot study," Dr Cynthia said. "And many schools are attacked. So all the schools must build bomb shelters. While schools are under threat, the military also targets health facilities."



Dr Cynthia Maung, founder of the Mae Tao Clinic, addresses unionists in Sydney on 5 March.

Education a fundamental right

Besides medical care, the clinic provides displaced children with access to education when their schools are closed due to fighting, airstrikes and war.

UNICEF reports that 1.3 million children in Myanmar had been displaced by the end of 2024. Hundreds of thousands of these children have crossed into neighbouring countries in search of safety.

Responding to the barriers these children face, the clinic runs the Early Childhood Development program and Children's Development Centre, which provides primary and secondary education.

Conflict is not the only barrier to education for children inside Myanmar. Over the past year, Dr Cynthia said schools have also been destroyed by floods and earthquakes.

But in Karen State, the constant threat of military attacks remains the greatest challenge. Teachers and children are taught survival skills, and school committees are strengthening safety procedures and strategies to protect students in the event of an airstrike or other crisis.

"Many schools have bunkers – it is very challenging for teachers and their mental health," Dr Cynthia said.

"They must take care of these children, and when they hear about an airstrike, they have to manage the situation. I think those teachers need a lot of courage.

"In the meantime, we are also trying to build the teacher network and education network to provide a safe place for students. Some students move to Thailand. Before the coup, we had around 8000 students studying at migrant learning centres. Now, there are almost 20,000. But there are still many children not in school."



Dr Cynthia Maung in her early days at the Mae Tao Clinic; photo credit: Mae Tao Clinic

More information

- Learn more about Dr Cynthia and support the work of the Mae Tao Clinic: maetaoclinic.org
- To support projects along the Thai-Myanmar border, visit Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA, the global justice organisation of the Australian union movement: apheda.org.au

Challenging student behaviours

Teachers must be better supported

Classrooms are becoming increasingly complex, with teachers and support staff responding to diverse learning needs, challenging behaviours and student wellbeing issues.

This complexity is driven by broader social, economic and health pressures, but it is being felt most acutely in our schools.

Education professionals are deeply committed to student success, but without adequate staffing, specialist support, time and training, current demands are unsustainable.

Class sizes are rightly recognised as a key factor in quality learning, and the IEU has successfully campaigned for and secured class size protections in many collective agreements.

However, class size alone is not the full story.

As classroom complexity increases, even smaller classes can become difficult to manage.

Teachers are spending less time teaching, as growing demands require them to respond to a complex combination of behavioural, cultural, language, medical and learning needs.

When staff are not provided with adequate support, classroom complexity significantly increases workload pressures and contributes to burnout and ongoing workforce retention challenges.

IEU members across the country are campaigning right now for stronger support and protections:

Support staff and teaching assistants

- accurate classification structures and wage levels that properly recognise the work value of support staff assisting students with additional learning needs
- additional paid hours to be offered to part-time and term-time teaching assistants to attend classes and activities involving students with identified support needs
- payment of health care allowances where support staff are required to care for or support students with documented health care plans
- access to high-quality, ongoing professional development focused on student learning, wellbeing and inclusion needs.

Teachers and school leaders

- targeted resources and guaranteed funding to ensure adequate release time for teachers and access to specialist psychological and behavioural supports
- formal recognition, including additional remuneration and release time, for coordination roles undertaken by inclusive education and learning support teachers
- reduced class sizes where students attend with identified learning or support needs
- collaboratively developed and enforced safety procedures and protocols for employees working with students who exhibit challenging or complex behaviours.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary



Cost of living

Wages must keep up with inflation

Inflation is again on the rise and eroding real incomes, leaving teachers, principals and support staff being asked to do more while effectively earning less.

To rebuild a sustainable education workforce, wages must not only recognise the complexity and value of the work – they must also ensure that education professionals do not fall behind as living costs accelerate.

Following a brief respite of real wage growth between 2023 and 2025, inflation is once again outpacing wages. The headline inflation rate of 3.8 per cent now exceeds average wage growth of 3.4 per cent.

These national averages also mask sharper cost of living pressures in some areas. In Brisbane, the Consumer Price Index surged 5.2 per cent and Perth recorded a 4.4 per cent increase.

The one bright spot with respect to pay, especially relevant to IEU members, is the continued wage premium won by union members. Union agreements deliver wages well in excess of non-union deals, representing a direct financial benefit of around \$1130 per year.

The Reserve Bank forecasts that real wages will continue to lag inflation until mid-2027.

We know that a high-quality education system is underpinned by pay and conditions that attract and retain a high-quality workforce. IEU members cannot afford to return to the dark days of severe real wage cuts which peaked in 2022.

Workplace reforms introduced by the federal Labor government have helped level the bargaining playing field and improve the capacity of IEU members to secure decent pay rises.

This momentum must continue. Now more than ever, we need wage outcomes that keep pace with rising costs and recognise the essential work of IEU members.

Our union will campaign in every workplace and in every bargaining round to ensure school staff are not left behind.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary

Thriving Kids report

Roadmap for better support in ECEC and schools



The Thriving Kids Advisory Group Report makes recommendations aimed at addressing the needs of children and students under nine years of age with developmental delay or autism and low to moderate support needs, outside the NDIS scheme.

The initiative is scheduled for roll out on 1 October 2026, with full implementation by 1 January 2028.

IEU members working in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and schools have frequently highlighted the increasing gap between the number of children and students presenting with additional support needs and the capacity for timely intervention provided by allied health and other support professionals.

Too often, teachers, educators and support staff in early childhood centres and schools have been left to manage the learning, emotional, social and behavioural needs of these children with inadequate or non-existent support.

As well as perpetuating inequities and delaying the achievement of a child's potential, the lack of appropriate support has also presented safety challenges, either to the child or student themselves, their peers, or the teachers, educators and support staff who work with them.

The IEU emphasised the need for a coordinated and targeted approach that improves access to allied health and professional support for children with additional needs during the consultations that informed the report and its recommendations.

Such an approach should both simplify and expedite the process for families as well as for those working in education and care settings.

The recommended model for the Thriving Kids Initiative includes the principle of co-design with the ECEC and school sector.

In addition, Recommendation 11 states that:

“The Committee recommends that a consultative group of professional organisations (including allied health peak bodies, pediatricians, child psychiatrists, child and family nurses, early childhood educators, and school educators) and parents involved in the system themselves, be part of the review process.”

Unions should be part of both the co-design and review process, to ensure that there is a platform for members to voice their concerns and provide feedback.

The IEU will continue to advocate for ongoing and meaningful consultation with our members during the development and implementation phases of the Thriving Kids model.

This will help ensure the design alleviates the workload burden on teachers, educators and support staff while achieving the aims of the initiative: better support for children, students and their families.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary

IEU speaks: The IEU has a federal union that represents, advocates for and acts on behalf of all 75,000 IEU members throughout Australia in matters of education policy, industrial relations and workplace laws.

Anti-discrimination law **Union backs MP's call to scrap religious exemptions**



The IEU backs Sydney Independent MP Alex Greenwich's call to scrap religious exemptions that make it legal to discriminate against school staff and students.

"We welcome Mr Greenwich's commitment to end the exemptions that permit non-government schools to target and punish LGBTQIA+ teachers and students," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"However, the problem is even worse than Mr Greenwich has identified."

Speaking ahead of Sydney's Mardi Gras parade in February, Mr Greenwich said he was committed to working with the NSW government to reform the state's anti-discrimination law.

At present, the *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act* allows faith-based schools to discriminate against people because of their gender,

disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity, marital status, pregnancy and even if they undergo fertility treatment.

"Teachers, support staff and school leaders have shared heartbreaking stories with the IEU of the discrimination they've experienced in the workplace," Matthews said.

"This includes teachers in Catholic schools being excluded from leaderships positions if they are divorced and staff in Christian schools sacked for allegedly being in a de facto or same-sex relationship."

Matthews said staff who don't meet these outdated rules are constantly at risk of disciplinary action, forcing them to hide personal details from their employer.

The NSW government is currently reviewing the state's anti-discrimination law, but there are no guarantees this long-running

review will recommend protections for teachers and school staff in faith-based schools. Nor is there any guarantee the NSW government will legislate recommendations arising from the review.

"Discrimination is unwelcome in schools and would be unlawful in every other industry," Matthews said.

"School employers have nothing to fear from modern community standards – they can still thrive without the need to discriminate."

"Changes to the anti-discrimination law could still allow religious schools to build communities of faith central to their ethos and character."

More information: NSW Anti-Discrimination Act: Time for reform



Emily and Britta,
 Teachers Health and IEU members

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Sub Branch reports

Term 1 | 2026

The IEU has 19 geographical sub branches across NSW and the ACT, plus the Principals' Sub Branch. Sub branches meet four times a year, usually in the first three or four weeks of each term.

Sub branch meetings are a way for reps and members to provide feedback to the union about what's happening on the ground in their workplaces. The meetings are also an opportunity for reps and members from each region to hear updates from IEU organisers.

Each sub branch sends four to six delegates to quarterly IEU Council meetings. Council is the union's decision-making body, bringing together about 115 member delegates from throughout NSW and the ACT.

The IEU Executive of 22 members is elected every three years by members.

All reps and any IEU members who would like to develop their union activism are warmly invited to attend their region's sub branch meeting.

Contact your rep or organiser if you would like more information.



Central Coast Sub Branch meeting

Central Coast

The Central Coast Sub Branch includes Gosford, Erina, Green Point, Lake Munmorah, Tuggerah, Wyong and surrounds.

The Central Coast Sub Branch met for its AGM on 19 February at the Ourimbah RSL Club.

Election of 2026 sub branch executive: Arden Cassie, President (re-elected); Maddy Hoskin, Deputy President; and Ann Hall, Secretary (re-elected).

It was noted that Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) teachers will be the highest-paid teachers in NSW by October 2027. This position may shift once the 2028 AIS multi-enterprise agreement (MEA) is renegotiated, which could alter relative pay standings.

Members also discussed the new anti-bullying framework and hate speech implications for schools, teachers and the NSW Education Standards Authority.

Teachers in CSA Christian schools will move to a new classification structure in July prior to a salary increase in the second half of the year. The new CSA Christian schools EA was discussed and members agreed it was a great result compared to the situation two years ago.

Members raised concerns about the lack of compliance of some independent schools with the new workload transparency clause. The union is campaigning strongly to ensure schools follow their legal obligations to provide clear information about workload expectations.

Jim Hall Organiser

Central Metropolitan

The Central Metropolitan Sub Branch includes central Sydney, Sydney's inner-western suburbs and Rhodes, Concord and Meadowbank.

The Central Metropolitan Sub Branch's AGM was held on 17 February at Burwood RSL. It was wonderful to see a good turnout, with both familiar faces and new reps from International Grammar School and Christian Brothers Lewisham.

As usual, IEU organisers were on hand to provide general updates and respond to issues raised. It was nice to welcome our new IEU convenor, David Whitcombe, along with IEU Deputy Secretary David Towson.

The 2026 sub branch executive was elected: Michelle Mella, President; Anthony Gibbons, Deputy President; and Helen Templeton, Secretary.

AIS school reps raised concerns about the apparent lack of transparency in many schools following the introduction of Clause 16.5 in the MEA.

There were several reports about substandard workplace health and safety. This generated discussion about one school that is yet to finalise class lists and timetables.

Another rep gave an update on challenges faced by teachers as they navigate two campuses amid ongoing construction.

There was an update on changes to working conditions affecting Amadeus Music Education teachers. Close engagement with the IEU has seen stronger connections and communication fostered among Amadeus teachers who have formed their own chapter.

Finally, there were discussions on the new hate speech laws, reps training days and the resumption of pay negotiations for Model A Catholic independent schools.

The next sub branch meeting will be at 5pm on 30 April at the IEU office in Ultimo.

Michelle Mella Sub Branch President



Central West Sub Branch meeting

Central West

The Central West Sub Branch includes Dubbo, Bathurst, Orange and Lithgow, as well as Cowra, Mudgee, Parkes, Forbes, Grenfell and Wilcannia.

On 20 February, the Central West Sub Branch met in Forbes for its AGM, one of our most well-attended sub branch meetings to date.

The 2026 sub branch executive was elected: Louise Hughes, President; Peter Nunn, Deputy President; and Nicole Downey, Secretary. Maureen Milgate, Julian Stewart, Tracy Stevens and Kim Pellow were elected to the sub branch committee.

We thank IEU Deputy Secretary David Towson and organisers Donna Widdison and Pat Devery for attending the AGM.

Chapter reps raised workplace issues including class sizes, levels of classroom support, programming expectations and appointment protocols. They also discussed expectations around meetings and so-called briefings, recognition of learning support officer qualifications, permanent employment contracts and the lack of time at work for training and courses.

The sub branch offered a sincere vote of thanks to our union for its success in reversing unfair decisions about long service leave entitlements made by Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst.

The sub branch also acknowledged organiser Jackie Groom, who retired in January. The thousands of kilometres she travelled to support members were remarkable. Mahatma Gandhi's words capture her spirit: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." We wish her every happiness in retirement.

The next meeting will be held in Orange on 1 May, and all reps and members are welcome.

Louise Hughes Sub Branch President

Cumberland

The Cumberland Sub Branch includes Parramatta, Mt Druitt, Castle Hill, Marsden Park, Blacktown and nearby surrounds.

The Cumberland Sub Branch AGM was held on 16 February at the IEU office in Parramatta.

Reps from Catholic systemic, Catholic independent and independent schools attended.

The sub branch elected: Deputy President Jessica Divis; and new Secretary Elias Abi-Elias. There were no nominations for President at the AGM – a further call for nominations will be made at the meeting in Term 2.

Workloads were a key topic of discussion along with the NSW government's recent changes to hate speech laws and its implications for members. These changes will flow through to employers' codes of conduct.

Members focused on how this may affect teachers in practice, including expectations around compliance, communication with students and parents, and the need for clear guidance and support from employers.

Members also discussed workload transparency in independent schools covered by the MEA, particularly where statements have not been provided or remain unclear. Reps are following up with schools to ensure employers comply with their legal obligations. (For more, see page 1.)

The Term 2 sub branch meeting is on 4 May at the IEU's office in Parramatta.

Luke Breen Organiser

Hunter Valley

The Hunter Valley Sub Branch includes Newcastle, Maitland, Singleton, Scone, Taree and surrounds.

The Hunter Valley Sub Branch AGM was held on 16 February at the Blackbutt Hotel in New Lambton. It was a well-attended meeting, with spirits high across all sectors for the start of the new year.

The 2026 sub branch executive was elected: Amanda Wood, President; Katrina Easton, Deputy President; Kim Keating, Secretary; Dot Seamer, Sarah Gardiner, Jessica Mead and Susan Carter are committee members this year.

Mark Wilson, Amanda Wood, Sarah Gardiner, Isabella Rendina, Carlo Rendina, Jim Hall and Raelene Maxworthy are this year's delegates to Hunter Workers.

The meeting expressed gratitude to the outgoing committee for their dedication and continued support of the union.

Members also agreed on meeting dates for 2026: Term 2, 4 May; Term 3, 3 August; Term 4, 30 November. The 2027 AGM will be on 15 February.

We welcomed two new reps to the meeting. Kate Kruczer from Holy Spirit Infants School, Abermain, who replaces long-serving rep Leah Shakespeare, and William Parker, from Holy Family Primary School, Merewether. We look forward to seeing them at reps training at Noah's on the Beach in Newcastle on 31 March (for more on Reps training, see page 10.)

Raelene Maxworthy Organiser

Ku-ring-gai

The Ku-ring-gai Sub Branch covers Sydney's north shore, including Hornsby, Wahroonga, Waitara, Warrawee, Thornleigh, Pymble, Turramurra, Berowra and Asquith.

Reps and members from the Ku-ring-gai Sub Branch met for the AGM on 16 February at Hornsby RSL. They were joined by IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews and organiser Charles Wheeler.

Congratulations to reps elected to the 2026 sub branch committee: Courtney Smith, President; James Whaley, Secretary; and Debbie Wright and Gabrielle Oslington, committee members.

Before AGM formalities were conducted, reps and officers engaged in discussions about a wide range of topics over a meal and drinks.

Workload transparency in independent schools drew discussion (see page 1) as well as the emphatic 'No Vote' by members for an inferior Greater Sydney Adventist EA.

The Ku-ring-gai Sub Branch meets at 4.45pm at Hornsby RSL on a Monday afternoon in the first half of each term. Remaining 2026 dates are: 11 May, 10 August and 2 November. All are welcome.

Charles Wheeler Organiser



Lansdowne Sub Branch meeting

Lansdowne

The Lansdowne Sub Branch includes Lakemba to Liverpool, including Bankstown, Fairfield and Auburn.

Seventeen reps attended the Lansdowne AGM at Fairfield RSL on 26 February. The sub branch elected James McFarlane of All Saints Catholic College as President; David Pospischil of Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School as Deputy President; and Bernadette Hawthorne of John the Baptist Catholic Primary School as Secretary.

Further committee members were also nominated: Connie Holmes of Saint Therese Catholic Primary School Lakemba; Michelle Ibrahim of Good Samaritan Catholic College; Penny Gligorov of All Saints Catholic College Liverpool Campus; and Janina Kozak of St John's Catholic Primary School Auburn. Congratulations to the office holders of Lansdowne.

Members' discussion included enforcement of current workplace agreements such as length of meetings and briefings, compulsory training required of staff outside of work hours, briefings not limited to the definition, class sizes and WHS concerns about classroom furniture. Reps are arranging meetings to rectify matters in their chapters.

Reps are encouraged to attend future meetings: Term 2, 7 May; Term 3, 6 August; Term 4, 29 October; and the AGM in Term 1 of 2027 on 25 February. All meetings are scheduled for 4.30pm at Fairfield RSL.

James Jenkins-Flint Organiser

Metropolitan East

The Metropolitan East Sub Branch covers Sydney's eastern suburbs, including Bondi, Waverley and Bellevue Hill.

Members from the Metropolitan East Sub Branch met at Juniors Kingsford on 18 February. The change of venue has led to much greater interest and engagement in the sub branch.

Members from several schools heard reports from IEU officers about the latest in Catholic systemic schools and independent schools, as well as the implications for schools of new hate speech laws and changes to the workers compensation system.

We were joined by IEU Assistant Secretary Amanda Hioe, and members were interested in her insights about workload transparency in independent schools (see page 1).

Members also discussed expectations around attending school camps, large class sizes and the need for more support staff in Catholic systemic primary schools

The February meeting, as always, is also the AGM, and Gary Osborne was elected President; Jenny Muscat as Deputy President; Jacklyn Guardascione as Secretary; and Sofian Perreau as a general committee member.

The Term 2 meeting will be held at Juniors Kingsford on 5 May.

Kendall Warren Organiser

Mid North Coast

The Mid North Coast Sub Branch includes Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Bellingen, Nambucca Heads and surrounds.

The Mid North Coast Sub Branch held its AGM on 20 February in Port Macquarie. Eleven members from Catholic and independent schools attended and elected a full sub branch executive for 2026.

Catholic systemic members expressed concern about a policy requiring staff to report all off-site personal interactions with students from any Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Limited (DLCSL) school. While this was presented as a child safety measure, members have raised concerns it does not offer real protection but creates significant stress and extra workload.

As a result, the diocese has entered discussions about how best to protect students without adverse impacts on staff.

Concerns were raised about the DLCSL technology policy, particularly its requirement that only work-issued devices are used on site. Members said this restricts staff from using devices that best meet their needs, creates privacy risks when personal data is transferred to corporate devices, and leaves staff financially liable for expensive equipment with no real option to opt out.

Members also discussed workload intensification, the lack of special sick leave granted to colleagues in government schools and inconsistency in guidelines for breast-feeding in schools.

Members in AIS schools report intensifying workloads, such as staff required to attend weekly after-hours PR events and after-school faculty meetings.

Members also raised concerns about what staff are permitted to do on non-working days.

The next Mid North Coast Sub Branch meeting will be held on 1 May at Nambucca RSL.

Markus Muschal Sub Branch President

Monaro

The Monaro Sub Branch covers Canberra and the ACT.

Members from across the ACT met at the IEU's Canberra office on 26 February. We welcomed new reps and members.

The 2026 sub branch executive was elected: Alex Thompson, President; David Caton, Deputy President; and Nicole Nolan, Secretary. We thanked the outgoing committee and welcomed the incoming committee.

The sub branch also thanks Andrew Dane and Jacob Betts for representing the ACT on the IEU Executive and welcomes David Caton to the Vice President ACT role on the IEU Executive.

Members discussed class sizes and the complexity of classes, catering for the number of personalised plans in each class and transparency when changes occur in schools.

There were calls for clarification about evidence requirements when ill or injured and for leave without pay, meeting times and expectations about staff attendance, and merit-based appointments.

Members also raised concerns about increases in parent-teacher interview requirements, duties of classroom support assistants, pro-rata duties, meetings and expectations for part-time staff.

Members are concerned about workload and support the independent schools workload transparency clause (see page 1).

Members expressed disappointment at changes to NSW workers compensation laws, which make it harder to access long-term support for psychological injury.

Members urged participation in the upcoming Council and Executive elections (see page 6) to ensure a broad range of school sectors and regions are represented.

The Monaro Sub Branch extends its sincere thanks to organiser Jackie Groom for her outstanding service to members.

Angela McDonald Organiser

North Coast

The North Coast Sub Branch covers Lismore, Tweed Heads, Kingscliff, Pottsville, Murwillumbah, Mullumbimby, Kyogle, Ballina, Lismore, Casino, Coraki, Woodburn, Yamba and Maclean.

A record number of reps attended the North Coast Sub branch AGM at the IEU's Lismore office. With 17 school reps, IEU officers Carolyn Moore and Richard Ryan, and NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, our meeting room was full.

The meeting elected: Kath Egan, President; Emily Webster, Deputy President; and Jennifer Allen, Secretary.

Members discussed the following issues:

- Catholic systemic staff should check their commencement date is correct in the diocese system – mistakes have been found, which affect long service leave balances
- the "slow creep" of extra duties and workload combined with the introduction of new programs and initiatives
- morning meetings have become quite long
- class sizes have grown due to cutbacks by the Lismore diocese
- Youth Ministry Officers are no longer based in schools and teachers are picking up their work
- Lismore CSO asked staff to complete a child protection declaration form online which caused anxiety for some staff
- an independent school rep thanked the IEU for the hard work involved in landing the AIS MEA last year
- workload and class sizes have increased in many AIS schools
- staff have been told they cannot park e-bikes on school sites due to fire safety concerns but this is not being enforced evenly across the diocese.

IEU organisers will continue to visit AIS schools to ensure they provide the IEU with workload transparency statements, as required in clause 16.5 of the multi-enterprise agreement.

Richard Ryan Organiser



North West Sub Branch meeting

North West

The North West Sub Branch covers the New England region including Armidale, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Tenterfield, Inverell, Moree and Narrabri.

The AGM at the Tamworth Hotel was well attended by a group of energetic and passionate professionals from different parts of the north west. We had lively discussion on a range of school as well as broader community happenings.

We are a welcoming group and invite all reps to attend the meetings this year. Members who aren't reps are also welcome if reps cannot attend. If drive-time is the obstacle, please reach out to your organiser so we can support you to attend.

Our meetings for the next 12 months are as follows: Term 2, 1 May at 5.30pm at Armidale City Bowling Club; Term 3, 31 July at 5.30pm at Tamworth Hotel; Term 4, 30 October at 5.30pm at Armidale City Bowling Club. The AGM in Term 1, 2027 will be held on 19 February at 5.30pm at Tamworth Hotel.

Our sub branch incumbents were all successfully re-elected to their roles: Harry Vella, President; Teresa Boyd, Deputy President; and Sophie Westermarck, Secretary.

The minutes of the meeting have been distributed to all reps so do have a read and see if any of the issues raised at the meeting resonate in your workplace.

It was, as always, a privilege to catch up with members in Boggabri, Wee Waa, Narrabri, Gunnedah and Tamworth in the week leading up to the meeting.

Sue McKay Organiser

Northern Beaches

The Northern Beaches Sub Branch includes Manly, Dee Why, Collaroy, Narrabeen, Terrey Hills, Warriewood and surrounds.

The Northern Beaches Sub Branch AGM was held on 24 February at Dee Why RSL.

Teachers and support staff from a range of schools welcomed federal Independent MP Dr Sophie Scamps to the meeting. Also in attendance were IEU Deputy Secretary David Towson and organisers Therese Fitzgibbon and Lee Cunningham.

Dr Scamps highlighted her support for paid placement schemes for teaching as well as efforts to extend the initiative to allied health. The program is already helping teacher education students complete their studies without experiencing placement poverty.

Members welcomed the initiative but raised workforce concerns, with some schools expecting up to 30 per cent of staff to retire over the next five years. While paid placements are beneficial, members stressed that progress toward the Gonski goals and reducing teacher workload are essential to improving recruitment and retention.

The meeting elected its 2026 committee: Karl Tikoft, President; Rachel Turner, Deputy President; and Sukli Barrell, Secretary.

Members discussed concerns in the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay about teacher aides working without a timetabled lunch break or a mandatory break after four hours.

Members from independent schools discussed the transparency provisions for workload in the new MEA (see page 1) and the retention of leadership roles.

Karl Tikoft Sub Branch President

Northern Suburbs

The Northern Suburbs Sub Branch covers Artarmon, Chatswood, Cremorne, Gladesville, Gordon, Hunters Hill, Kirribilli, Lane Cove, Lindfield, Milsons Point, Mosman, North Sydney, Roseville, Ryde, St Ives, St Leonards, Willoughby and Woolwich.

It was wonderful to see both familiar and new faces at our AGM at The Oaks in Neutral Bay. We began with an Acknowledgement of Country and reflected on the example set by First Nations peoples in education through storytelling, activism and resilience.

As teachers and unionists, we recognise the importance of being guided by that example.

The meeting opened with nominations and elections for sub branch office bearers. We were pleased to fill the roles of President, Caroline Brehaut; and Deputy President, Elizabeth Keogh. The position of Secretary remains vacant, and members are encouraged to consider stepping into this important role.

Discussion focused on increasing sub branch meeting attendance, including varying venues and times.

Reps shared school updates and raised issues such as increasing union membership, starting the year positively as a rep and engaging younger staff in union membership. Delegates report that IEU resources for reps are helpful: ieu.asn.au/resources



Northern Suburbs Sub Branch meeting

An update was provided on bargaining for the new enterprise agreement in Model A schools. Reps from Model A schools raised concerns about increased face-to-face teaching hours and workload transparency. This led to discussion of the workload transparency clause in the independent schools MEA (see page 1), which the union is seeking to include in the Model A EA.

The advantages of the clause were highlighted, along with challenges in ensuring compliance and the need to strengthen it in the next agreement to ensure clearer publication of duties, meetings and cover requirements.

Caroline Brehaut Sub Branch President

Penrith/Blue Mountains

The Penrith/Blue Mountains Sub Branch covers Penrith to Glenbrook, Katoomba and Blackheath.

The Penrith/Blue Mountains Sub Branch held its AGM on 16 February at Nepean Rowers Club.

Congratulations to the committee members re-elected for 2026. It is wonderful to know we have dedicated members and reps who are keen to be involved in the union at this level.

Members welcomed a new rep from one of our Blue Mountains schools and we look forward to their contributions, along with those of our regular reps. When confirming meeting dates for the year, the sub branch agreed to trial different days of the week to make meetings more accessible. Staff meeting clashes often limit who can attend, and we hope this change increases participation.

IEU Assistant Secretary Lyn Caton attended the AGM and suggested schools invite representatives from NGS, Teachers Mutual Bank and Teachers Health. They can speak to all staff, regardless of IEU membership, and provide useful advice about their services. Deb Lockwood noted these visits are always well received at her school.

IEU organisers Jennifer Tait and Peter Criticos covered recent legislative changes relating to anti-bullying and workers compensation.

Delegates to IEU Council emphasised the importance of attending Council meetings (four per year, for more information, see page 7). Council meetings feature guest speakers and opportunities to network with like-minded colleagues.

Elections for new positions on Council are coming up, and reps are encouraged to nominate for the Penrith/Blue Mountains Sub Branch. For election notice and nomination details, see page 6.

Liz Heggart Sub Branch President

Principals

The Principals Sub Branch held its AGM on 21 February to share experiences and address the evolving demands of school leadership in 2026.

Leadership and staffing were a key focus, along with the increasing complexity of school administration. Governance, compliance and operational expectations continue to grow, requiring principals to balance these demands with the core work of leading learning.

The successful yes vote on the Catholic Systemic Principals' EA in December 2025 was acknowledged as providing stability (see page 2).

Principal and staff wellbeing was a central theme, with discussion of increasingly complex parent interactions, family law matters and staff mental health needs. Members expressed appreciation for diocesan wellbeing initiatives and identified opportunities for clearer HR pathways when issues escalate.

There was robust discussion on recent policy and legislative changes, including updates to workers compensation, new hate speech requirements in school codes of conduct and the NSW anti-bullying framework. Principals expressed interest in consistent guidance and practical resources to support implementation at the school level.

Significant IT and operational transitions, curriculum rollout requirements and growing LBOTE/EALD needs were also noted. Principals highlighted the importance of adequate resourcing, training and communication to minimise disruption.

Finally, the sub branch acknowledged organiser Lyn Caton, who is moving to a new IEU role in Canberra. Principals expressed their appreciation for Lyn's support during a complex industrial year when the union negotiated new EAs. The sub branch thanked her warmly and wished her well in her new position.

The next meeting will be held via Zoom on 18 May at 6pm.

Chris Egan Sub Branch President



Riverina Sub Branch meeting

Riverina

The Riverina Sub Branch covers Albury, Griffith, Hay, Leeton, Thurgoona, Wagga Wagga and West Wyalong.

The Riverina Sub Branch AGM was held on 20 February at the International Hotel in Wagga Wagga, with members gathered for a constructive start to the year. It was great to see such thoughtful discussion around the table.

Vanessa Geddes was elected President, Narelle Ryall as Deputy President and Terri-Anne Scott was elected Secretary for 2026. I want to congratulate each of them and thank them for their ongoing commitment to supporting colleagues across the region. We also expressed thanks to outgoing Vice President Holly Wright.

Discussion focused on themes common to many workplaces. Members spoke about growing workload pressures, changes to duties and structures without clear consultation, and the need for fair recognition of support staff roles. There were questions about compliance training expectations and how 'right to disconnect' provisions are applied in practice.

Reps acknowledged the significant fluctuation in staffing within the Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga office over the past year and expressed hope that the recent appointment of key staff will lead to a more settled and stable year.

The meeting closed by acknowledging Jackie Groom's retirement and her many years of service to the branch, and welcoming Lyn Caton back as an organiser in the Riverina.

Tahlia Bruce Organiser



South Coast Sub Branch meeting

South Coast

The South Coast Sub Branch covers the Macarthur region, the Southern Highlands, Wollongong and the Illawarra region and the northern end of the Shoalhaven region.

It was great to see so many dedicated reps at the South Coast AGM held on 25 February – our first at the new IEU office, showing once again why Wollongong is known as 'Union Town'.

A new committee was elected: Marco Cimino, President; Lachlan Young, Deputy President; and Kane Soligo, Secretary.

Payroll issues with the Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong (CEDoW) were a key topic of discussion.

Members are angry and disappointed about errors, delays and the stress caused by incorrect payments.

CEDoW is reviewing payroll processes, which is a positive step, but members want more action to ensure problems do not occur in the future.

Casual employment numbers are taking many weeks to generate, causing members to miss out on potential employment opportunities.

Members are also concerned that CEDoW's compliance requirements have increased beyond NESAs' minimum mandated expectations under the guise of quality teaching. Staff report that documentation, reporting and administrative processes are adding substantially to workload pressures.

Members from independent schools and Christian schools are concerned about workload creep, including excessive meeting times and movement bells encroaching on break times.

The meeting also discussed a lack of training and unrealistic timelines for new technology implementation as well as expectations on staff to undertake unreasonable duties above what is normally expected of them.

Our next meeting will be on 13 May, and we warmly invite all reps in the region to come along and join us for drinks and dinner after the meeting.

Marco Cimino Sub Branch President

South East

The South East Sub Branch covers Yass, Young, Broulee, Bega, Goulburn, Tumut, Pambula, Googong, Batehaven, Cooma, Queanbeyan and Batlow.

The South East Sub Branch held its AGM on 27 February at the Statesman Hotel, Curtin.

IEU organiser Angela McDonald and Assistant Secretary Lyn Caton joined the meeting and members acknowledged Jackie Groom on her well-deserved retirement.

The outgoing sub branch committee was thanked and a new committee was elected: Linda Swadling, President; Lyn Bathgate, Deputy President; and Kate van Leeuwen, Secretary. Dates for future meetings and training opportunities were also confirmed.

Members discussed the review of the Religious Education Coordinator in Catholic schools, which the IEU will meet with employers to clarify.

The rollout of new processes in schools for teaching and support staff was raised with members discussing how different schools are implementing this.

Members also sought clarity and support for work health and safety issues involving physical workspaces and behaviour management.

Anti-bullying laws, reforms to the workers compensation system and changes to conditional accreditation also generated lively discussion during the meeting.

Linda Swadling Sub Branch President

Southern Suburbs

The Southern Suburbs Sub Branch covers the St George area and the Sutherland Shire.

The Southern Suburbs Sub Branch meeting returned to a hybrid format, with several reps joining online.

After losing our long-standing president last year, it was encouraging to fill elected positions: Amy Kermode, President; Paul O'Brien, Deputy President; and Stuart Jones, Secretary.

Committee members now include Peter Moore, Bronte Rams, Sharon Robinson and Peter Robertson. We also welcomed new attendee and rep Philip Hair.

Catholic systemic reps raised concerns about technology arrangements, particularly the closure of Google sharing functions, the temporary drive and shift to Microsoft software.

Members discussed requirements for overnight supervision at camps and excursions, along with the expectation that supervisors would not undertake activities the following day.

Peter Moore received a certificate recognising 40 years of membership, although the exact length of his service remains a topic of friendly debate.

Josef Dabbs Organiser

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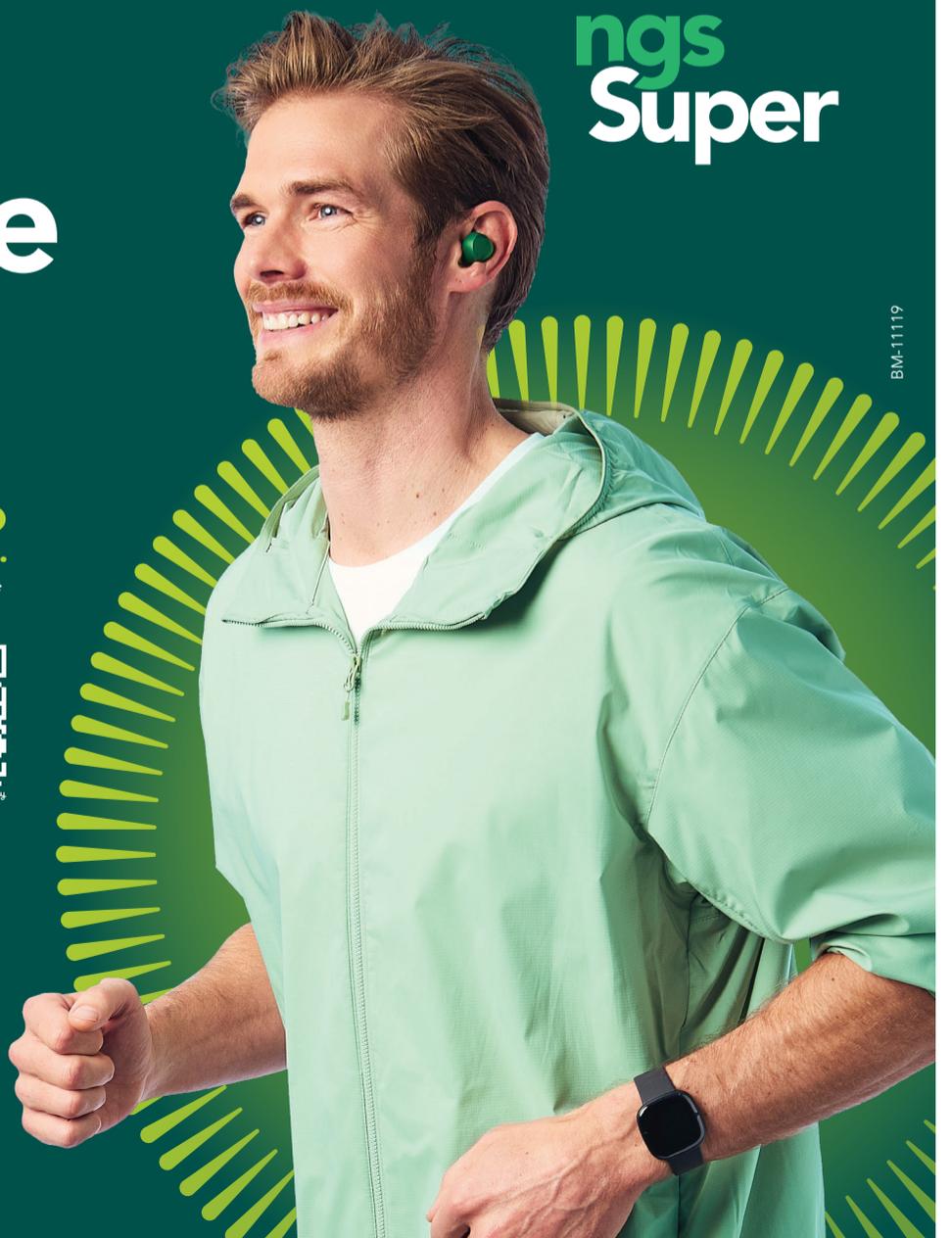


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MARKET VOLATILITY

What it means for your super

Recent global events have introduced renewed uncertainty into financial markets, prompting sharp movements across shares, commodities and other asset classes. While headlines can feel unsettling, periods of volatility are a normal part of investing.

For superannuation members, it's important to remember that super is a long-term investment. Market ups and downs are expected along the journey – and history shows markets have tended to recover as uncertainty eases.

What does this mean for your super?

Making significant changes in response to short-term market movements – particularly switching to cash after markets have fallen – can lock in losses and reduce long-term returns. Some of the strongest recovery days often occur during periods of heightened volatility, and missing those rebounds can have a meaningful impact on retirement savings.

Staying disciplined and focused on long-term goals remains key. Watch this helpful video about super and market volatility: bit.ly/40FKmlo

Do you need to change your investment?

You may not need to change anything. However, if you haven't reviewed your investment mix in some time, it could be a good opportunity to check whether it still aligns with your goals, timeframe and comfort with risk.

Switching to more conservative options after a downturn may feel safer, but it can limit your ability to participate in a recovery. A conversation can help you make a considered decision rather than a reactive one.

If you're retired and drawing an income

Drawing an income from investments that have recently fallen in value may affect your balance.

Depending on your circumstances, you might consider:

- temporarily reducing your income payments
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- reviewing whether your current investment option remains appropriate.

Every situation is different, so personalised guidance can help clarify your options.

How NGS manages market volatility

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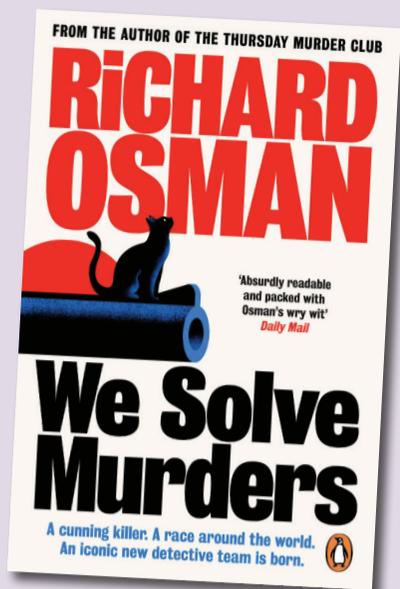
Newcastle: 8-14 Telford Street, Newcastle East NSW 2302 P 4926 9400

Wollongong: 1 Lowden Square, Wollongong NSW 2500 P 8202 8900

Lismore: Unit 4, Lismore Professional Centre, 103-105 Molesworth Street,
Lismore NSW 2480 P 6623 4700

Canberra: Units 11 & 12, 3-5 Phipps Close, Deakin ACT 2600 P 6120 1500

Giveaways



We Solve Murders

Author: Richard Osman

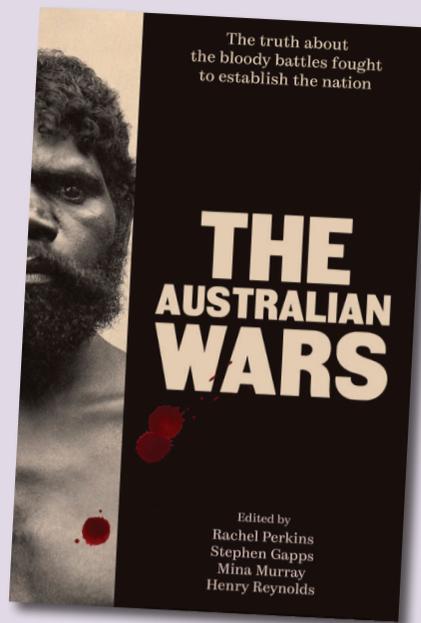
Publisher: Penguin Books Australia

From the author of *The Thursday Murder Club* comes the first instalment of a new mystery series.

Steve Wheeler is enjoying retired life. He still does the odd bit of investigation work, but he prefers the pub trivia quiz and afternoons at home with his cat, Trouble. His days of adventure are over – that's his daughter-in-law Amy's business now.

Amy Wheeler thinks adrenaline is good for the soul, which makes being a private security officer to billionaires the perfect job. She's currently on a remote island keeping world-famous author Rosie D'Antonio alive. Then a dead body, a bag of money and a killer with their sights on Amy have her sending Steve an SOS.

As a breakneck race around the world begins, can they stay one step ahead of a deadly enemy?



The Australian Wars

Edited by: Rachel Perkins, Stephen Gapps, Mina Murray, Henry Reynolds

Publisher: Allen & Unwin

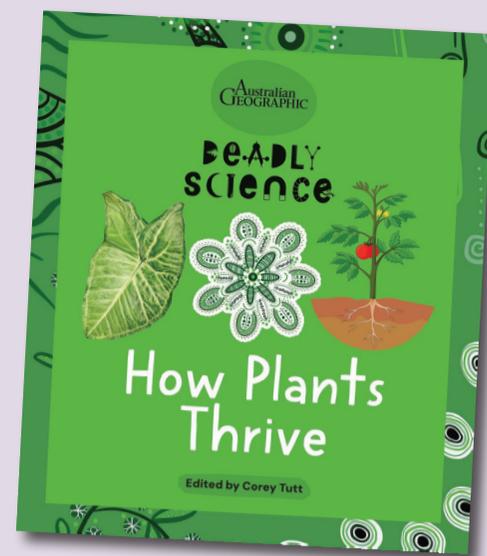
It is estimated up to 100,000 people died in the frontier wars that raged across Australia for more than 150 years.

This is equivalent to the combined total of all Australians killed in foreign battles to date. But there are few memorials marking these domestic wars.

The Australian Wars is the first book to tell the story of the massacres, guerilla warfare, resistance and the contests of firearms and traditional Aboriginal weaponry as Indigenous nations resisted colonial occupation of their lands.

At stake was the sovereignty of an entire country.

The Australian Wars brings what for too long has been considered the historical past into the present so that we might know the truth of the origins of this nation.



How Plants Thrive

Edited by: Corey Tutt

Publisher: Hardie Grant

Discover how plants thrive in the latest book from Australian Geographic and Deadly Science, an engaging series created with Corey Tutt, the 2020 NSW Young Australian of the Year.

Australia's native plants have learned to survive in our harshest environments, from the driest corners of the outback to the humid forests of northern Queensland.

Over time, they have adapted and adjusted to every imaginable threat.

In this book you will discover seeds that need fire to crack open, encounter carnivorous plants that eat insects and others that can be used to make a drink for sore throats.

In *How Plants Thrive*, you will find the tools, both modern and Indigenous, to understand and navigate the difficulties ahead as we learn to live with Earth's internal and powerful forces.



To go in the draw, email entries to giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the title of the book you would like to receive in the subject line. Write your name, membership number and postal address in the body of your email. All entries must be received by 30 April 2026.

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