

Community preschool staff

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Rallies: Sydney and Lismore

Wednesday 6 May

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(See page 9 for full details)

news month

The newspaper of the
Independent Education Union
of Australia NSW/ACT Branch
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PROPOSED PARENT BAN

Harassment and abuse of school staff must stop

Carol Matthews
Secretary



The IEU welcomes the NSW government's proposal to empower school principals to ban parents if they threaten or abuse students, staff or other community members.

The *Education Amendment (School Community Safety) Bill 2026*, currently before the NSW Parliament, permits an authorised person such as a principal to make a school community safety order against a parent or carer in specified circumstances.

The order could include a ban preventing adults who engage in unreasonable and harmful behaviour from coming within 25 metres of school grounds, camps, sporting venues and excursions or prevent them contacting staff, including by email.

Under the bill, both immediate orders, which have effect for 14 days, and ongoing orders can be issued.

Behaviour that could lead to a ban under a school community safety order includes excessively emailing, calling or texting school staff or unreasonably creating images of staff.

Failing to follow an order may lead to an application in the NSW Local Court for a protection order. Breaching that order can attract a penalty of up to \$5500.

Similar laws were enacted in Victoria in 2022. The proposed new laws will cover government and non-government schools and significantly expand the protections under existing legislation.

“Declining respect for the teaching profession has long been a factor in teachers’ dissatisfaction with their jobs. It has a major impact on their health and wellbeing.”

For example, the *Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901* only permits a principal or employer to deny physical entry onto a fenced

property. It does not apply to school activities conducted on other premises or areas such as pick-up and drop-off zones, where teachers may encounter aggressive parents. Nor does it apply to bullying or other unreasonable behaviour that may be conducted online or by phone.

Major impact on health

Announcing the new laws last month, NSW Deputy Premier and Education Minister Prue Car rightly told *The Sydney Morning Herald*: “Harassment and abuse of teachers impacts their ability to teach and can drive them from the profession, with students suffering the consequences.”

Declining respect for the teaching profession has long been a factor in teachers’ dissatisfaction with their jobs. It has a major impact on their health and wellbeing.

A 2022 Monash University study found 70 per cent of teachers in Australia do not feel teaching is respected or appreciated by the public.

“In some instances, you do have parents that believe that they can treat teachers like verbal punching bags and go in and take out their frustrations on a principal or a teacher,” NSW Premier Chris Minns told the ABC in March.

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Cost-of-living clause

Rising inflation could lead to one-off payment

David Towson
Deputy Secretary



The IEU in 2025 negotiated a cost-of-living adjustment clause in enterprise agreements covering teachers and support staff in Catholic systemic schools. This recognises that high inflation erodes living standards and aims to alleviate it.

Clause 6.2(c) of the *Catholic systemic enterprise agreement* means that if annual inflation rises above 4.5% in the March quarter of 2026 the union would meet with Catholic

systemic employers to discuss a one-off cost-of-living payment of \$1000 to be made after 1 July 2026.

The clause is mirrored in both the Parramatta and Broken Bay enterprise agreements.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics was due to release official inflation figures on 29 April, after *Newsmonth* went to press.

There are similar clauses in union agreements covering teachers and support staff in NSW government schools. For teachers, it may be activated if the Sydney consumer price index (CPI) exceeds 4.5%; and for support staff, if it exceeds 4%.

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Work health and safety

Fighting against fatigue

Suzanne Penson
President



Fatigue in schools is often spoken about as a wellbeing issue.

However, SafeWork NSW's Code of Practice: Managing the risk of fatigue at work, which commenced in February 2026, makes clear that fatigue is a work health and safety risk.

This reframes the wellbeing discussion. Instead of asking how individual employees can better cope, the code provides guidance to employers on how to eliminate or minimise the risk of fatigue at work.

This is because fatigue is not simply feeling tired or drowsy. As the code points out, it is a "state of impairment" that can impact physical coordination and strength; concentration and decision making; and emotional engagement and regulation.

Daily demands

The code emphasises that fatigue arises when job demands consistently exceed a worker's capacity for recovery. Hazards can include high cognitive load, sustained attention, emotional demands, extended hours and insufficient breaks.

In school settings, these factors may include continuous face-to-face teaching, complex behavioural management, administrative compliance requirements, and communication with families and colleagues. Teachers' work also frequently extends beyond the classroom through lesson preparation, assessment and communication outside school hours.

This is why the right to disconnect, enacted by the Albanese government in 2024, is crucial. It enables employees to refuse work-related contact outside normal hours.

SafeWork guidance suggests that employers must identify hazards, assess risks and implement controls, rather than rely on individual employees to manage excessive workloads.

Recovery time crucial

A key to managing fatigue risk is adequate recovery time.

In many industries, uninterrupted breaks are seen as essential to safe performance.

Yet in schools, breaks are often fragmented by supervision duties, meetings or expectations that staff remain constantly available.

The code points out that working hours should allow sufficient time for rest and recovery. When recovery time is consistently

reduced, fatigue accumulates and risks increase. The code also makes clear that awareness alone is insufficient.

The IEU consistently advocates for practical controls such as workload transparency, curbs on administrative overload and realistic non-contact time. The union calls for clear processes that allow employees to raise concerns without stigma.

Where fatigue risks are not addressed, schools often see rising rates of sick leave and high staff turnover. This indicates systemic risk, not individual weakness.

Towards a solution

IEU member voices are essential in identifying hazards and advocating for safer work.

The union raises member concerns with employers and negotiates for better conditions.

When we collectively campaign and negotiate for sustainable workloads, we enable teachers and support staff to continue delivering high-quality education.

By applying these principles, we shift the conversation from coping with fatigue to preventing it — so schools remain places where both staff and students thrive.

Safe work is not an optional extra. It is essential.

Micromanagement: A hidden driver of teacher workload

Denise McHugh
Deputy President



Spend time in any teacher Facebook group and a clear theme emerges. The frustration is not just about workload, it's about work that doesn't seem to matter.

Teachers are no longer just asking how much they're doing, but why. The answer is often "compliance" — but compliance with what, and for whom? Increasingly, it is also framed as "best practice". But whose best practice?

When teachers interrogate the tasks in front of them — the documentation, data collection and layers of sign-off — the link to improved student outcomes is often unclear.

What sits underneath much of this is not compliance, but micromanagement. It is one of the least acknowledged drivers of workload.

Micromanagement is easy to recognise. It appears in overly detailed lesson documentation, multiple planning templates, data walls rarely used to inform teaching, and repeated "evidence collection".

Perhaps individual tasks can be justified. But together, they create an unsustainable load.

Too often, the people creating the workload are not the ones doing the work. Teachers are. They are expected to implement, explain, defend initiatives, as well as absorb the frustration created by them.

Practical example

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) is a clear example. It is designed to ensure students

with disability are properly recognised and resourced. It relies on teacher judgement supported by evidence.

But in many schools, it has turned into a compliance exercise generating additional documentation, duplicated records and elaborate systems designed less to support students than to demonstrate process. Evidence is collected far beyond what is required.

The IEU has done important work in clarifying appropriate evidence for the NCCD, including its evidence factsheet developed in collaboration with the federal education department. It establishes clear boundaries around what is — and is not — required.

The national Teacher Workload Impact Assessment Tool, which includes several IEU recommendations, is another response to this issue. It is designed to prevent ill-considered or unhelpful initiatives that add to teacher workloads without producing meaningful results.

Collective action gets results

Workload creep happens not through a single directive, but through layers of smaller tasks.

Over time, these tasks become normalised. They are rarely reviewed.

If we are serious about reducing workload, we need to ask: What is actually required? What has been added by the school? What would happen if we stopped doing it?

These questions are best addressed collectively through your union. As shown with the NCCD fact sheets, by working together we can tackle workload pressures.

Take note: Why written records matter

Liz Heggart
Vice President Systemic



There will have been countless times when something has happened in the workplace with a student, parent, or colleague that has left you questioning whether to take it further.

Deciding whether to take action or make a report is always complex.

As a chapter rep, I always stress to members that only they can decide whether addressing the issue is something they can manage at that time.

However, one thing you can — and should — do immediately is make a written record of the interaction, just in case.

This means that if you do decide to take it further, you'll have a contemporaneous record to rely on.

Why note? Can't I just remember?

When an incident occurs, it's best to record it in as much detail as possible, as soon as possible after the event.

You should not rely just on your memory — our days are so busy with never-ending

to-do lists that it's easy to forget what actually transpired.

Your future self will be grateful if you have made notes that can be referred to if needed.

“When an incident occurs, it's best to record it in as much detail as possible, as soon as possible.”

What to note

- Who was involved — not just names but who they are (for example, a parent, student or member of staff).
- When it happened — date and time are the most important, but details such as “after a staff meeting” or “during parent-teacher interviews” also provide valuable context.
- Where it occurred — if it was face to face, note the location; if it happened over the phone or online, record that it occurred via call, email, or another platform.

- Any witnesses — there may have been others present when the incident occurred, so noting them can also be helpful.

Where to note

The best place to record an incident is in your chronicle, daybook or notebook.

Whether digital or old-school, it's something you always have with you and can easily use to make notes.

If there are emails, file them in a folder that can easily be found. You may even want to take screenshots in case the emails become inaccessible later on.

Final note

In my experience, most incidents of conflict never end up being taken further by members.

However, sometimes the behaviour is repeated, prompting you to reconsider whether to act, or the other party may raise the issue themselves — so it always pays to be prepared.

If you need support with making a report or complaint, don't hesitate to contact the union, starting with your rep and organiser.

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BANNED

PROPOSED PARENT BAN

Harassment and abuse of school staff must stop

Calls for change

Last year, a rising tide of online abuse directed at teachers and principals prompted calls for parents to be fined.

The chairman of Victoria's Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution, Frank Handy, called for \$1000 fines to deter parents from making inflammatory comments about school staff.

Data from Australian Catholic University's Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey shows 54 per cent of school leaders reported threats of violence in 2024, compared to 43 per cent five years ago.

Two-thirds of school leaders say those threats came from parents. Almost 48 per cent of school leaders have experienced physical violence. That is compared to 37 per cent five years ago, and one in five of those surveyed now says parents were responsible.

In 2024, more than 35 per cent of school leaders reported being subjected to cyberbullying. Alarmingly, almost 90 per cent of those surveyed said parents were responsible.

"Unfortunately, we have to admit that for more than a decade we have seen an increase in harmful and threatening behaviour directed towards teachers and school leaders," Car told the NSW Parliament in March.

The Daily Telegraph in March reported principals were too scared of being attacked to leave their offices at school drop-off and pick-up times.

"Principals are being punched, kicked, pinned against walls, followed home, stalked by cars with headlights off, pelted with rocks, threatened with death and rape, forced to hide in locked rooms, and having chairs, tables and bookshelves thrown at them," the newspaper said.

"Some schools have restricted parent access to drop-off and pick-up zones to limit violence."

Deakin University professor Phil Riley, a former principal and the founder of the research, said the "tragic" violence being fuelled by parents and students could claim a leader's life.

"The numbers would suggest that eventually someone is going to die," he told *The Daily Telegraph*. "The incidents of violence are creeping up, but also the intensity as well."

Shocking stories

The IEU has long called for action from employers to stamp out bad behaviour from parents. IEU members have told harrowing stories of receiving threatening emails from parents.

In 2025, more than 120 IEU delegates unanimously endorsed a motion at the March Council meeting noting "the increase in unsafe behaviours from the parental community".

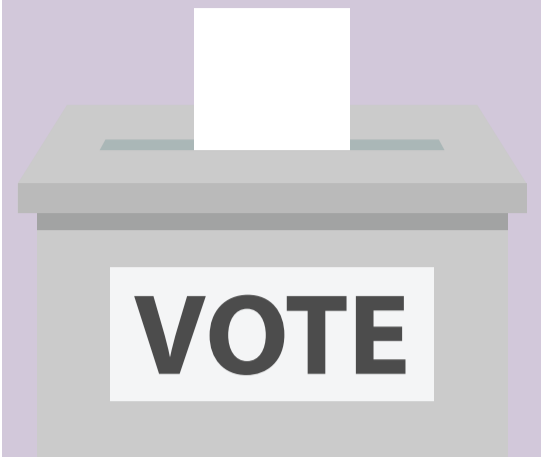
The union wrote to Catholic employers in NSW and the ACT to request action to ensure respect for teachers, including:

- formally acknowledging the concerning rise in abusive behaviours by parents towards staff
- reminding parents of their obligation under diocesan family and school partnership principles and policies
- developing an addition to the assault register to enable staff to report unsafe parent behaviours effectively.

School employers are legally obliged to ensure employees are safe and free from harassment.

Threatening and abusive behaviour directed at school staff by parents is unacceptable.

The NSW government's proposed ban on aggressive parents is a necessary first step. But the union will continue to campaign for greater measures to protect school staff from unacceptable conduct and restore respect for the profession.



Union elections Make your vote count

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is conducting elections of sub branch delegates to the IEU Council as well as filling vacant positions on the Executive.

These elections are an important part of how the union renews its leadership and ensures members continue to be represented fairly.

Assistant Secretaries

Two positions have already been decided: Pat Devery and Therese Fitzgibbon have been elected unopposed as assistant secretaries.

Having been an organiser since 2018, then Professional Engagement Coordinator, Pat is a familiar face to the many IEU members who have attended reps training. He will be based in the IEU's Parramatta office.

Prior to his role at the IEU, Pat was a secondary school Ancient History and English teacher for 25 years in both the independent and Catholic systemic sectors.

A long-time organiser originally based in Newcastle, Therese has worked with the IEU for more than 20 years.

Therese was appointed Campaign and Growth Coordinator this year and is now based in the IEU's Ultimo office.

The union congratulates Pat and Therese and thanks outgoing Assistant Secretaries Lyn Caton and Amanda Hioe.

Lyn has returned to an organising position based in Canberra and Amanda has been elected an Assistant Federal Secretary.

IEU Executive

Other roles on the Executive are still being contested, with elections under way for the positions of General Executive Member and Financial Officer.

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

Sub branch delegates to Council

The AEC has confirmed the election of sub branch delegates to Council where there were no competing nominations.

In other sub branches where there are more nominations than delegate positions, the AEC will ask members to vote in the coming weeks.

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, who are elected by the full IEU membership every three years.

Member participation matters

The union congratulates all successful candidates and thanks every member who takes part in the election process.

Member participation is what keeps the union democratic, strong and focused on the needs of the people it represents.

Carol Matthews Secretary

Continued from page 1

Cost-of-living clause

Rising inflation could lead to one-off payment

Importantly, any cost-of-living payment can only be made to Catholic systemic staff if the NSW Education Department agrees to provide such a payment to its employees.

Economic turmoil

As members know, conflict in the Middle East has caused great economic uncertainty, impacting fuel prices in particular.

As *Newsmonth* went to press, peace talks on the Iran War had failed and the United States had instigated a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. US President Donald Trump had then said talks would soon resume.

Economic commentators, including the International Monetary Fund, were advising that even if a peace agreement were reached within a few weeks and the strait reopened, it could take six to 12 months before fuel and fertiliser supplies would be restored.

The Reserve Bank of Australia raised the official cash rate in February and March 2026. Economists are predicting further rate rises this year. The Commonwealth Bank is tipping that inflation will peak at 5.4% in the middle of the year. Westpac economists have said much the same.

While we live far from the unfolding human tragedy in the Middle East, working people are feeling the impact of rising prices as purchasing power diminishes and real wages go backwards.



Annual wage review

Last month, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) called for a 5% pay increase in the upcoming annual wage review by the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

This decision is of critical importance to IEU members who are covered by modern awards. The awards set minimum pay rates and apply to the nation's lowest paid employees. Strong IEU membership ensures the vast majority of members are covered by union-negotiated agreements that provide superior salaries and conditions.

The FWC will hand down its decision in early June, and increases are paid from the first full pay period on or after 1 July.

This decision is also important for members who are accessing the federal government's paid parental leave scheme, which is paid at the rate of the minimum wage. From 1 July, the scheme will improve from 24 weeks to 26 weeks (130 days). It is currently \$948.10 per week. The federal government now pays superannuation on top of this scheme.

Monitoring inflation

When the clauses in Catholic systemic agreements were negotiated, inflation was trending downwards and there was little expectation they would be activated. But things have changed.

The February 2026 Sydney CPI was 3.8%. Sydney had the third-highest capital-city CPI in the nation behind Perth (4.9%) and Hobart (4%).

The one-off cost-of-living payments would be taxed and, for part-time employees, would be pro-rated. Superannuation of 12% is payable on it.

The union will provide more information to members in Catholic systemic schools who stand to benefit from this cost-of-living clause after the inflation figures are released on 29 April.

National Employment Standards Members push for overhaul

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.



The IEU has provided a detailed submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the operation and adequacy of the National Employment Standards (NES).

Our submission reflects the experiences of IEU members and highlights several urgent areas for reform.

Although the NES still provides an important minimum safety net, several provisions are unclear or no longer fit the needs of modern Australian workplaces.

Thousands of IEU members, including many whose collective agreements reference or rely upon NES entitlements, are affected by these shortcomings.

Time to modernise

The NES must be strengthened and updated where inconsistent application has emerged over time or where entitlements are found to be inadequate.

This includes increasing annual leave, improving the operation of long service leave and personal leave, introducing cultural and kinship leave and providing greater flexibility for workers to access shorter working weeks.

The IEU supports the broad suite of improvements proposed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions across these and other areas.

Paid reproductive health leave

A central focus of our submission is the call for 10 days of paid Reproductive Health Leave (RHL) to be included as a statutory NES entitlement. The case is clear:

- Millions of workers experience reproductive health conditions that affect their ability to work, including endometriosis, menopause, fertility treatment and reproductive procedures.
- RHL is a gender-equity measure. Such health conditions disproportionately affect women, contributing to lost income, lower workforce participation and long-term economic inequality.
- While some IEU agreements include RHL, coverage is inconsistent. Some faith-based schools refuse to bargain for it on religious grounds. A national standard is needed for all workers.

Our submission recommends that RHL should be a standalone NES entitlement of 10 days paid leave per year. Such leave would be available upfront each year (non-accumulating).

RHL is not only fair – it's necessary. It addresses a long-standing gap in the NES, promotes gender equity and ensures that personal health does not force members into unpaid leave or workplace disadvantage.

The NES must evolve to reflect the realities facing education professionals in 2026 and beyond.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary

NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarships

The IEU encourages members to apply for a NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship to complete a study tour in Australia or abroad.

Applications are open until 15 May for the scholarships, which offer \$15,000 for a five-week study tour. There are 15 scholarships available across 13 categories.

The prizes are open to permanent and temporary teachers in NSW government and non-government schools, TAFE NSW campuses and early childhood education and care services.

Winners will undertake a study tour of up to five weeks between 1 January and 30 June 2027, and report back on their research within 90 days of completing their study tour.

Teachers can use their scholarship for a range of activities such as formal study or visiting sites, schools and institutions to conduct interviews, observe exemplary practices and collect resources for the preparation of teaching materials.

IEU members Mick Klipin, a teacher at Bishop Druitt College in Coffs Harbour, and

David Van Tol, a teacher at Kambala School in Rose Bay, both won the NSW Premier's History Teachers' Association History Scholarship last year.

Mick used the scholarship to travel to Cambodia to discover more about the country's turbulent past, which he teaches as part of Modern History and Society and Culture courses.

David applied for the scholarship to fund a study trip to Cuba to learn more about the revolution that swept Fidel Castro to power and installed a communist government on the doorstep of the United States.

David told *IE* magazine he is "really curious" to discover what Cubans think about the revolution.

"I also want to understand how the story of the revolution has changed over time through Castro's rule, the economic shifts and the passing of generations."

Read more about Mick and David's unique journeys in the latest edition of *IE*.

Long Service Leave Union convinces employer to retain balances on payslips

Staff employed by the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (CDMN) have won the right to retain long service leave (LSL) balances on their payslips after IEU members raised concerns.

CDMN employees were advised in January 2026 that LSL balances would be removed from their payslips.

The IEU expressed concern about this decision and advised members to download their latest payslip as a reference point.

In February, the IEU was informed by CDMN's Catholic Schools Office that some LSL balances were incorrect. The IEU made further inquiries and advocated on behalf of members.

CDMN informed employees on 27 February that LSL balances would be removed from their payslip from the pay period ending 22 March 2026.

To resolve the issue, the IEU met with the employer and suggested adding the word "Indicative" to the LSL title so it can remain on the payslip.

The employer took up the union's suggestion, advising employees via text on 20 March that the LSL balance will stay on their payslips.

The IEU thanks members in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle for raising their concerns both individually and at a chapter level.

Together we won the right to retain LSL balances on payslips while CDMN's Catholic Schools Office reviews balances for accuracy.

It follows IEU members in the Bathurst Diocese achieving a major win regarding their LSL entitlements in November 2025.

NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarships

- \$15,000 for a five-week study tour within Australia or abroad
- Applications close: 15 May
- More information: education.nsw.gov.au/teach-nsw/enhance-your-career/nsw-premier-s-teacher-scholarships



From left, NSW Premier Chris Minns, IEU members Mick Klipin and David Van Tol, and acting NSW Education Minister Courtney Houssos at the NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarships presentation in 2025.

OUT NOW Latest issue of IE

The latest issue of *IE* is packaged with this edition of *Newsmonth*. Remember, reading *IE* can count towards your PD.

First Nations Elder and union icon Uncle Bob Anderson shares stories from his lifetime of fighting for social justice.

This edition is packed with stories about IEU members such as Ethan Parlato, a music teacher sharing his skills with colleagues under the Australian Youth Orchestra's Music in Me mentoring program.

We also meet IEU history teacher members Mick Klipin and David Van Tol who will embark



on overseas study tours after receiving NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarships.

Education professor Martin Mills discusses why boosting respect for teachers is crucial to addressing the profession's workforce crisis.

We examine measures to combat workplace harassment and easing the transition to secondary school for First Nations students.

Discover great reads on other topics including the vital role of school support staff and teaching reading to students with differing abilities.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *IE* and find it valuable for your professional practice.

Sydney Adventist teachers Members call for better deal

The IEU is fighting for better pay and conditions for teachers employed by the Greater Sydney Seventh-day Adventist Conference following a resounding rejection of an inferior enterprise agreement (EA) in 2025.

After members rejected the proposed agreement, the union immediately sought a meeting with the conference at the start of Term 1 to ensure bargaining recommenced promptly and progressed towards a resolution.

The union also secured a significant pay rise for members after the employer also agreed to an interim 5% increase to base salary rates from 26 January 2026.

The conference agreed to meet with the union and other bargaining representatives on 19 February 2026.

Ahead of that meeting, the IEU again outlined the four outstanding claims that remain unresolved and led to the union's recommendation that members vote no to the proposed EA:

1. Salary uncertainty in 2028: The conference did not agree to include a pay protection clause to ensure salaries would remain competitive in 2028.
2. Salary progression: While other employers have moved to a seven-step salary scale, the conference insisted on retaining an 11-step model. This significantly delays early

to mid-career teachers' access to higher pay compared with colleagues in other independent schools.

3. Long service leave: The conference did not agree to a five-year long service leave threshold consistent with other sectors, instead maintaining a substantially longer qualifying period.
4. Workplace Framework: The conference proposed removing the clause that incorporates the Workplace Framework into the EA. The framework provides enforceable protections around face-to-face hours, release time, meetings and class sizes.

At the 19 February meeting, the conference appeared more receptive to the union's position, indicating it may be prepared to move to a seven-step salary scale.

Following feedback from other bargaining representatives regarding concerns about Step 10 under the current classification structure, the conference asked whether an alternative approach – further increasing Step 10 rates – might be considered instead.

The IEU and other bargaining representatives requested that both options – a proposed seven-step structure and an amended current structure with increased Step 10 rates – be properly modelled and provided to all parties for consideration.

This modelling is yet to be provided to the union.

In this meeting, the conference also provided updates on the remaining claims:

- Long service leave: A proposal was put forward allowing access to long service leave after seven years, rather than the existing longer threshold. The union has not formally replied to this proposal.
- Pay protection: The conference continues to resist a pay protection clause for 2028. The IEU made clear this was deeply concerning, particularly given ongoing cost-of-living pressures and rising inflation.
- Workplace Framework: The conference is still proposing to remove the framework reference from the enterprise agreement and managing these matters through policy. The IEU strongly rejects this approach, reiterating that enforceable protections must remain within the agreement.

The union is still waiting for a formal response from the conference on salary modelling and the outstanding claims.

More than a month after the meeting, no proposal has been provided.

Neal Bent Industrial Coordinator



Anti-discrimination law Union steps up campaign to scrap religious exemptions

The IEU is campaigning for an end to religious exemptions that make it legal to discriminate against school staff and students.

The IEU Council of 120 elected members at its March meeting recommitted to this campaign, unanimously endorsing the following motion:

That the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Council calls on the NSW government to reform the state's anti-discrimination laws and seeks the removal of exemptions that make it legal for private educational authorities to discriminate against school staff and students in their services.

Union demands urgent reform

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews in April wrote to NSW Attorney General Michael Daley to seek a meeting to discuss the union's demand for reform of the state's anti-discrimination laws.

"The Act has been amended numerous times yet still retains exemptions that allow discrimination on many attributes against members employed by private educational authorities," she wrote.

Matthews said these "unqualified absolute exemptions" permit discrimination on the grounds of gender, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity and marital status.

"Additional broad exemptions apply to religious bodies, including religious schools," she said. "These exemptions are broader than those applying in any other state or territory or federally."

Matthews said the exemptions in the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 are wide ranging and not confined to schools serving religious communities.

"Our members are denied fundamental workplace rights enjoyed by other workers in NSW," she said.

Matthews has also written to NSW Education Minister Prue Car, Opposition Leader Kellie Sloane and Greens MP Jenny Leong.

School staff deserve protections

The IEU has written to MPs as the NSW government undertakes a long-running review of the state's anti-discrimination law.

The union last year provided a lengthy submission to the NSW Law Reform Commission calling for the almost 50-year-old anti-discrimination law to be modernised.

"The Act permits broad exceptions for religious bodies and private educational authorities, enabling discriminatory practices that are increasingly misaligned with contemporary community standards and human rights principles," Matthews said.

The union believes these exceptions undermine the Act's primary purpose of promoting equality and preventing discrimination in public life.

"IEU members have not fully benefited from the protections provided under the Act due to the breadth of these exemptions and exceptions," Matthews said.

In February, the union backed Sydney Independent MP Alex Greenwich's commitment to end the exemptions that permit non-government schools to target LGBTQIA+ teachers and support staff.

Nothing to fear from change

Teachers, school leaders and school support staff have shared heartbreaking stories with the union of the discrimination they have suffered at work because of their sexual orientation, for accessing fertility treatments, a change in their relationship or pregnancy.

"Our members should not be at risk of losing their jobs because of their sexual orientation or because they divorce, remarry or access IVF services," Matthews said.

"School employers have nothing to fear from modern community standards. They can still build communities of faith without any need to discriminate."

Matthews said special exemptions to discriminate are in conflict with the responsibility of employers to mitigate psychosocial hazards in the workplace.

"Discrimination at work can have a devastating impact on the mental health of workers," she said. "Teachers and support staff in faith-based schools deserve the same employment protections as the rest of the community."

Read the IEU's letter to the NSW Attorney General in full:

ieu.asn.au/scrap-religious-exemptions

Activate your delegates' rights

Delegates' rights to access paid union training have been in effect since July 2024.

This legal right did not arrive by accident – it was fought for, and won, by the union movement.

The IEU strongly encourages our reps to exercise their hard-won rights to paid training to help ensure these rights become part of everyday workplace practice.

Use it or lose it

A right that is not regularly used can become harder to protect over time.

When reps do not exercise their right to training, employers may begin to set their own limits around it – as we are already noticing in some schools.

By taking an active role, IEU reps can help ensure these rights continue to be recognised and respected.

The IEU has successfully supported reps to access their entitlement to paid training where employers have attempted to prevent attendance.

As more reps assert these rights, it becomes harder for employers to ignore the intent and operation of the legislation.

Regular and visible attendance at union training normalises the role of the rep in the school and helps embed these rights into your workplace practice.

Enlightened employers have actively worked with the union to ensure the smooth operation of our reps training schedule.

They recognise that appropriately trained union reps are a positive influence in schools and early childhood education and care services.

Active and informed reps are more effective in advocating for members in the workplace, providing a union voice on matters affecting teacher and support staff workloads, conditions and professional practice.

Follow the process

Except in cases where the agreement allows otherwise, IEU reps are required to provide five weeks' notice of their intent to access paid training.

They should then follow the usual process of applying for that leave.

If reps do not provide the required notice, the employer may reasonably refuse the request.

The IEU has successfully overturned blocked training requests when reps have followed the proper process.

Foundation and advanced training

The IEU now offers a Foundation course for new reps or reps who have not undertaken training in the past three to five years, and an Advanced course for reps who wish to take their activism to the next level.

If you are unable to attend or have already attended several training days, talk with your organiser to see if it might be possible to send another union member who may be interested in a role in their chapter's committee.

A full list of training days is on the IEU website and we are always happy to schedule additional training where there is an identified need.

Contact your organiser to discuss this possibility.

For more on reps training, including upcoming dates: see page 10.

Pat Devery Assistant Secretary

Artificial intelligence



AI

Students' cognitive abilities at risk

Students risk losing cognitive abilities vital for their learning and development if the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in schools is not regulated.

A new report warns AI can enhance learning but only if national standards for safe, educationally sound tools are quickly adopted and teachers are equipped to guide their use.

AI a significant risk

The *Towards high quality in Australian educational technology* report said a strong pedagogical response is required to support students to offload lower-order tasks to AI, while building self-regulated learning capability and critical thinking skills.

The report's co-author, University of Technology Sydney Professor Leslie Loble, said AI was a significant risk for students who outsource too much cognitive work crucial to establishing their knowledge, skills and "thinking infrastructure".

"The cognitive offloading from human to AI is especially risky for school students, who are building the foundational knowledge and skills that enable both schooling and lifelong capacity for learning and understanding," she said.

"The educational imperative is not to protect students from a world where AI is the norm, but to prepare them for it."

Loble said young people needed strong knowledge foundations and complex reasoning skills, "not just the ability to 'Google it' or outsource the thinking to AI".

"We know students are already using AI extensively, so we can't put this policy challenge in the too hard basket as we did until recently with social media," she said.

"The issue isn't whether AI exists in classrooms, but whether it is being used to strengthen learning and help students become more effective thinkers."

Vital role of teachers

Released by the Australian Network for Quality Digital Education, the report highlights two important areas for improving learning with AI:

1. Designing AI tools for schools that foster learning, not replace it: AI tools should promote cognitive engagement, deeper thinking and the development of foundational knowledge, not simply generate answers.
2. Giving teachers clear guidance, strategies and evidence-based resources to deploy AI effectively: Teachers remain the most important factor in student learning. With the right support, they can help students use AI to extend their thinking rather than outsource it.

University of Queensland Professor Jason Lodge said the school years were critical for building the memory stores and cognitive foundations that last a lifetime.

"If we allow AI to replace that process for some students, we risk

creating a learning divide that will be very hard to close," he said. Lodge said teachers were crucial to managing AI risks for students.

"While unstructured use of AI risks cognitive atrophy, humans still learn more effectively from and with other humans," he said.

"By supporting the teacher, we empower the human expert who is best placed to manage the complex, relational work of co-regulating learning, managing cognitive load, and building the evaluative judgement, self-regulated learning and metacognition that students need."

Lodge said AI will almost certainly widen existing equity divides and mean a widening learning gap for disadvantaged students and schools if left unstructured.

Students who already possess high levels of domain knowledge and strong metacognitive skills will be able to leverage AI for beneficial offloading and accelerate their learning," he said.

"Students without these skills, often those already experiencing disadvantage, will be susceptible to detrimental offloading and bypassing the very learning they need.

"This further underlines the importance of giving support to teachers."

More information

Towards high quality in Australian educational technology: opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/10453/179687



Australian Services Union Secretary Angus McFarland addresses the Palm Sunday rally flanked by unions including the IEU.

Palm Sunday rally

The IEU continued its long tradition of joining the Palm Sunday rally and march for peace on 29 March.

The theme of this year's event, held in Sydney's Belmore Park, was "Yes to peace. No to war".

Beginning with an Acknowledgement of Country and a reminder of the biblical underpinnings of Palm Sunday – Jesus's triumphant arrival in Jerusalem – the annual rally marks the beginning of the Catholic and Christian Holy Week.

The rally has a broad scope, welcoming participants of diverse faiths. Speakers noted that peace is possible when people recognise each other as friends and neighbours. They called for unity not racism and an Australia that welcomes migrants and refugees.

Unions including the IEU, the NSW Teachers Federation, Australian Services Union, Maritime Union of Australia and Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union emphasised that peace is union business and called for an end to the Iran war.

IEU members know that quality education requires communities that are peaceful and prosperous for everyone.

The union recognises the fundamental right to education, and the right to live free from fear and conflict.

The IEU has proudly supported the annual Palm Sunday rally for more than 40 years.

As a union committed to social justice, we advocate for policies that promote education and uphold the human rights of everyone.

World Support Staff Day

World Support Staff Day on 16 May is an important day to recognise and celebrate our invaluable colleagues.

The day is an initiative of Education International, the global federation of more than 370 education unions, including the IEU. Everything that happens in our schools that enables teachers to teach and students to learn starts with support staff.

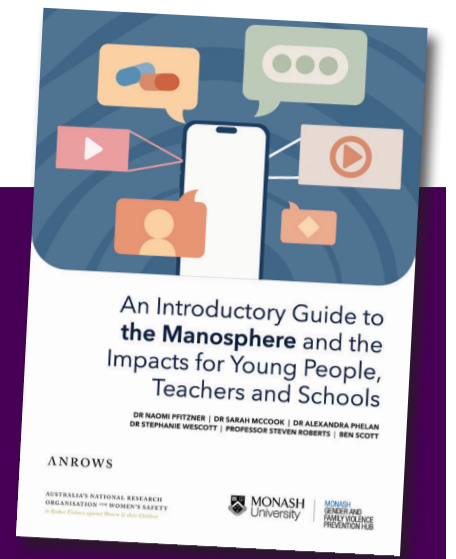
From providing tech support to managing school finances and keeping our libraries running, support staff are vital to school communities.

On 16 May, we urge everyone to say a big thank you to all support staff across NSW and the ACT for their incredible work.

Meet support staff member Deborah Halliday, page 14.



‘Manosphere’ Combating the darkest recesses of the internet



Harmful ideas from the manosphere are increasingly leaking from the online world to classrooms, with female teachers reporting increasing incidents of gender-based harassment and violence.

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) chief executive Dr Tessa Boyd-Caine said she was concerned that misogynistic content is influencing boys and young men's attitude to women.

"And those are the attitudes that we see are really present in violence against women and children," Dr Boyd-Caine told the ABC.

To combat the impact of the manosphere – online spaces that promote misogyny and male supremacy – Monash University and ANROWS have released *An Introductory Guide to the Manosphere and the Impacts for Young People, Teachers and Schools*.

Understand harmful impacts

The guide is part of a project led by Dr Naomi Pfitzner, deputy director of Monash University's Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, to develop a professional learning program to address the harmful impacts of the manosphere in Australian schools.

By understanding the manosphere, the guide argues schools can support students to develop skills to navigate online platforms, social media and content creators.

Pfitzner said not all young people exposed to manosphere content online will take on misogynistic and harmful attitudes.

"However, there is consistent evidence across multiple contexts that consumption of this content is widespread among boys and young men," she said.

"This is driving common patterns of increased sexism, misogyny and harmful behaviour directed at women teachers, girls, and trans youth in schools."

The guide is designed to help schools and teachers recognise the influence of the manosphere and how to manage it in the classroom.

Girls afraid to speak up

By encouraging men and boys to disrespect women and girls, use violence and aggression, and reject authority, the manosphere causes real-world harm.

One of the few studies to examine the impact of the manosphere on girls found one in four reported feeling unsafe at school due to boys' behaviours.

The 2024 Unmasking Influence study found 36 per cent of girls reported reduced class participation, 35 per cent said they felt anxious or stressed about going to school and 30 per cent reported they found it difficult to concentrate in class.

Other research highlights the increase in everyday sexism and misogyny that girls are encountering in schools including incidents of targeted sexual violence and harassment.

Pfitzner said boys who want to reject the influence of the manosphere may feel socially isolated or have difficulty finding friends who also openly reject these attitudes.

"They may also experience harassment and belittling comments if they try to call out their peers online or in the classroom," she said.

Pfitzner said misogyny was taking a toll on teachers and contributing to the profession's workforce crisis.

"Many women teachers contending with increased misogyny and disrespect in schools, alongside inconsistent school responses to harm, are experiencing higher stress and burnout alongside unsafe working environments," she said.

"These conditions are contributing to higher workforce turnover with some women teachers changing schools or leaving the profession altogether."

Union's role

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch was invited to participate in the project by Pfitzner, supporting the promotion of professional learning opportunities to members.

The union encouraged participation in co-design workshops and the pilot program and contributed teacher and sector

perspectives as the project progressed. The union also provided feedback at key stages and engaged with the development of the work, helping to keep it relevant to school contexts and classroom practice.

Pfitzner is scheduled to speak at the IEU's June Council meeting.

More information

anrows.org.au/resources/guide-to-the-manosphere

What you need to know

The manosphere's impact on teachers and schools:

- by causing real-world harm to girls and young women, and making many boys feel uncomfortable with the misogyny they witness online and the harmful behaviours of their peers at school
- through women teachers facing disrespectful 'baiting' questions and intimidating behaviours intended to undermine their authority
- through some women teachers moving schools or leaving teaching.

To address these impacts, schools need to:

- recognise that the manosphere is not just an issue for young people and online safety
- understand the pathways into the manosphere and its appeal to young men
- help young people develop critical digital media literacy
- recognise that schools are employers and have a positive duty to address sexual harassment and provide a safe work environment for teachers and school staff.

Understanding adolescence How to shape healthier behaviour

Education Manager of the Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services Drew Hanger, pictured right, was the guest speaker at the IEU's Council meeting of more than 130 members on 21 March.

A former teacher, Drew runs seminars aimed at preventing gender-based violence.

"We were thinking, what can we do earlier to intervene, to stop seeing some of the things that we're seeing in our communities?" Drew said.

His sessions are based on a survey of 1000 young men in Australia aged 18 to 30, called "Unpacking the Man Box".

"We enable critical conversations around the construction of gender, and particularly masculinity," Drew said. "We're seeing some extreme social pressures come into the way boys think they need to act and behave – we're seeing it in our schools."

Drew has also worked with the NSW and Victorian governments on the Respectful Relationships curriculum. As well as offering seminars for teachers to carry this work into the classroom, Jesuit Social Services also conducts "Toolbox Talks" with men on construction sites and works with sports coaches to shape conversations with young men.

Drew has had boys tell him about the social pressure they feel. "Boys tell us they feel expected to

be tough and in control, even if they don't personally believe it," he said. "That gap between what boys think and how they feel pressured to perform is where a lot of the harm sits."

In his seminars, Drew asks participants what they admire and respect in men. "They say things like 'kind, caring, compassionate, a good listener'," he said.

"No one ever names the harmful stereotypes – so why do boys and men act like those are the things we need to be?"

Drew emphasises the central role that teachers can play in changing attitudes. "Teachers matter," he said. "Hundreds of young people told us that teachers have a significant impact on their ideas of masculinity."

More information and register for seminar

Drew will present *Unpacking the adolescent "Man Box": Supporting healthy identity, wellbeing and relationships* for IEU members.

- Wednesday 20 May, 4pm to 5pm, online
- Register for the seminar: www.ieu.asn.au/pd-and-events
- For full details, see page 12.
- Unpacking the Man Box: jss.org.au/programs/the-mens-project



"That gap between what boys think and how they feel pressured to perform is where a lot of the harm sits."

Budget estimates NSW Education Minister needs a plan for community preschools



The IEU calls on the NSW government to guarantee the future of community preschools by immediately boosting funding to lift the pay and conditions of teachers and educators in the sector.

NSW Deputy Premier and Education Minister Prue Car on 11 March told a Budget Estimates hearing that the state government would review funding for community preschools as recommended by the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

But the Minister also claimed, despite clear evidence presented by the union and accepted by the FWC, that community preschools have the capacity to increase the pay of their staff.

The union disagrees.

"We do not accept that community preschools have sufficient reserves to pay these increases," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"The NSW government must accept the umpire's recommendation and immediately fund pay rises that properly value the work of staff in community preschools."

Matthews said community preschools have already been forced to raise fees for families, despite the funding requirement that parental fees be kept as low as possible.

"There must be a plan to ensure fair pay for community preschool teachers not just in 2026 but in the longer term as well," she said.

Preschool teachers undervalued

The FWC ordered the NSW government back to the bargaining table with the IEU, United Workers Union and employer group Community Early Learning Australia on 23 March.

The union is planning a rally in Sydney's CBD on 6 May if the NSW government fails to follow the FWC's recommendation to fund pay rises for staff in community preschools.

"The NSW government has undervalued the work of community preschool teachers for far too long," Matthews said.

"This has caused a workforce crisis that must be fixed by paying salaries comparable with teachers in schools."

Funding for community preschools is almost solely derived from the NSW government. The federal government funds other early childhood services, such as long day care, but not preschools.

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.

Community preschools are run by volunteer committees of parents whose only priorities are children's education and safety, not profit.

"We welcome the rollout of 100 new NSW government preschools," Matthews said. "However, the government also needs a plan to ensure the 700 NSW community preschools also have a future."

Workforce Retention Payment Union calls for 15% pay rises to be permanent

The union has called on the federal government to extend funding for permanent 15% pay rises for staff in long day care centres.

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes said the federal government's Workforce Retention Payment (WRP) scheme must be extended beyond November 2026.

In a letter to the Early Childhood Education Minister, Senator Jess Walsh, he said early childhood education is an essential service.

"Since the recent pay increases have been supported by federal government funding, wages have been able to rise without increasing costs for families during a period of significant cost-of-living pressure," Hayes said.

The IEU, Australian Education Union and United Workers Union signed a historic sector-wide multi-employer agreement in 2024 that delivered pay increases to more than 50,000 employees and over 500 employers.

The long-overdue pay rises were funded by the federal government through the WRP scheme.

The program has since expanded, delivering 15% pay rises to almost 200,000 employees.

However, the funding for these pay increases is due to expire on 30 November this year.

Hayes said there was no guarantee that wage rates will be maintained without continued government funding.

"Our union is concerned that the pay increases cannot be sustained without ongoing government support," he said.

"If wages fall after the end of the Workforce Retention Payment scheme, we can expect workers to leave the sector in large numbers, worsening the workforce crisis."

Walsh said in response that the WRP was an "interim measure" to support workers while the federal government considered the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) decision about the Children's Services Award last December.

The FWC found pay rates for educators (this does not include teachers) should be boosted up to 27% to address historic gender-based undervaluation, starting with a 5% increase for most workers from 1 March 2026.

"Now that the FWC decision has been handed down, responsible Ministers are moving to determine the government's role in supporting the ECEC sector," she said.

Growing numbers of preschoolers have mental health disorder

A survey of more than 500 Australian preschoolers has found up to half have a mental health disorder.

Researchers from Monash University found that 43 per cent of preschool children meet the criteria for an anxiety disorder, including separation anxiety and social phobia.

Their report, *Comorbidities among mental disorders in preschool children in the Mercy pregnancy emotional wellbeing study*, also found one in five children involved in the study suffered from two or more mental illnesses.

The researchers screened 545 children aged three and four against the Preschool Age Psychiatric Assessment.

They found diagnoses including anxiety, depression, conduct disorder and panic attacks, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder.

The study said two or more mental disorders among preschool-aged children is "relatively common".

Lead researcher Dr Karen Wynter said mental health disorders are more prevalent in preschool-aged children than many people may realise.

"It's a significant public health issue as for many children these disorders will persist into middle childhood, adolescence and adulthood," she told *The Daily Telegraph*.

However, she also said the results of the survey of 545 preschool children had to be cautiously interpreted.

Anxiety disorders such as phobias of the dark or spiders are not unusual among young children.

Writing in *The Conversation*, psychologists Alison Fogarty, Grace McMahon and Monique Seymour said some degree of anxiety and worry is expected in preschoolers.

"Research tells us mild anxiety can even play a protective role – it helps us learn to identify and respond to potential threats."

Union members report up to 60 per cent of children enrolled at their service have additional needs, the IEU said in its submission to a 2025 NSW Parliamentary inquiry into early childhood education and care.

"Funding has not kept pace with the number of children presenting with diagnosed learning support needs, undiagnosed needs, challenging and extreme behaviours."



New members Union expands presence on Central Coast

The IEU warmly welcomes 22 new members at early childhood education services on the Central Coast, as it prepares to negotiate an enterprise agreement (EA) with better pay and conditions for members.

After discovering that five early learning centres (ELCs) operated by CatholicCare Broken Bay would be transferred to Catholic Schools Broken Bay in July 2026, IEU organisers visited these services.

These visits were followed by two

online meetings at which members and organisers discussed the importance of union membership and what could be achieved with union density.

As a result, the number of IEU members in these services has risen to 22 since December 2025.

Teachers at these services, which include Our Lady Star of the Sea ELC at Terrigal, St Brendan's ELC at Lake Munmorah and Waitara Early Learning & Care Centre, are currently covered by

the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award*. Educators are covered by the *Children's Services Award*.

The IEU advises members to send contracts to the union to review before they sign.

Ultimately, the union aims to negotiate an EA for members with pay and conditions comparable to those in schools.

Community preschool staff

START STRONG PAY FAIR

Rallies: Sydney and Lismore
Wednesday 6 May
Make signs and wear your best bright pink!

Sydney rally

When: Wednesday 6 May

Where: Top of Martin Place at Macquarie Street

Time: 9.30am for 10am start

Lismore rally

When: Wednesday 6 May

Where: Spinks Park, Molesworth Street

Time: 8.45am

Wear pink, bring your signs and slogans, and help us fight for the future of community preschools.

START STRONG PAY FAIR

NSW government stalls on pay boost



1. IEU preschool ambassador Raelee Smith, centre, addresses the media at the Fair Work Commission (FWC) on 23 March, flanked by fellow ambassadors, from left, Bridget Isichei, Janene Rox, Melinda Gambley and Jodie Cox.

2. Preschool ambassador Bridget Isichei speaks outside the FWC.

3. IEU members gather at the FWC calling for fair funding for community preschools.

4. IEU ambassadors and officials after meeting with NSW government representatives at the FWC.



3. The IEU and its tireless preschool ambassadors on 23 March returned to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to demand the NSW government provide better funding for community preschools. They have since returned for two further meetings.

"Our members are here today to make the point that this issue is felt deeply by the community, despite NSW government attempts to downplay it in Budget Estimates hearings," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

Members are now gearing up for a rally on Martin Place on 6 May to call on the NSW government to fund their services fairly.

Undervalued workforce

The FWC in February recommended the NSW government review and boost funding for community preschools to lift pay and conditions for teachers and educators.

The NSW government was also "hailed back to the negotiating table", as *The Daily Telegraph* put it, with the union's preschool ambassadors.

The resumption of negotiations on 23 March gained extensive media coverage on television, radio and newspapers.

Matthews told *The Daily Telegraph* she hoped the meeting between unions and the NSW government at the FWC would provide some clarity about funding.

Members speak out

Outside the FWC, Muswellbrook Preschool Kindergarten educational leader Raelee Smith said early childhood teachers were an undervalued workforce who had been forced to accept lower wages to keep preschools affordable.

"Early childhood teachers are a gender-undervalued workforce who have been forced to accept lower wages to keep

preschool affordable so the NSW government can relinquish its responsibility," she said.

"We're tired of putting everyone else's family before our own."

East Maitland Community Preschool director Jodie Cox told ABC Newcastle that community preschools were often the only provider of early childhood education in many small towns.

"We're not-for-profit. Any money that we bring into the preschool has to be spent at the preschool," she said.

"Our members are here today to make the point that this issue is felt deeply by the community, despite NSW government attempts to downplay it in Budget Estimates hearings."

Cox also pointed out that community preschools are managed by committees of parents whose only concern is the education and care of children – not profit.

"The very people who come to preschool are the ones who are volunteering their time to be able to ensure that the preschool can operate," she said.



Two-year campaign for pay rises

The IEU and preschools have been campaigning for two years for pay rises that properly value the work of preschool staff.

Yet the NSW government has failed to respond with an offer.

A preschool teacher with five years' experience earns \$86,264, while a graduate teacher in a primary school earns \$90,177.

Community preschools across NSW turned pink on 18 March as they called on the state government to provide fair funding for long overdue pay rises.

Teachers and educators wore pink and decorated their preschools as they ramped up their fight for fair funding to save community preschools.

Long-term staffing crisis

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.

"There is a long-term staffing crisis in community preschools, and this will only worsen without increased funding for much-needed pay rises," Matthews said.

"Some community preschools face closing. Others have been forced to raise fees for families in a cost-of-living crisis.

"It's time the NSW government boosted funding for better pay and conditions."

Funding for community preschools comes from parents and the NSW government – not the federal government. On average, more than 80 per cent of this funding is spent on wages.

More than 90 per cent of preschool staff are women.

"We need to fix this gender-based pay undervaluation," Matthews said.

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.

Hannah Smith

MLC School, Burwood

Hannah Smith is a maths teacher at MLC School, an early learning, primary and secondary school for girls in Sydney's inner west.

She describes students at the school as "lovely" and "a significant change from teaching boys".

But Hannah and her colleagues still face challenges similar to those in other schools, including workload creep and dealing with parental expectations.

"Workload is an issue for us like it is for everyone," Hannah said. "There needs to be a balance between that interaction with parents and how much time that takes up."

Hannah said she feels supported by the school, "but I worry about what happens to people if they don't have a head of department who's really supportive".

An IEU member since 2024, Hannah put up her hand to be a rep because she values the union's role in backing staff when they need it most.

"If we don't have a strong union, it's much easier for our concerns to be dismissed," she said.

Hannah said it can be a challenge to address workplace issues when school staff are so busy.

"The busier we get, the more at risk I think we are," she said. "We need to be collegiate."

Hannah's goals as rep include recruiting new members and holding school leaders to account for issues such as workload and extracurricular duties.

"Our school is very good at saying really positive things about teacher wellbeing, and we know that translates to student wellbeing," she said.

"And then suddenly people get emails saying they're required to show up at this parent-teacher night they knew nothing about."

At reps training, Hannah said she found the discussion of various scenarios a rep might face to be useful.

Union rep is not the only important position held by Hannah. She is also the vice president of the NSW Knitters Guild, an organisation dedicated to encouraging knitting and crocheting. Its motto is "knit, purl, chat".

Hannah, who is also qualified to teach art, designs knitting and crochet patterns and teaches crochet classes.

"I like that creative outlet – it's good for me," she said. "It's a lovely community of really interesting, educated women. And you know, any repetitive action is soothing."



Jacky Guardascione

St Margaret Mary's Catholic Primary School, Randwick North

Jacky Guardascione is the assistant principal at St Margaret Mary's Catholic Primary School in Randwick North.

St Margaret Mary's has about 120 students and attracts families seeking a smaller school for their children.

"We try to offer parents an option for schooling where we know all the students," Jacky said. "We have a real sense of community and try to ensure no one's left behind."

Jacky took on the role of rep at St Margaret Mary's after having been a rep at her previous school. As an assistant principal, Jacky describes herself as a conduit between staff and school leaders, ensuring the conditions the union has fought for and negotiated are implemented.

"I think it's an advantage to have a seat at the leadership table," she said. "I've only been out of the classroom for the past year, so I'm still very much in touch with what it's like to teach."

Recent improvements include an extra two hours of scheduled collaborative planning time per week for teachers and a reduction in briefings thanks to the use of technology to communicate with staff and students.

"I think the biggest challenge is trying to think creatively with the resources you have," she said.

An IEU member since 2009, Jacky recruits new members by reminding them of the value of joining the union and the security it provides.

Jacky said she attended the IEU's reps training as a "refresher" to keep up to date with the agreements and policies that cover her workplace.

Jacky has two teenage children and "a lot of my time is spent ferrying them around to different activities", she said. "But I love watching them play these sports and activities on the weekend."



"The biggest challenge is trying to think creatively with the resources you have."

Alexander Goossens

German International School Sydney, Terrey Hills

Alexander Goossens teaches history to students in Years 7 to 12 at the German International School Sydney.

The K-12 bilingual school in Terrey Hills has about 400 students, some of whom have a close connection to Germany while others attend the school for its International Baccalaureate program.

An IEU member since 2024, Alexander became the school's rep when the previous rep stood down after 17 years.

"I knew she was looking for someone else, and I was interested," he said.

Alexander said she offered good advice, telling him: "It's a valuable role and rewarding as well."

"As a history teacher, I'm aware of the important role that unions have played throughout history. And maybe I am an idealist too," he said.

"I just think it's a good thing to represent employees and be engaged in your workplace."

Alexander said he had learnt more about the legal framework and policies that govern school

workplaces as well as how to be an effective rep during the training day at the IEU's Ultimo office.

Alexander studied education and completed his teacher training in Germany prior to moving to Australia.

"I graduated in 2021, and came to Australia in the same year, because my wife is from Coogee and we had lived together in Germany for five years," he said.

Outside of school, Alexander admitted he does not mind bringing work home.

"I read history books," he said. "I love history but otherwise I have two kids – I try to be a good father to them."

"They're two and five years old. I try not to be too tired after school and be present somehow."



Nathan Short

Kinross Wolaroi School, Orange

Nathan Short is a PDHPE teacher and head of boarding house at Kinross Wolaroi School, a K-12 co-educational day and boarding school in Orange.

Nathan has a .6 teaching load, with the remainder of his working hours dedicated to the care of 48 boarding house students in Years 9 to 12.

Nathan said the role is rewarding, but workload is a "massive issue". He is often on call late at night and early in the morning.

"A couple of weeks ago, I did a hospital run till 2.30am," he said. "It's big hours but at the same time, it's quite rewarding."

"The more people you've got in the union, the stronger you are."

Nathan's dual roles also mean he sits between enterprise agreements for teachers and support staff – an issue faced by other teachers in boarding schools with similar responsibilities.

"With the help of the union, we decided to be a case study of what we wanted to achieve and set the benchmark for other boarding schools," he said.

Nathan credits his mother, a school principal who later worked for Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst, with sparking his interest in

the union.

He put his hand up to be a rep to make a positive difference for his colleagues and the school community.

"I've been heavily influenced by her beliefs around workplace rights," he said. "And I just think we can do more to look after teachers, especially in independent schools."

An IEU member since 2006, Nathan said recruiting new members by sharing the benefits of joining the union is a key role for reps.

"I've said it a couple of times today, that there is safety in numbers," he said. "The more people you've got in the union, the stronger you are."

"I always look at it as an insurance policy. It's a good way to protect yourself."

Nathan said the union's reps training day had equipped him with the knowledge to provide the best advice and support to members.

"I'd recommend it to anyone," he said. "I've had so many questions that have just been answered. I feel much more confident being able to speak to colleagues."



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.

To attend this training, you need to be officially recorded as a rep on the IEU database (check

with your IEU organiser or call us on 8202 8900). We urge newly elected reps or reps who have not attended training in the previous 12 months to register.

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 experience any issues with accessing your leave entitlements.

Email repstraining@ieu.asn.au for more information or contact your school's IEU organiser.

Fri 1 May	Aspect	IEU office	Wattle Street, Ultimo
Fri 15 May	Albury	Atura Hotel	Dean Street, Albury
Thu 21 May	Lismore	Lismore Workers Club	Keen Street, Lismore
Tue 26 May	Coffs Harbour	Coffs Harbour Ex-Services' Club	Vernon Street, Coffs Harbour
Thu 28 May	Gosford	Gosford Golf Club	Racecourse Road, Gosford
Advanced reps training			
Wed 13 May	Canberra	IEU office	Phipps Close, Deakin



with Professional Development and Reps Training

ieu.asn.au



Meghan Jaeger, left, celebrates 40 years of IEU membership with rep Karen Guy at St Xavier's Primary School in Gunnedah.



IEU General Executive Member Peter Moore marks 40 years of membership with fellow Executive member Amy Kermode at the Southern Suburbs Sub Branch AGM.



Member Marisa Karam, left, celebrates 20 years and rep Tanya Zarb celebrates 30 years of IEU membership at St Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School in Hurstville.



Member Rebecca Cook, left, marks 10 years of IEU membership with rep Lara Sullivan at Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School in Tarro.



Celebrating member milestones at St John's Catholic Primary School in Dapto. From left, Alana Stroligo (10 years), rep Kelly Aquilina, Paula Huckstepp (30 years), and Kylie Stephens (30 years).



Members Catherine Milazzo, left, and Kim Said mark 30 years of IEU membership each at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School in Matraville.



IEU rep and Griffith East Preschool director Suzanne Tucker marks 40 years of IEU membership.



Organiser Christina Ellul celebrates 30 years of IEU membership with fellow organiser Richard Ryan.



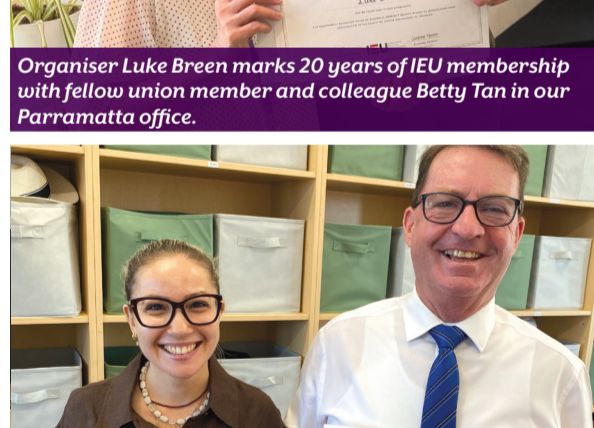
Organiser Luke Breen marks 20 years of IEU membership with fellow union member and colleague Betty Tan in our Parramatta office.



Member Michelle Atkins marks 30 years of IEU membership at St John's Catholic Primary School in Dapto.



Marking membership milestones at St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Port Kembla. From left, Alison Madaschi (20 years), Julie Beuman (20 years), and Katina Plataniotis (10 years).



Members mark milestones at St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Port Kembla; Casey Figueira (10 years) and Gavan Hctor (30 years).



Member Peta Howley, right, celebrates 30 years of IEU membership with rep Trisha Dryden at Our Lady Help of Christians in Rosemeadow.



Celebrating membership milestones, Mark Burian (30 years) and Wendy Isemonger (20 years) at St John the Evangelist Catholic High School, Nowra.



Member Jody Fowler with her 10-year membership certificate at Birralee Preschool in Lane Cove.

Professional development

Join us for PD in 2026

The IEU offers members various 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 Term 2. Check out these courses and register your interest via our website: ieu.asn.au/pd-and-events/

Christina Ellul
Professional Engagement Lead

MAY
20

Unpacking the adolescent "Man Box"

Supporting healthy identity, wellbeing and relationships

Teachers play a critical role in shaping how young people understand identity, relationships and wellbeing.

Drawing on research from The Men's Project, this one-hour online session introduces the concept of the "Man Box" – the set of social norms that shape how boys and men are expected to think, feel, and behave.

Participants will examine the impacts of these expectations and explore practical strategies to support healthier identities and more positive engagement in learning environments.

Through discussion and reflection, teachers will build awareness, develop practical approaches and gain confidence in supporting young people to move beyond harmful stereotypes and behaviours.

Why this matters

Research shows that rigid expectations of masculinity are linked to poorer mental health outcomes, reduced help-seeking, and increased harmful behaviours.

Supporting young people to challenge these norms is essential for fostering wellbeing, respectful relationships, and inclusive school communities.

What you will learn

- Identify the societal pressures influencing boys and young men.
- Understand the impact of these pressures on behaviour and wellbeing.
- Reflect on how bias and actions can reinforce stereotypical norms.
- Apply practical strategies to model and promote healthier identities.

Details

Date: Wednesday 20 May, 4pm – 5pm

Location: Online via Zoom

Duration: 1 hour

Audience: Primary and secondary teachers, school leaders, early childhood teachers.

Standards: This session contributes one hour of professional development for NSW teachers maintaining at proficient teacher level, particularly Standards 1, 4, 6 and 7 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

For more information, see page 7.

MAY
27

Sustaining the educator

Maintaining professional boundaries

Ideal for teachers and school leaders who may be struggling to get the balance right.

In an era where the classroom follows us home via notifications and digital platforms, the line between "teacher" and "individual" has never been thinner. This 90-minute interactive session is designed to help teachers reclaim their time and mental space.

We move beyond the surface-level advice of "self-care" to explore the structural and psychological barriers of the "always-on" culture.

Participants will engage with current research on digital burnout, evaluate their own boundary "leakage" and walk away with a personalised toolkit of evidence-based strategies to manage workload and communication without the guilt.

Why this matters

Setting professional boundaries ensures teachers maintain the distance and mental clarity required to support wellbeing, uphold professional responsibilities and sustain effective practice in increasingly demanding environments.

What you will learn

- Identify the psychological impacts of "digital tethering" and the 2026 educational landscape.
- Audit personal and professional communication habits to identify high-stress triggers.
- Apply evidence-based frameworks to set firm limits with stakeholders (parents, leadership, and peers).
- Develop a sustainable "Digital Sunset" protocol to protect non-work hours

Details

Date: Wednesday 27 May, 4.30pm – 6pm

Where: Online via Zoom

Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Audience: All educators and leaders

Standards: This course provides 1.5 hours of professional development, contributing to the 100-hour requirement for maintaining your accreditation. It addresses Standards 4, 6, and 7 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

MAY
13

CEMA course 1

Foundations of assessment literacy for teachers

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 educators' 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, CEMA's courses are 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 TQI accredited.

AUG
5

CEMA course 2

Foundations of assessment literacy for teachers

Understanding the intricacies of performance assessment tasks is crucial for educators aiming to evaluate student learning comprehensively.

This course empowers teachers to:

- define performance assessment tasks and understand the key components that make them effective
- construct appropriate rubrics to monitor student growth and ensure consistency in judgment with minimal additional effort
- explore practical examples and work through the process of creating personalised rubrics
- evaluate and enhance skills in developing projects, investigations, and performance tasks for continuous improvement in assessment practices.

By focusing on practical, hands-on learning, this course equips educators to develop effective rubrics that improve both teaching strategies and student outcomes.

Details

When: Wednesday 5 August 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 TQI accredited.

More details and register for Zoom links
ieu.asn.au/pd-and-events or contact us at pd@ieu.asn.au

Time capsule: 1986

Approved by ASIC and ASIC - Publication No. NSW 4203
VOLUME 6, NUMBER 3
MAY, 1986

Newsmouth

A publication of the Independent Teachers' Association

ITA Council Elections - Vote of Confidence

At the recent full round of Branch Annual General Meetings held in March, elections were held for the delegates from each Branch to form the ITA Council in 1986.

The elections produced an overwhelming vote of support for the decisions and actions of 1985 Council delegates, with the re-election of all 15 of the Council delegates who stood for re-election.

Throughout 1985, the role of the ITA Council as probably the most important body in the ITA structure (notwithstanding that Annual Conference is the supreme policy making body) was put to the test. The Council as a body and the two elected council delegates from each Branch certainly met the challenge.

In this context, it is pleasing to note that the maturity and experience gained by Council in 1985 are to be maintained in 1986 with the strong vote of confidence in 1985 Council delegates by their re-election.

This endorsement by Branches of Council's strong stand for the independent and active stand taken by the ITA Council in 1985 is a credit to the decisions of the 1985 Council delegates who stood for re-election.

Attempts by a break-away group of principals to block Award coverage for principals (and backed by the Catholic Industrial Official) were overruled by Justice Bauer, who agreed to let the ITA case proceed.

Details of the case on page 6.

Principals' Award - given "go ahead!"

The ITA's case for an Award to cover the salary and conditions of Principals in Catholic Systemic Schools has been given the "go ahead" by Justice Bauer in the NSW Industrial Commission.

Details of the case on page 6.

Superannuation ... an industrial issue!

The ACTU's claim for a 3% productivity wage rise, to be taken in the form of superannuation, continues before the Commonwealth Conciliation & Arbitration Commission. This is despite the appeal by the Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI) to the High Court, challenging the Commission's jurisdiction to deal with the issue of superannuation.

The Commission will hear the case but will not be able to make a decision until the High Court first makes its decision on jurisdiction. (Details p.3)

Meanwhile the ITA and ITFA have proceeded to take all steps necessary to form a joint working party with Non-Government School employees to explore the establishment of a National Non-Government Schools Superannuation Fund.

Meetings are being held with CEO and AIS representatives throughout Australia and submissions have been sought from over 15 superannuation companies on the establishment and running of such a fund. (see p.3.)

Seminars with members and school meetings are all looking at the issue of superannuation and alarming deficiencies in existing funds are being discovered all over NSW and throughout Australia (see p.7.)

Teachers in Non-Government schools do not face the prospect of "retirement with dignity". The treatment of superannuation must never be allowed to be the same again (see Editorial - p.3.)

... with Dignity

Brad, what is that thing next to your chair?

A dog. It came with my first superannuation payment.

Why on earth did they give you a dog?

Its name is Dignity. They promised us retirement with dignity.

How can you afford to feed a dog on your pension?

I can't. Which means I'll be dying with dignity as well.



Clockwise from left: The May 1986 edition of *Newsmouth* advocated for superannuation; Bob Hawke was in the third year of his prime ministership; the October 1986 edition of *Newsmouth* called member meetings to vote on industrial action over splitting of the Archdiocese of Sydney; and Corazon Aquino was named *Time* magazine's Person of the Year for 1986 after becoming the first female president of The Philippines.

Approved by ASIC and ASIC - Publication No. NSW 4203
VOLUME 6, NUMBER 8
OCTOBER, 1986

Newsmouth

A publication of the Independent Teachers' Association

The Sydney Archdiocesan Split Industrial Action in Schools?

All Systemic school members in the three Sydney Dioceses are urged to attend one of these two mass meetings of ITA members:

PARRAMATTA TOWN HALL
Church Street
Parramatta
(5 mins from Parramatta Station)
Date: Monday 13 October
Time: 4.30pm

PETERSHAM TOWN HALL
Crystal Street
Petersham
(2 mins from Petersham Station)
Date: Wednesday 15 October
Time: 4.30pm

These meetings have been called to consider taking industrial action in Sydney's Catholic Systemic Schools in response to the Archdiocesan split, the resultant reduction in working conditions and the employers rejection of the ITA's position.

The ITA Executive urges maximum participation in these decisions. PLEASE ATTEND.
Michael Raper/General Secretary

A candidate of the defeated team in the 1985 Executive elections expressed the view last year that "once you lot have your first strike teachers will find out just what they've voted for." The assumptions underlying this comment were not only that the current Executive members and officers were militants hell-bent on confrontation but that if and when strike action occurred the vast majority of members would disassociate themselves from such action.

Given that Chapter Reps in Sydney's Catholic systemic schools voted in August to place the issue of industrial action on notice for a mass meeting of systemic school teachers, those assumptions may soon be put to the test.

The lead article, on page 3 looks at the circumstances under which industrial action may be taken and reasons why all ITA members should give such action their serious consideration.

New ITA Telephone Number
FROM TUESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER THE NEW ITA TELEPHONE NUMBER WILL BE
(02) 267 5544

POSTAL ADDRESS:
GPO BOX 116, SYDNEY 2001
The street address for the Association will be
176-182 Day Street, SYDNEY, 2000

As 1986 began, the NSW Independent Teachers Association (ITA), as our union was then known, had 12,103 members – and 2035 more joined throughout the year. Today we have more than 32,000 members.

Of those who joined in 1986, 85 are still members and will receive their 40-year membership gift this year.

It was the United Nations International Year of Peace in 1986 – food for thought 40 years later.

The year's agenda

ITA General Secretary Michael Raper laid out the union's agenda for 1986, including:

- growing union membership
- changing the ITA's rules to allow election of chapter committees. Many schools elected chapter secretaries and chairpersons for the first time to support their chapter rep
- achieving superannuation for members (see May 1986 *Newsmouth* cover above left)
- clarifying face-to-face teaching hours in Catholic systemic primary schools
- purchasing the ITA's new premises in Day St, Sydney, which opened on 27 September 1986
- registering as a federal union (rather than

state jurisdiction): the High Court ruled that the Independent Teachers Federation (ITF) could be registered as a federal union for non-government school teachers

- opposing funding cuts to early childhood services: a national day of action was called on 5 March 1986 and childcare centres throughout Australia took part. More than 1000 people joined a rally at Martin Place to protest the funding cuts.

Taking action

The Vatican announced that two new dioceses were to be formed – Broken Bay and Parramatta – from parts of the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Mass meetings of members were held in October at Parramatta Town Hall and Petersham Town Hall to discuss taking industrial action to ensure that sick leave and long service leave benefits would be portable to the two newly created dioceses (see October 1986 *Newsmouth* cover, above right).

Across the two meetings, 270 members voted to take industrial action while 155 voted against.

This represented 63.5 per cent of members in favour; however, the ITA's constitution at the

time required a two-thirds majority (66.6%) for industrial action to be authorised.

In the ACT, the Independent Schools Staff Association (ISSA) negotiated the *Teachers (Non-Government Schools) (ACT) Award* – the first award to cover non-government schools in the ACT. ISSA amalgamated with the IEU in 2003.

Facing punishment

Corporal punishment of students in NSW government schools was in its final year in 1986.

The ITA executive unanimously passed a motion stating: "Corporal punishment has no place in education and should be banned in all non-government schools."

However, not all members agreed and letters defending corporal punishment appeared in *Newsmouth*.

Salaries snapshot

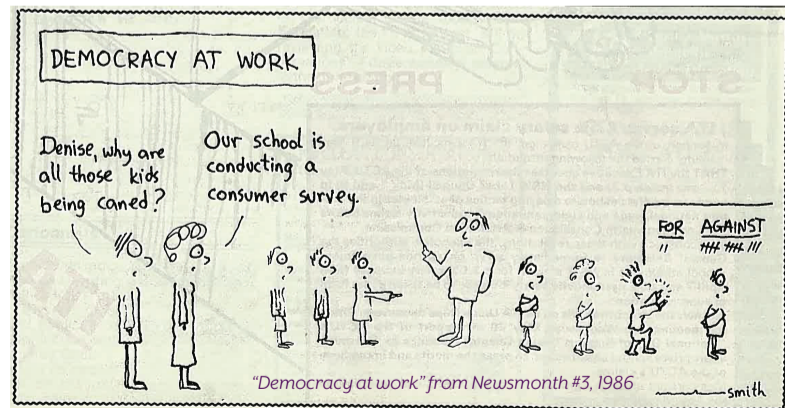
A summary of salaries in 1986:

- first-year-out teacher (two-years trained) \$17,140
- top-step teacher (four-years trained) \$24,955
- Catholic systemic lay principals \$32,915 to \$44,885.

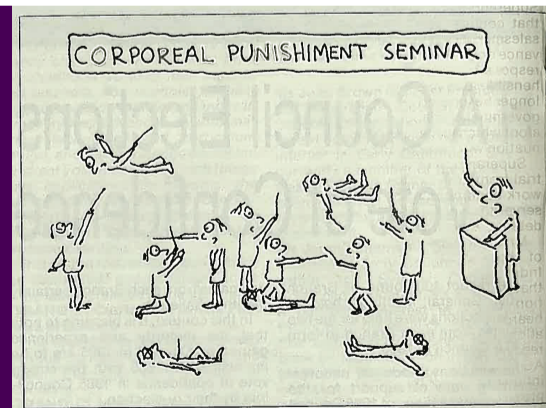
Nation and culture

A snapshot of people, politicians, movies and music:

- Prime Minister: Bob Hawke
- Federal Education Minister: Susan Ryan
- NSW Premier: Neville Wran followed by Barrie Unsworth
- NSW Education Minister: Rodney Cavalier
- NSWRL Premiers: Parramatta Eels
- VFL Premiers: Hawthorn
- Academy Award Best Picture: *Out of Africa*
- Booker Prize: *The Old Devils*, Kingsley Amis
- Countdown Music Awards: Best Album: *Whispering Jack*, John Farnham; Best Single: *You're the Voice*, John Farnham
- Australian of the Year: Entrepreneur Dick Smith
- Time* magazine's Person of the Year: First female president of The Philippines Corazon Aquino.



From the archives Banning the 'caring' cane



"The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there" wrote L.P. Hartley in his 1953 novel *The Go-Between*. This was evident in 1986 when *Newsmouth* featured the union's call to abolish corporal punishment.

That year, members of the Independent Teachers Association, as the IEU was then known, wrote letters to the editor opposing the abolition of corporal punishment in schools.

The first issue of *Newsmouth* in 1986 featured an article by Professional Officer Barbara McGarity entitled *Discipline*, which included a motion from the ITA Executive calling for an end to corporal punishment in non-government schools.

"All but the staunchest diehards will now agree that corporal punishment has nothing to do with education," she wrote.

A colourful exchange of letters followed; some members were deeply offended by the union's stance.

One member said he was "incensed" by McGarity's article. "I am incredulous at her suggestion to seek the advice of a psychologist: I thought only Russians sent dissenters for such education," he wrote.

"The majority of parents support the judicious and careful use of the cane."

Another member called McGarity's story "a slur on many dedicated, caring teachers – teachers who are prepared to undertake an unpleasant task in the interests of their students".

He further claimed that 80 per cent of staff at his secondary school did not want corporal punishment abolished.

McGarity hit back (so to speak): "[The member] seems to have made the mistake of confusing punishment with discipline.

"If violence is evil, then corporal punishment in schools is an aberration," she wrote.

Our cartoonist depicted the debate vividly in *Democracy at Work*, which showed a 'consumer survey' of students lining up to be caned.

Amid the furore, ITA member John Quessy expressed support for the "sensible and sensitive statement" from the union's Executive. John, of course, went on to become Secretary of the IEU in 2012.

To cane or not to cane, that question is settled. The fight for fair pay and conditions continues.

MEET OUR MEMBERS

Bronwyn Hession A lifetime of exceptional service



Award-winning member Bronwyn Hession reflects on a life dedicated to teaching and her former singing career, writes Andrew Taylor.

Bronwyn Hession's first response to the news she would be receiving the James Sturgiss Exceptional Service Award was to "just double check it is me, not the other Bronwyn".

"I was really, really surprised and very humbled too," Bronwyn said. "I could point to many of my colleagues who deserve recognition for things they've done."

Bronwyn received the award at a ceremony in February from the board of the Professional Teachers' Council NSW for exceptional service to professional teacher associations and as a leader in the Catholic sector in NSW.

Bronwyn said it was meaningful to receive an award in memory of a man who was a "very generous, enthusiastic educator".

It was also special to be nominated by her peers, "many of whom have track records similar to mine, who know what it's like to do the hard yards", she said.

The award comes after Bronwyn attained life membership of the Teachers' Guild of NSW in recognition of her 50-year career in education. It prompted her to wonder "whether people are sending me messages that say, 'come on, Bronwyn, it's time you down tools'".

Teaching as a vocation

Bronwyn began teaching at Northmead High School in 1975 after graduating from the University of NSW.

Her grandmother had been the principal of Bondi Beach Primary School, while her mother taught English to migrant children.

"I had a strong sense of teaching as a vocation, something that was an important opportunity to make a difference in the lives of lots of kids," she said.

"I had a strong sense of teaching as a vocation – an important opportunity to make a difference."

Bronwyn initially taught subjects including English, music and geography, but developed a passion for economics while teaching at Mercy Catholic College in Chatswood.

"There's always a lot happening in the economy," she said.

"I had some great students who also became very keen and enthusiastic about economics, and we'd get really excited when the CPI [consumer price index] was being released."

Progression to policy

Bronwyn's colleagues encouraged her to become an HSC marker, which also led to her involvement in professional associations, particularly Economics and Business Educators (EBE) NSW.

Bronwyn went on to become president of EBE NSW and later the national association, Business Educators Australasia, playing a role in developing the Australian curriculum in Economics and Business, and building a community of economics teachers.

Bronwyn also worked at the NSW Education Standards Authority as a senior inspector in school registration and oversaw the home-schooling portfolio before joining Catholic Schools NSW, where she was warmly welcomed into the Office of the Chief Executive, Dallas McInerney, as a policy adviser.

Developing a single school registration system to replace 11 separate registration systems run by each diocese is just one of the key initiatives Bronwyn has been closely involved in.

Ever an IEU member

Throughout her journey from the classroom to the upper echelons of policy development, Bronwyn has maintained her membership of the IEU, which she joined in 1983.

She credits former IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary John Quesy, who was a colleague at St Pius X College in Chatswood, with persuading her to join the union.

"It was a community of practice where you did share common goals and cared deeply for the profession," she said.

Bronwyn may not be in a school workplace, but she said the union's presence is still a "source of comfort".

"It's that you're not alone – someone else has got your back," she said. "And we can achieve a lot more together."

Outside of work, Bronwyn is a dedicated music fan and former singer who performed in clubs around Sydney and even toured as a backing vocalist for Julie Anthony.

She also performed the role of Ruth the Pirate Maid and similar roles in the annual Gilbert and Sullivan productions at St Pius.

However, Bronwyn said her three grandchildren are her greatest passion.

"They're lovely, so spending time with them, although they're very busy, we have lovely get-togethers and celebrations and that's pretty special," she said.

Deborah Halliday

A strong voice for support staff

Deborah Halliday recruits new members at her school, especially among support staff, through patient conversations, writes Andrew Taylor.

Deborah Halliday is the senior finance secretary at Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School in North Ryde.

But she is often called away from her desk to solve problems great and small.

"Technically, I'm in the office, but sometimes I fix furniture," she said. "The role is definitely varied. Sometimes, you have to fix photocopiers. There are all sorts of things people expect you to do."

'Grew up union'

Deborah is the rep at her school, carrying on a family tradition of union involvement.

"I grew up union," she said. "My dad was a union organiser. My sister is a rep as well."

"I've always felt passionate about being part of the union, so I thought this is something I can offer the school and staff."

Deborah grew up "running around the union building" in the inner-city suburb of Surry Hills where her father worked on industrial matters involving James Hardie Industries and asbestos-related illnesses.

In Year 12, she undertook a major project on the 1998 waterfront battle, which pitted employers and the Howard government against the union movement, led by the Maritime Union of Australia.

"It's always been something in the background for us that's like our Catholic faith," she said. "It's just part of your upbringing."

At Deborah's school, challenges for members include difficulty finding mutually agreed times for long service leave due to the demands of school life.

Other issues include workload pressures, teacher shortages, unpaid overtime, increasing parental expectations and rising behavioural issues among students.

Support staff, meanwhile, can face requests to perform tasks beyond the scope of their role as well as job insecurity.

Building her chapter

Recruiting new members, especially support staff, is one of Deborah's goals as rep. In the past year, she has boosted union density at the school through conversations with colleagues.

"A lot of it is talking to them about what it means to be a part of the union," she said. "It's not just about wages, it's about conditions and supporting your colleagues."

"It's not just an individual thing. We're a group, and we should be working together to achieve all the things that everybody feels so passionate about."

Deborah is also working on ways to encourage greater involvement in union activities.

"My idea this year is to put out a form to find out what members want to discuss, then give that information to our organiser before the chapter meeting," she said.

"When we meet, people can feel like they're getting real results on the spot."

IEU organiser Lee Cunningham said Deborah leads her chapter with conviction and had built the union's presence at her school.

"She understands the power of a collective voice and is unapologetic about the necessity of support staff to engage in their union," Lee said.

"One member at a time, Debbie has recruited her colleagues and has built union power within her school."

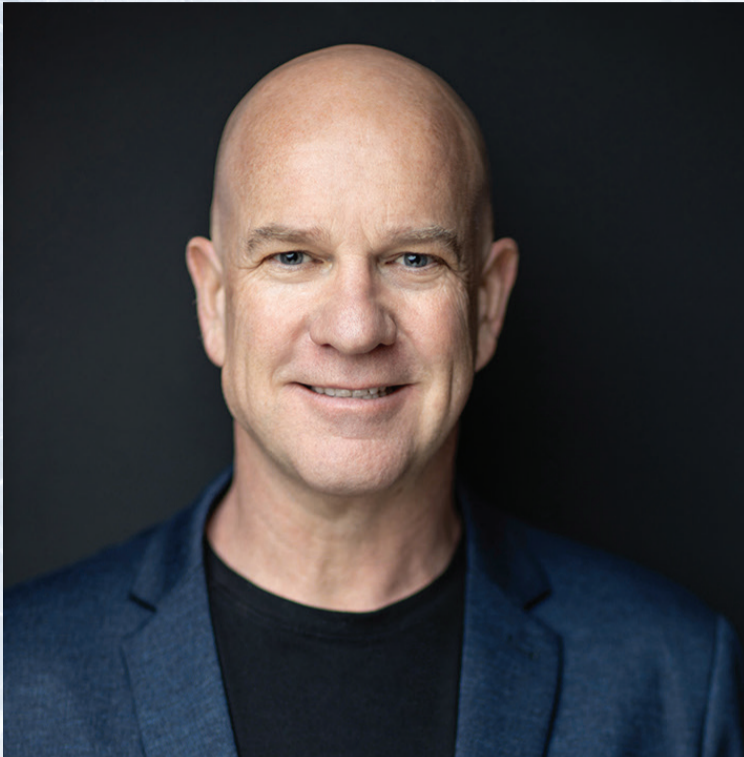
Outside of school, Deborah has just started playing netball again.

"I really love the game," she said. "But mostly now I just drive my kids – Mum Uber."



FROZEN FACES

How screens impact young children's learning



“It’s plausible that the new devices are the culprit when it comes to our decline in intelligence.”

Preschoolers are struggling to understand social cues, make friends and regulate their emotions because of excessive screen use, writes Andrew Taylor.

Children are starting preschool with frozen faces and are unable to express their emotions because of the amount of time both they and their parents spend staring at screens.

This is one of the findings of neuroscientist Dr Mark Williams who said the overuse of devices has left toddlers with the “still face effect” – an inability to receive social cues, make social connections or learn to self-regulate.

“We used to see this mostly in children who had experienced severe trauma, like physical or sexual abuse,” he said.

“But now we’re seeing it far more widely in the general population. Essentially, it means you lose the ability to use your face to express emotion.”

Williams said the facial expressions of parents and carers are crucial to young children’s learning and development.

Yet when a baby or toddler is met with a blank face staring at a screen rather than a smile directed at them, they do not learn to associate various reactions with different emotions.

“When they get to preschool they use this neutral face to try to make friends but when the other toddler sees a neutral face, he’s like, ‘oh that’s weird’ and walks away so these kids have a lot of trouble making friends,” Williams told *The Daily Telegraph*.

Serious harm to learning

The “still face effect” is one of the consequences of excessive screen use that Williams documents in *Screen Smart Children*, co-written with teacher Gavin McCormack.

An honorary professor at Macquarie University’s School of Psychological Sciences, Williams said the book shows the serious harm to children’s learning and development caused by overuse of devices as well as providing practical tips to combat them.

The book draws on research and examples from the classroom to show how excessive screen use by young children and parents leads to anxiety, inattention, behavioural issues, speech problems, poor memory and learning difficulties.

Williams also highlights the reversal of the Flynn effect – an improvement in intelligence from one generation to another – in the last decade.

Williams said the fall in IQ has occurred in specific areas: verbal comprehension; perceptual reasoning; and perceptual organisation.

“It’s plausible that the new devices are the culprit when it comes to our decline in intelligence,” he writes in the chapter “Getting dumber”. “Especially when you factor in the number of hours our kids are on their devices at school as well.”

Renowned neuroscientist Baroness Susan Greenfield in her 2014 book *Mind Change* explored how digital technologies affected our brains, prompting controversy over her suggestion that the impact was comparable to climate change.

Subsequent research has vindicated Greenfield’s arguments about technology rewiring us in ways that Williams likens to brain damage.

“This generation is going to be the first generation that is less intelligent than their parents, which is really scary,” he says.

Williams said excessive screen use is more harmful for younger children because their brains are still developing.

Impact on teachers

Williams said staff in early childhood education bear the brunt of “still face effect” and other harmful consequences of excessive screen use.

“You’re going to have more behavioural issues because children will be used to being positively reinforced constantly, which doesn’t happen in real life,” he said.

“You’re going to get kids who are less able to regulate their emotions and less likely to sit down and play with blocks or whatever.”

Williams said children are increasingly exhibiting speech delays because they are given devices rather than learning how to communicate properly by chatting to their parents.

Research even shows young children are speaking less than previous generations.

“They’re not playing with siblings or friends regularly, so they’re not learning to communicate or interact, which causes problems at preschool,” he said.

Attention issues are also more likely to arise in young children due to overuse of screens.

“If your attention mechanisms aren’t working, you’re going to have trouble with memory storage,” Williams said.

“They’re not going to be able to retain as much information as children used to be able to.”

Williams said a lack of attention means teachers must change the way they give instructions to students.

“Instructions will have to be broken down because the working

memory and attention mechanisms aren’t as good,” he said.

“So therefore, you have to give constant reminders because they’re going to not remember as much information.”

Addictive by design

Despite his concerns about excessive screen use, Williams is adamant he is not a technophobe.

“The problem at the moment is a lot of technology is designed to capture and hold our attention so that a few multinational companies can make huge amounts of money,” he said.

A California court in March awarded millions of dollars in damages after a jury found social media platforms Instagram and YouTube were designed to be addictive.

Williams is also critical about edtech, or educational technology such as software, online platforms and digital content used in teaching.

He said edtech often relies on gamifying learning to prolong engagement by offering intermittent rewards: “Most people don’t know that gamified actually means using reinforcement schedules to get someone addicted.”

Williams is not alone in warning about the potential harms of technology.

Safe, ethical use

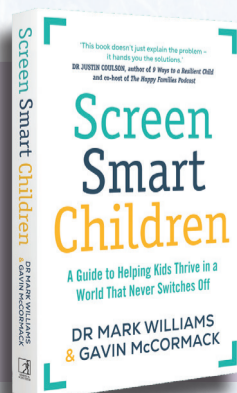
The IEU advocated for the safe, ethical and pedagogically sound use of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and edtech in its submission to the Productivity Commission’s 2025 interim report *Building a skilled and adaptable workforce*.

The submission said good faith consultation and agreement with employees and their unions “is vital if AI and edtech are to deliver workload relief and improvements in learning outcomes”.

The federal Department of Health warns sedentary screen time during early childhood can have long-term impacts on a child’s development, including shorter attention spans, delays in developing language skills and leaves children less ready for school.

It recommends no screen time for children under two years, and no more than one hour a day for children aged two to five.

WIN A COPY



We have a copy of *Screen Smart Children* by Dr Mark Williams and Gavin McCormack to give away.

In a world where screens dominate childhood in both classrooms and bedrooms, many parents feel overwhelmed.

Are devices stealing attention, empathy and imagination from our children? Or can they be part of a healthy, balanced life?

Internationally acclaimed neuroscientist Dr Mark Williams and award-winning educator Gavin McCormack

draw on decades of cutting-edge brain research and real-world classroom experience to reveal how screen exposure is rewiring young minds.

To enter, email giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the book’s title in the subject line by Thursday 28 May. Include your postal address and membership number in the body of the email.

AROUND THE GLOBE

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



Left: Displaced Palestinian children attend a children's educational institution that was partially destroyed by Israeli attacks on Gaza.

Right: Education International calls for an end to war in the Middle East.



Unions across the globe have come together in a powerful, united call for a ceasefire in the Middle East, reflecting the core trade union values of solidarity, peace, and justice.

Through coordinated action led by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Education International (EI), unions are demanding an immediate end to the violence, the protection of civilians and full respect for international law.

On 13 April, leaders of global union federations representing more than 200 million workers around the world signed a statement calling on the international community to reject war, respect international law and condemn the use of military force by all parties.

Education hit hard

Across the Middle East, education systems are facing collapse. Many areas lack reliable internet access, electricity, adequate digital infrastructure or even basic computing equipment.

In early April, EI brought education unions together for a solidarity webinar with member organisations affected by the wars in the Middle East.

Teachers and unionists have been directly impacted by widespread destruction, mass displacement and the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools.

"We are here today because our unions choose solidarity, we choose peace, and we choose to protect children and

those who teach them," said EI president Mugwena Maluleke. In Lebanon, more than 2000 civilians have reportedly been killed and over 1.2 million people displaced.

Essential civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, has been repeatedly attacked, with an estimated 70 per cent of public schools now being used as shelters for those forced from their homes.

Despite these conditions, teacher unionists continue to organise and support their communities, defending the fundamental right to education as war rages on. They all agree that schools must never be targeted, occupied or militarised.

Devastation in Gaza

Education in Gaza has been devastated by ongoing conflict. A 2025 UNESCO survey found an estimated 745,000 students were out of school, including 88,000 in higher education, with 95 per cent of university campuses damaged or destroyed.

In response, UNESCO and partner organisations are working to keep education alive through initiatives such as the Gaza Virtual Campus and Temporary Learning Spaces, providing digital access, safe places to learn and psychosocial support.

While these efforts are helping thousands of students continue their studies, only a ceasefire and lasting peace can fully protect the right to education.

Fundamental right

As teachers and educators, we have a moral obligation to speak up for peace and the right of all children, wherever they live, to have access to school.

During the webinar, Maluleke reiterated EI's commitment to peace and commended teachers and unionists for their steadfast support of education during times of crisis and solidarity across borders.

"Your courage, your honesty, and your determination remind us why solidarity is not a slogan, it is a lifeline," he said.

"Teacher unionists are standing firm amidst war, displacement, fear, and immense loss. They continue to organise, support and defend the right to education."

More information

EI solidarity: bit.ly/eimiddleeast

Global unions statement: bit.ly/globalunionspeace

UNESCO: bit.ly/unescogaza

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Find out more

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What your union can do for you



Join the Independent Education Union
We're the voice of teachers and professional, administrative, operational and support staff in non-government education. Know your rights and responsibilities at work.

Enterprise agreements, salaries and conditions
The IEU negotiates enterprise agreements that secure your pay rises and conditions, including sick leave, carer's leave, parental leave and long service leave.

Industrial advice, support and representation
The IEU has workplace rights specialists who can advise and support you on a wide range of employment issues, such as classification, contracts, disputes, discrimination, termination, flexible work requests and more.

Child protection and workplace investigations
The IEU provides crucial advice and representation during workplace investigations such as reportable conduct allegations, performance issues and workplace conflict.

Workers compensation and workplace health and safety
The union promotes and supports health and safety at work. We provide workers compensation advice and advocacy, and representation where required.

Accreditation advice and professional development
The union provides advice on teacher accreditation and registration, and we offer a range of free and discounted face-to-face and online professional development sessions.

Advancing your interests

- A professional voice: through representation and advocacy to employers, government, policymakers and in the mainstream media.
- Payment recovery: the IEU recovered more than \$4.4 million in underpayments to members in 2025 alone.
- Community and connection: opportunities to network with engaged education professionals in your workplace and region.

Keeping you informed

- Stay across workplace issues and professional news with our regular email updates and print publications, including Newsmonth (workplace news and views); IE magazine (professional journal); and Bedrock (for early childhood education and care members).
- Follow us on social media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, BlueSky.
- Bookmark our website: www.ieu.asn.au

Authorised by Carol Matthews, Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch

Join the IEU
Union fees are tax deductible



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Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch

The Briscoe Building 485-501 Wattle St Ultimo NSW 2007
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Thinking about retirement?

Here's what you need to know ...

The IEU can assist you as you prepare for retirement.

Scan the QR code for more information



Authorised by Carol Matthews, Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch



Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch

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.

Scan the QR code for more information



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Join your union for

- Better pay and conditions
- Industrial advice
- Your professional voice

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Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch



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Union resources

The IEU provides various resources for reps and members, including recruitment posters, information series and fact sheets on rights and responsibilities, women and equity information, and calendars. Ask your organiser for any resource you need, or download from our website: ieu.asn.au/resources

Just started teaching?

Here's what you need to know ...

The IEU can provide support and assistance to beginning teachers.

Scan the QR code for more information



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Present Tense Members close to win at Taylors College

The IEU consistently advocates for improvements to members' work lives, particularly through the negotiation of enterprise agreements.

These agreements must provide for better pay and conditions than the underpinning award.

Taylors College negotiations

The IEU is close to reaching an agreement with Taylors College after protracted negotiations, with outstanding matters on the verge of being resolved.

Bargaining at Taylors College has been at an impasse for some time. The employer was determined to chip away at long-standing arrangements for non-term weeks in which teachers have been allowed to set their own work and were not required to attend their workplace.

IEU members make up the vast majority of teachers at Taylors College, and they held firm on maintaining the existing arrangements. Eventually, the employer conceded this point.

However, members are understandably concerned that the employer may try again in future.

They instructed the IEU to seek changes to the disputes procedure in the agreement to allow for arbitrated outcomes to disagreements and to give their union greater power to push back against management overreach.

The new enterprise agreement (EA) is still being finalised, but voting on it is expected to take place in May.

Other negotiations

The IEU has been bargaining with WSU The College since 2025, alongside the National Tertiary Education Union. The parties have worked through the agreement and are awaiting a salary offer from the employer.

Negotiations have begun with WSU The College's subsidiary, International College (a joint venture with Navitas), and members have requested the involvement of the IEU.

The *Fair Work Act* provides that any union with members in a workplace should be a bargaining agent in any negotiations.

The finalised EA for UTS College has been formally approved by the Fair Work Commission, providing 3% a year pay rises until the start of 2029.

Negotiations for a new EA will soon commence at UNSW College.

Better off under union agreements

The *Fair Work Act* includes provisions relating to "good faith bargaining", under which an employer can be compelled to bargain when it can be shown that a majority of employees (or a section of employees, such as teachers) want this to occur.

Employees working under an EA must be better off overall than under the underpinning award, so employees are always better off under an agreement negotiated by the union.

To find out how this might work at your college, contact the IEU.

Kendall Warren Organiser

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*Investment performance is net of tax and investment expense, for the year ending 31 Dec 2025. View our investment performance table for other time periods. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. This is general information only and may not be right for you, read the PDS, FSG and TMD at ngssuper.com.au. Issued by NGS Super Pty Limited AFSL 233 154

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How to crush your financial goals in 2026

Have you set goals in the past that you didn't reach? You're not alone.

Often, a goal isn't reached because a clear and achievable process isn't used. A goal without a plan is like searching for a location without a map.

Find out how you can set financial goals in 2026 and make them happen.

Use the SMART framework

SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based.

This is an easy-to-use framework that can help you design goals that are focused and, therefore, will give you a better chance of reaching them.

How can you use the SMART framework?

Specific – make your goal specific.

For example, a goal that is specific might be: To save \$3000 to travel.

A goal that isn't specific might be: To save money to travel.

Measurable – make sure you can track the progress of your goal.

For example, a measurable goal might be: To save \$3000 by the end of the year to travel.

A goal that isn't measurable might be: To save money to travel soon.

Achievable – make sure you can break down what you need to do to reach the goal.

For example, an achievable goal might be: To put \$250 a month in a savings account to save \$3000 by the end of the year.

A goal that isn't achievable might be: To put spare money in a savings account when I can and save \$3000 by the end of the year.

Relevant – ensure the goal is relevant for your financial situation.

For example, a relevant goal might be: To stop buying takeaway coffee and put that money in my travel savings fund.

A goal that isn't relevant might be: To put money into a travel fund whenever I come across extra money.

Time-based – set a deadline.

For example, a time-based goal might be: To put \$250 a month in a savings account that will result in a total of \$3000 by 31 December.

A goal that isn't time-based might be: To save \$3000.

Talk to a Super Specialist

Want to find out how you can kick goals with your super? If you would like to explore your options, why not connect with one of our NGS Super Specialists?

Talking with a Super Specialist costs nothing, and they can provide general answers to your questions about superannuation, investment options, insurance or planning for retirement. They can also help you decide the next steps – including if a meeting with an NGS Financial Planner is right for you.

To talk with one of our Super Specialists: ngssuper.com.au/advice-and-education/advice-services/super-specialist

Discover more

Take control of your financial future. Visit ngssuper.com.au to get started.

This is general information only and does not take into account your objectives, financial situation or needs. Before acting on this information, or making an investment decision, consider whether it is appropriate to you and read our Financial Services Guide, Product Disclosure Statements and Target Market Determinations. You should also consider obtaining financial, taxation and/or legal advice tailored to your personal circumstances before making a decision. This information has been issued by NGS Super Pty Ltd ABN 46 003 491 487 AFSL 233 154 as trustee of NGS Super ABN 73 549 180 515.

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Parramatta: Level 2, 18-20 Ross Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 P 8202 8900

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



Luna Park

Author: Helen Pitt

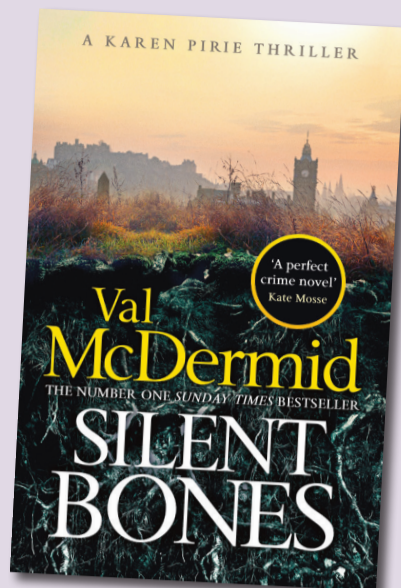
Publisher: Allen & Unwin

The dazzling, rollercoaster story of Australia's iconic amusement park on Sydney harbour. For decades, the young and young at heart have loved the Luna Park face and its promise of laughs and thrills – and a whiff of danger.

Helen Pitt has uncovered Australia's intriguing Luna Park story. It's filled with con men and criminals, crooked cops, failed politicians and movie moguls.

Like the circuses, from which amusement parks evolved, this is a tale with elephants, performing snakes and many ringmasters.

From the engineering feats of its construction during the Depression to the deadly 1979 Ghost Train fire, Luna Park has endured financial disasters, legal battles and closures. Yet it survives, glittering by the water.



Silent Bones

Author: Val McDermid

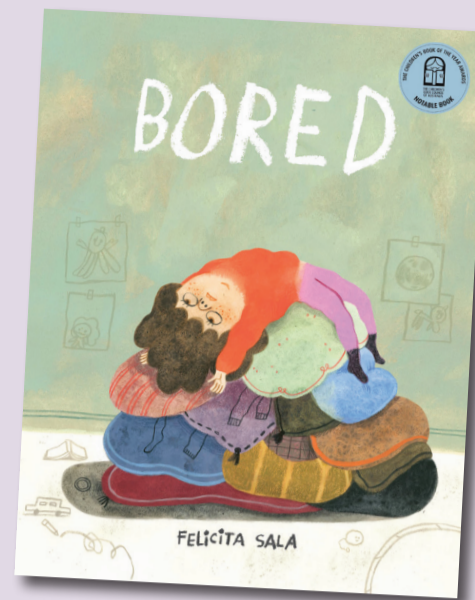
Publisher: Hachette Australia

When torrential rain causes a landslide on a motorway in Scotland, it reveals a crime scene: someone hid a body in the tarmac 11 years before.

Journalist Sam Nimmo had been the prime suspect in the murder of his fiancée when he disappeared, and now DCI Karen Pirie and her Historic Cases Unit must find out who buried him – and why.

Meanwhile, in Edinburgh, new evidence reopens a closed case, and the accidental death of a hotel manager starts to look like murder.

In the latest novel in Val McDermid's Karen Pirie series, Karen and her team must untangle a web of lies, one that connects their murder cases with Scotland's rich and powerful.



Bored

Author: Felicitia Sala

Publisher: Hardie Grant

Utter boredom leads one imaginative girl to inspiration in this clever story from much-loved author Felicitia Sala.

Rita is bored. So, so, so bored. Flopped in her bedroom, limp and tragic, Rita tries everything to cure her malaise. But time drags on, and there she remains: catatonic with boredom.

If only there were a special place, a non-boring place just for bored people ...

From award-winning author Felicitia Sala comes a slyly brilliant ode to boredom and imagination, and a guaranteed antidote to the doldrums.



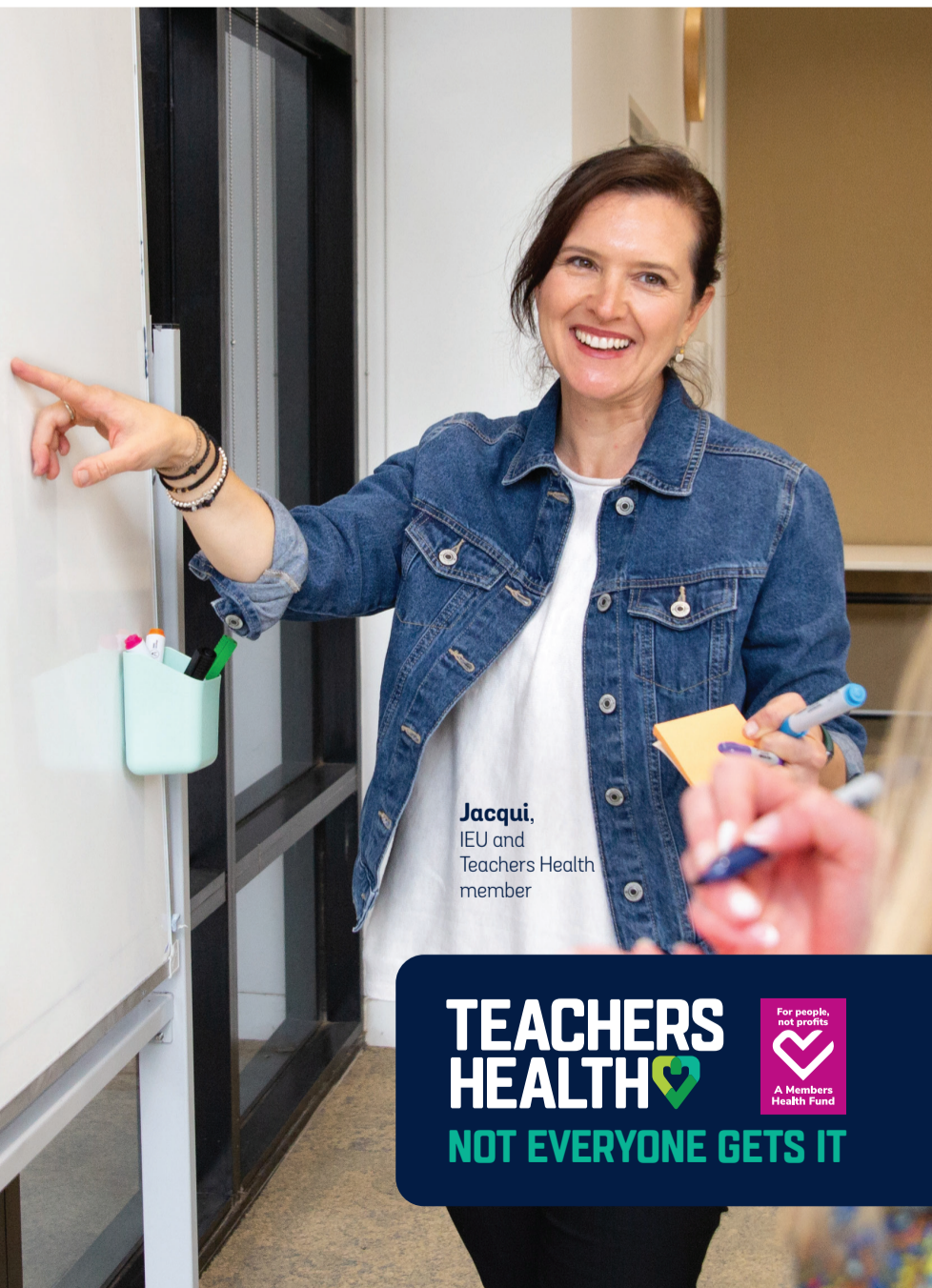
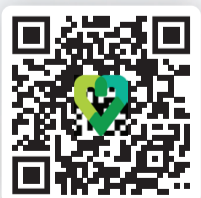
To go in the draw, email entries to giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the title of the book you would like to receive in the subject line. Write your name, membership number and postal address in the body of your email. All entries must be received by 28 May 2026.

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