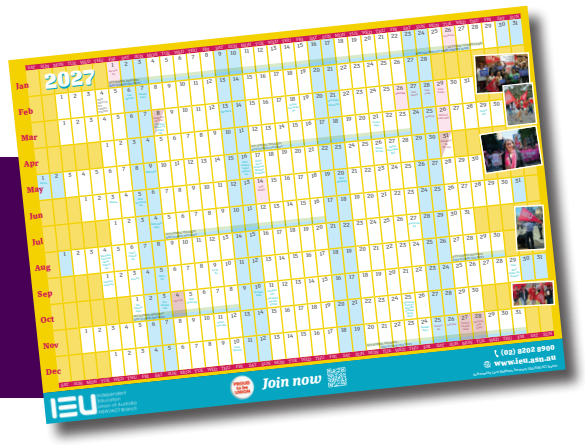
Get organised
Don't miss our 2027 calendar
Packaged with this issue of *Newsmonth*



newsmonth

The newspaper of the Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch
(vol 46 #7) November 2026
PP 100000871 ISSN No: 0728-4845

Independent schools: **Bargaining gets underway**





Carol Matthews
Secretary

The union has begun bargaining for new multi-enterprise agreements for teachers and professional and operational staff in 250 independent schools across NSW and the ACT.

Employers issued Notices of Employee Representational Rights (NERRs) in late October to staff who would be covered by one of two proposed agreements:

- *Independent Schools (Teachers) Cooperative Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2028*; or
- *Independent Schools NSW (Professional and Operational Staff) Cooperative Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2028*.

These proposed multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) will replace the existing MEAs, which do not expire until January 2028.

What's in the claim

The IEU will consult with members in independent schools in coming weeks to determine member priorities for teachers and professional and operational staff. Priorities are likely to include:

- pay rises above inflation
- greater flexibility for non-initial primary carers to take parental leave
- arbitration of disputes
- improved consultation provisions.

Teacher workload

Workload is a key issue for teachers. Members report excessive meeting requirements, the number and unpredictability of extras, lack of support for teaching students with disabilities, inadequate arrangements for Year 12 teachers in Term 4; and a lack of clarity about the required duties for part-time teachers.

We need to strengthen and extend the workload transparency clause the union negotiated in 2024 as part of the current MEA.

Support staff

The union believes pay rates need to increase to match rates in other education sectors.

Teacher aides' pay is about 20% below pay rates applying to teacher aides in NSW government schools and Catholic systemic schools. The union raised this disparity in the previous round of bargaining, but rates are still way behind – so we will renew the pressure.

Continued on page 3

Catholic independent schools
Model B and Model C bargaining update

The union is bargaining for replacement multi-enterprise agreements (MEAs) covering teachers and support staff in Model B and Model C Catholic independent schools.

The IEU has met with Catholic Employment Relations (CER – the employer representative) on six occasions, most recently on 20 October.

Key claims

At the October bargaining meeting, the union pressed the employer on the claims, endorsed by members, for better pay and conditions.

For support staff, this includes additional pay increases to address the pay gap with comparable school sectors, as well as improved personal/carer's leave and long service leave.

CER gave the following responses to our claims for teacher members:

- Pay offer: CER indicated its offer will be lower than our claim of 4.5% a year and may reflect the Model A schools outcome of 3.75%, 3.5% and 3.25%. This is still under negotiation.
- Support staff pay and classifications: CER is yet to make an offer on additional pay to achieve comparable rates with other school sectors.
- Paid parental leave for all employees: CER indicated schools may be prepared to improve paid parental leave, which is well below other school sectors for non-initial primary carers. Employers will consider superannuation on paid parental leave for the initial primary carer only.
- Leave for support staff: CER has not made an offer yet for increased personal/carer's leave and long service leave.
- Teacher workload: The IEU has pressed for a workload transparency statement requiring the employer to inform teachers of key workload measures applying at their school, such as face-to-face teaching hours and release time in line with the clause agreed in Model A schools. Employers are likely to support this claim.

The IEU is also seeking school-level guidelines on arrangements for Year 12 teachers in Term 4, caps on the number of staff meeting hours per term, compensation for overnight camps, and reduced teaching loads for early career teachers.

Employers have not agreed to these claims. We will continue to press these matters on your behalf with the employers.

Teachers: Personal/carer's leave

Employers have flagged their intention to change personal/carer's leave for teachers.

Teachers are currently entitled to 25 days a year (if full-time) accruing to a maximum of 150 days; they can only take leave accrued over the previous six years.

The proposed model means teachers would retain their existing entitlement, receive 15 days on transition to the new model, then receive 15 days a year on an ongoing basis, accruing indefinitely. In other words, the employer is proposing to cut the number of days per year from 25 to 15, but the cap on accruing leave would be removed.

The union has not agreed to this change. For the union to consider this model, the employer would need to improve other aspects of personal/carer's leave, including the circumstances in which evidence of illness can be required and access to special leave for family responsibilities.

Next steps

We urge members to hold a chapter meeting to:

- Identify workload concerns at your school, for example, extras, excessive or unclear teaching loads, unpaid co-curricular commitments.
- Vote on the motion to endorse the union claim for improved pay and conditions and return it to the IEU by 17 November.
- Ask your chapter rep (or committee) and IEU organiser to meet with your principal to communicate members' views and request that the principal convey those views to CER.

Your union is strongest when members act together.

Carol Matthews Secretary

(vol 46 #7) November 2026

Join us

Follow us

ieunswact

ieunswact

ieunswact

Newsmonth is published eight times a year (two issues per term) by the Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch.

Executive editor Carol Matthews, Secretary, for and on behalf of the IEU Executive and members

Production editor Monica Crouch

Contributors Katie Camarena, Monica Crouch, Andrew Taylor, Tania Yardley

Photos Katie Camarena, Zoe Hercus

Graphic design Chris Ruddle

Proofreader Helen O'Regan

Letters from members are welcome. They do not reflect endorsement if printed, and may be edited for size and style at the editor's discretion. Write to:

Newsmonth
485-501 Wattle Street
Ultimo NSW 2007
GPO Box 116
Sydney NSW 2001
Tel: 8202 8900
Email: ieu@ieu.asn.au
Website: ieu.asn.au

This publication was produced on the unceded lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

More than books: Why school libraries matter



Suzanne Penson
President

The recent decision by Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle to abolish teacher-librarian positions in primary schools is deeply concerning.

It raises important questions about how we value professional expertise and educational opportunity.

As President of the IEU, and as a practising teacher-librarian, this issue resonates strongly with me. I understand firsthand that a school library is far more than a room filled with books. It is a place of discovery, belonging, learning and opportunity.

Crucial and complex work

Every day, teacher-librarians work alongside classroom teachers, developing and resourcing the curriculum and embedding literacy and digital skills.

We encourage reading for pleasure. We help staff and students navigate the continually evolving and complex information landscape.

Students need qualified teacher-librarians who can teach them not simply how to find information, but how to question, evaluate and understand it. In the face of misinformation and AI, these skills have never been more important.

One of the most vital roles of the teacher-librarian is wellbeing champion.

We can instil a love of reading by connecting a Year 8 student who hates reading with the perfect book for them. We provide students with a welcoming space at lunchtime.

We help a young person develop confidence through research and conversation or through encouraging them to explore something new.

Helping a student feel valued and safe in the school library during lunch breaks is priceless.

Teacher-librarians can change a student's experience of school and influence the school's overall culture.

These experiences matter. They are part of a dynamic education that prepares students to succeed in the world.

Disappointing decision

The IEU has challenged the Maitland-Newcastle decision to make teacher-librarians redundant.

This highlights a broader concern for the union: the gradual erosion of specialist positions and the risk that remaining staff will be expected to absorb additional responsibilities. This in turn impacts on work health and safety.

Genuine consultation must involve employers listening to those who understand the work because they do it every day. The voices of those who are impacted by reduced professional support need to be heard too.

Our members deserve a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their professional lives, their colleagues and the students they serve.

Standing together

We must stand together to protect the professional expertise, dignity and working conditions of every member.

When we stand up for our members, we are also standing up for the quality of education every student deserves.

As both IEU President and a teacher-librarian, I believe in effective union leadership that is connected to the realities of classrooms, libraries, playgrounds and staffrooms.

The IEU extends solidarity to the teacher-librarians in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese who have been made redundant from the jobs they love. We are here to support you.

See Maitland-Newcastle staff cuts, page 5

Teachers caught in culture-war crossfire



Denise McHugh
Deputy President

Well, politicians are back to teacher bashing. Apparently, when all else fails, blame the people in classrooms.

First we had Nationals leader Matt Canavan declaring that the rise of the toxic online "manosphere" could partly be blamed on the "feminisation of our curriculum". According to Canavan, speaking in September, boys are tired of being lectured at school about "how bad men are".

Then along came Opposition Leader Angus Taylor, jumping aboard the same culture-war bandwagon. He warned that "political agendas" are being pursued in schools.

When pressed for an example, Taylor's evidence was hardly compelling: his own children had come home from school from time to time saying things that concerned him.

Seriously? This is what passes for evidence?

Show us the evidence

Canavan and Taylor are senior politicians making broad accusations about schools and the highly trained professionals who work in them.

If Canavan believes the curriculum has been "feminised", perhaps he could point to where. Is it hiding somewhere in algebra? The periodic table? Shakespeare? Geography? Coding?

Or does teaching young people about respect, consent, equality and healthy relationships now constitute an attack on masculinity?

And if Taylor genuinely believes teachers are pushing political agendas, then produce the evidence. Name the curriculum content. Identify the syllabus outcome. Explain precisely what teachers are supposedly doing.

Solving social problems

Teachers have become society's favourite emergency service. Bullying? Schools must fix it. Youth violence? Schools. Vaping? Schools. Mental health? Schools. Consent and respectful relationships? Schools. Online safety? Schools.

Every time another social problem emerges, politicians decide schools should solve it and teachers are handed yet another responsibility.

Then, remarkably, some of those same politicians who expect schools to tackle these complex social issues turn around and accuse teachers of indoctrinating children.

Now we find politicians implicating teachers in the rise of misogyny. But these online subcultures are fuelled by many factors, including social-media algorithms and influencers deliberately targeting young men.

Enough.

Manosphere not made in class

The manosphere was not created in Australian classrooms. Teaching boys to respect women does not diminish boys. Teaching consent is not "feminising" education. Encouraging young people to think critically about the world around them is not political indoctrination. It is education.

Teachers and support staff deserve better than being used as convenient punching bags in politicians' culture wars.

Perhaps before our politicians pontificate about what is supposedly happening in classrooms, they could try something radical: read the curriculum, talk to teachers and spend some time in a classroom.

Pipe down – and let teachers get on with teaching.

See Respect for teachers, page 6.

Catholic systemic schools

Standing strong ahead of EA negotiations



Liz Heggart
Vice President Catholic Systemic Dioceses

With enterprise agreements (EAs) and Work Practices Agreements (WPAs) covering Catholic systemic schools up for renewal next year, we are gearing up for another round of bargaining.

Members are facing increasing cost-of-living pressures and ever-growing workloads, so making gains in both salaries and working conditions is essential.

Employers often say they value their staff. The upcoming negotiations will reveal whether those words are backed by action or whether they are simply a lot of hot air.

Fair pay

Our employers are quick to highlight the differences between Catholic systemic schools and government schools through glossy brochures and high-production videos.

Yet when it comes to paying salaries above public sector rates, they have shown little willingness to move in previous negotiations.

They cannot continue to market a premium education while expecting staff to settle for less. It is time for employers to back up their rhetoric with action.

Genuine consultation

Recent restructures in the Maitland-Newcastle and Broken Bay dioceses have exposed shortcomings in consultation – a process that is designed to protect members.

We need to fight for a stronger consultation so that, when changes are proposed, the union is involved much earlier in the process.

This would ensure members are not left high and dry and that there are effective mechanisms in place to manage the impact of change.

The consequences of these restructures will be far-reaching for staff in affected schools and are also likely to have a big impact on student outcomes.

Workload concerns

There is scope to address workload through both the EAs and WPAs to help reduce unsustainable levels of burnout among teachers and support staff.

Key areas where improvements are needed include enforceable limits on meetings, face-to-face teaching hours, expectations around out-of-hours activities, class sizes and coordinator workloads.

The work of teachers and support staff has become increasingly complex as the number of students requiring additional support and the diversity of their learning needs continue to grow.

As a result, more time is needed to adapt lessons, provide individualised support, manage complex student needs and meet the increasing administrative and pastoral demands of school life. This is just one example of the workload pressures facing school staff today.

Solidarity matters

As negotiations begin in the coming months, our collective strength and solidarity will be critical in ensuring that staff voices are heard and that employers' commitments to wellbeing, respect and fairness are reflected in real improvements to salaries, conditions and workloads.

Make sure you have your say at chapter meetings and sub branch meetings so that employers can be in no doubt about the expectations of their workforce.

Continued from page 1

Independent schools

Bargaining gets underway

Teacher aides employed in Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia) schools are mobilising behind the IEU claim, and we will ask all teacher aides in independent schools to show support.

Our claim will also focus on pay rises for other professional and operational staff.

Better leave provisions for support staff are overdue. Professional and operational staff get only 10 days of personal/carer's leave a year, and no special leave day for family events.

In many other enterprise agreements, support staff have the same or similar personal/carer's leave provisions as teachers (usually 15 days) – for example, in NSW Catholic systemic schools, NSW Christian schools and NSW government schools.

While Aspect provides teacher aides with 15 days of personal/carer's leave a year, this entitlement is not enshrined in the MEA, so we will be pressing to have it included.

Next steps

The union had its first bargaining meeting with employer representative Independent Schools NSW on 29 October.

IEU organisers will consult with members in coming weeks. We'll ask you to hold a chapter meeting to discuss your priorities for bargaining.

You are always welcome to contact your organiser to arrange a visit.

A chapter meeting is also a good opportunity to ensure you have a union rep at your school, as well as a committee to assist in recruiting members and consulting across your workplace.

To win our claims we need maximum support among members in schools – and the highest possible union membership.

We encourage you to talk to potential members at your school, especially professional and operational staff, and invite them to join. There is real strength in numbers.

We are always stronger together.

Carol Matthews Secretary

Modern award schools

Why union-negotiated agreements pay



David Towson
Deputy Secretary

Teachers and support staff in about 40 NSW independent schools lack the protections and entitlements of a union-negotiated agreement.

Instead, they work under the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020*, commonly referred to as the modern award.

The equivalent modern award for support staff is the *Educational Services (Schools) General Staff Award 2020*.

Union agreements deliver better pay

Modern awards provide the minimum national wage rates and conditions in schools (and other workplaces) without union-negotiated agreements. They represent the lowest common denominator of salaries and conditions.

The starting salary for a teacher under the modern award is $75,941. In comparison, the starting rate for a teacher in NSW on the union-negotiated *Independent Schools (Teachers) Cooperative Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2025* (CMEA) is $96,155.

Under the modern award, the top rate for an experienced teacher (without a promotion or HALT allowance) is $97,720. Under the CMEA, the top rate for an experienced teacher is $133,009. The difference is more than $35,000 a year.

Pay rates are even higher for teachers in ACT schools, and salaries under the MEA will receive a 4% boost after 1 February next year.

To put this into perspective, a first-year out teacher on the union-negotiated CMEA who commences their career in 2027 could be earning a higher salary than a teacher with 10, 20 or 30 years of experience employed at a modern award school.

Modern awards are bare minimum

The reality is that most modern award schools pay above the wage rates prescribed by the award. They simply would not be able to attract or retain staff without doing so. However, those rates of pay are generally known only to the individual employees concerned.

In addition, employers who pay above the minimum rate are not required to pass on future wage increases. They may also offer different rates of pay to employees performing the same duties. Any above-award payment is not necessarily enforceable.

Our members employed in modern award schools are often most disadvantaged by inferior or absent employment conditions.

A member from a modern award school recently contacted the IEU after learning that the award provided no entitlement to paid parental leave.

They knew teachers in other sectors receive between 14 and 24 weeks of paid parental leave at their full salary.

This member will be eligible for the federal government's paid parental leave scheme, which is paid at the minimum wage. But so too are members covered by union-negotiated agreements who receive both employer-funded paid parental leave and the government entitlement.

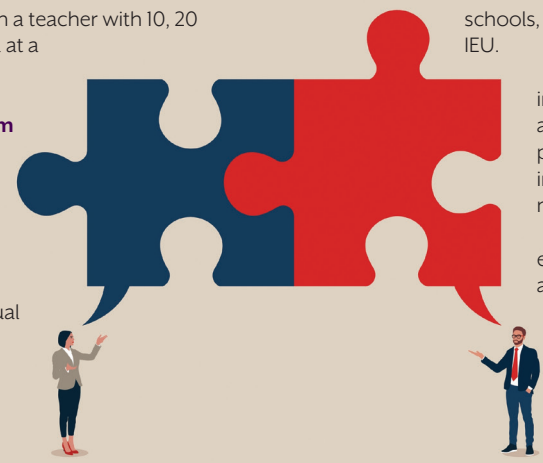
Personal/carers leave and long service leave entitlements are also vastly inferior for staff employed on the modern award compared with their colleagues employed under the CMEA.

More employers signing up

The IEU and Independent Schools NSW (ISNSW) have started bargaining for a new agreement to commence in 2028. At this stage, five modern award schools have indicated they will be included in the CMEA.

These schools are demonstrating a commitment to being employers of choice by providing staff with the certainty of enforceable fair salaries and conditions.

For members in other modern award schools, urge your colleagues to join the IEU.



Contact your organiser and invite them to visit your workplace and speak to members and potential members to explain the importance of securing a union-negotiated agreement.

If you are unsure whether an enterprise agreement or modern award governs your employment conditions, contact the IEU.

Artificial intelligence

Technology's promise must not be squandered



Patrick Devery
Assistant Secretary

Artificial intelligence (AI) in schools brings both enormous opportunities and equally significant challenges.

However, like most technological advances, its value will depend on how it is used and who benefits.

AI's potential

For teachers, AI has the potential to streamline routine administrative tasks, develop teaching resources, support student learning and, if introduced thoughtfully, reduce some of the demands that consume their working lives.

There is a certain irony in the promise of reduced workload when teachers are already required to redesign assessments, deal with issues of academic integrity and subject student work to increasing scrutiny.

Once the profession has negotiated these implementation challenges, as it invariably does, AI has significant potential to save teachers hours of unnecessary administrative work.

Winning back time

The crucial question is who controls that hard-won time. The union believes it should be returned to the essential work of education: teaching, supporting students and building relationships.

Any gain on paper means little if those saved hours are filled with new demands on the profession.

Every teacher knows that education is fundamentally a human endeavour. AI can produce a lesson plan or worksheet, but it cannot recognise the quiet distress of a student struggling to keep up or fit in.

It cannot build trust with a reluctant learner, nor can it exercise the judgement that comes from knowing a young person and their unique circumstances.

Professional judgement is not incidental to teaching; it is central to it. Teachers must retain responsibility for what is taught, how it is taught and how learning is assessed. Technology should serve their expertise, not dictate their workflow.

Industrial concerns

For too long, employers and governments have confused efficiency with educational progress, believing that additional duties, larger class sizes, reduced staffing ratios and cuts to support staff somehow constitute productivity gains.

Schools have been run like factories, with students treated as products.

Somewhere in this neoliberal pursuit of efficiency, it has been forgotten that education is essentially about relationships.

AI must not become another excuse for workload intensification, reduced staffing or diminished professional autonomy.

Its introduction requires genuine consultation with staff and unions, appropriate training, transparent policies and enforceable protections for privacy, professional autonomy and job security.

Claims of reduced workload must be measured against teachers' actual experience, not the wildly optimistic assertions of software developers or employers.

The success of AI in education should not be measured by the tasks automated or the positions employers believe they can dispense with.

It should be measured by the time returned to teachers, the professional judgement it preserves and the educational relationships it sustains.

Bargaining starts in your staffroom – not at the negotiating table



Therese Fitzgibbon
Assistant Secretary

Our bargaining power comes from the strength of our union in every workplace. And there is real strength in numbers.

The union will negotiate new agreements for teachers and support staff in Catholic systemic schools and many independent schools in 2027.

This means now is the time for reps and chapters to get organised and start preparing.

Strong chapters deliver stronger outcomes

When staff stand together, employers notice. High union membership, active workplace representatives and engaged members give a chapter a stronger and more effective collective voice. It is this voice that we rely on.

Everyone benefits from the better pay and conditions that the IEU negotiates through collective bargaining – whether they belong to the union or not.

Employees who choose not to join the union are effectively leaving it to others to secure and defend the pay and conditions everyone enjoys.

The union bargains with the employer on behalf of members. When more employees join the union, they bolster this bargaining power.

This can lead to solid pay rises, gains in working conditions and a greater capacity to resist unreasonable demands.

Collective strength depends on many individuals choosing to participate.

What can chapters do now?

Every chapter can take practical steps to prepare:

- Hold a chapter meeting. Discuss the upcoming negotiations, what is at stake and the improvements you want to achieve.
- Map your workplace. Identify members, non-members and potential activists. Get to know your non-members and look for opportunities to have a chat about joining the union.
- Start conversations. Talk to colleagues about the issues that matter most to them. Workload, salaries, job security and working conditions affect everyone.
- Ask colleagues to join. Don't assume someone else will have the conversation. Explain that union membership is more than access to advice and support. It is about building the collective strength needed to improve pay and conditions for everyone.
- Build an active chapter. Share responsibilities, identify future workplace leaders and establish regular communication to keep members informed, engaged and involved.

As we gear up for bargaining on behalf of thousands of members in Catholic systemic schools and independent schools, it is critical that we do all we can to build union power through inviting non-members to join us.

The negotiations provide a real opportunity to secure improvements in pay, conditions and workloads. But what we achieve at the bargaining table depends on the strength we build beforehand.

The work of building that strength starts now.

Strong chapters build strong unions. And strong unions win better agreements.


The Sydney Morning Herald
INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.
Business growth shifts from city's east to west
Coalition signals bid to drive migration lower
Opera Australia thinks big for 2027 season
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
Teachers push for clarity on funding
Trouble in Tiger Town
The Developer of Rozelle Village and the owners of Wests Tigers leagues club are on a collision course as doubts over the new club surface.
The Sydney Morning Herald
SATURDAY
INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.
LABOUR PAINS
Pacific workers' great Australian dream dashed
Completion date for Ms a long and winding highway
STROKES OF GENIUS
Thirty must-see works of art (that aren't the Mona Lisa)
OPERATION ROSNY
Catholic Schools ousts CEO McInerney
Big fish in international pond
Sydney fish maestro Josh Niland is scaling up, taking what has earned him acclaim in Australia to the global stage.
Swans hotel scandal deepens
Labor and Coalition unite to stop One Nation AI backlash

NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption

Union a trusted source during scandal

The IEU has been a trusted source in the media throughout the corruption inquiry into whether public funding for Catholic schools may have been wrongfully spent on Liberal Party branch stacking.

The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) held two months of public hearings to investigate allegations that Catholic Schools NSW made illegal political donations to the NSW Liberal Party.

Hearings began in July when counsel assisting, Peggy Dwyer, told the inquiry: "Money in politics, as in other spheres of life, has the potential to corrupt."

The allegations include claims Catholic Schools NSW made political donations to right-wing Liberal party operatives that were not declared and exceeded caps.

The payments were allegedly made at the behest of chief executive Dallas McInerney, who was sensationally sacked in August after a damaging appearance in the witness box at the ICAC inquiry.

Trusted source

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews twice appeared in stories on page one of *The Sydney Morning Herald* to represent the views of members.

In August, the *Herald* reported Catholic Schools NSW was under pressure from its teachers to show greater transparency over funding after allegations that $265,000 had been funnelled to a conservative faction in the Liberal Party.

The revelations included evidence that members of the Liberal factional group known as the Reformers were employed by Catholic Schools NSW, the governing body for almost 600 schools.

The ICAC heard evidence they recruited and renewed members to the Liberal Party during work time.

Matthews told the newspaper the NSW government closely scrutinises expenditure at the individual school level to ensure the overall $3.8 billion in state and Commonwealth funding is used solely for the operation of each school.

However, similar scrutiny is not applied to organisations such as Catholic Schools NSW that receive funding on behalf of Catholic diocesan schools.

"IEU members would be deeply concerned if any public funding for non-government schools has been diverted from its intended purpose," Matthews said.

The Guardian also reported the union's deep concern that public funding for Catholic schools may have been wrongfully spent on Liberal Party matters.

"Regardless of the findings of ICAC in this matter, there should be greater scrutiny of bodies such as Catholic Schools NSW, which receive public funding on behalf of non-government schools," Matthews said.

Catholic Schools NSW sacks boss

The *Herald* also sought comment from the union when McInerney was sacked by Catholic Schools NSW following his appearance in the witness box at the ICAC inquiry.

Matthews said she was not surprised by the termination.

"It is vital that government funding of non-government schools is used solely for the purpose for which it is intended," she said.

"The community must have confidence that public money is being used for educating school students and not for improper purposes."

Matthews also said "very close scrutiny of expenditure at the school level" is required under NSW law to ensure funding is used for the benefit of students and the operation of schools.

"However, the legislation needs to be expanded to apply the same scrutiny to the bodies that receive funding on behalf of non-government schools," she said.

Screen time

New research backs call for "digital detox"

Almost half of NSW teachers do not believe that digital devices help students learn, according to research commissioned by the state government.

The survey of more than 900 teachers in NSW government schools, Catholic and independent schools also found half of teachers reported students were frequently distracted.

Only 42 per cent of teachers said students were able to shift their attention away from digital devices when asked.

Classroom challenge

The *Best practice in screen use for education* report is based on a survey of 914 teachers, 1057 students and 1686 parents and carers.

"Overall, these findings suggest that managing attention and minimising off-task screen behaviour remain persistent classroom challenges, with many teachers reporting impacts on both student focus and peer interactions," the report said.

The report's co-authors, Matt Bower, Joanne Orlando and Karen Woo, said educational screen use in schools was often moderate and for specific purposes.

"However, there appears to be an extensive amount of non-educational use of screens in high schools," they wrote in *The Conversation*.

"This suggests we need more research and initiatives to help students develop digital self-regulation. This will require supporting both teachers and parents, as well as students."

Digital detox

The report's findings follow growing concern about the impact of screen use on student learning.

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare in August called for a "digital detox".

"There is a lot of evidence that writing something down has a bigger impact on learning and memory than typing it," he wrote on social media.

The NSW government in September announced limits on the use of digital devices in schools in a bid to curb excessive screen use, improve attention and lift educational outcomes.

NSW Deputy Premier and Education Minister Prue Car said excessive use of technology is a major concern for parents and schools.

"Students benefit from the use of screens and technology in schools when they are used in an intentional way with a specific and age-appropriate educational purpose," she told *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Safe use of technology

The IEU advocated for the safe, ethical and pedagogically sound use of technology 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".

Have your say

New Stage 6 syllabuses

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is seeking feedback on a range of Year 11-12 draft syllabuses as part of the NSW curriculum reform program. These include:

- Human Society and its Environment (HSIE)
- Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)
- Science
- Technological and Applied Studies (TAS).

This is an opportunity for teachers and education professionals to help shape the future curriculum and ensure it reflects the needs of students and classrooms.

We encourage IEU members to review the draft syllabuses and provide feedback through NESA's online surveys during the consultation period.

The key features of each syllabus are outlined on NESA's website. The consultation period closes on 18 December 2026.

More information
nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/news/syllabus-consultations

Workers compensation: How the union ensures your pay is right

The union recently recovered tens of thousands of dollars in entitlements for a member from a complex workers compensation case.

The union challenged the employer's calculation of entitlements including annual leave, superannuation, personal leave and long service leave accrual for a teacher on workers compensation.

Concerned about pay?

If you are navigating workers compensation, extended medical leave or preparing to leave your school, we urge you to contact the union. We can ensure you are paid accurately.

Your entitlements to workers compensation, long service leave, personal leave and superannuation stem from different state and federal laws. These include the *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* and the *Workers Compensation Act 1987 (NSW)* as well as your enterprise agreement.

When these entitlements overlap, your employer is required to make complex calculations. The IEU acts as a second set of eyes, working collaboratively with your employer, to ensure your entitlements are correctly calculated and paid.

Overlapping entitlements

If you are on workers compensation, your employer needs to understand how personal leave interacts with it.

The *Fair Work Act* generally restricts personal leave from being taken during a compensation period. This means employers sometimes mistakenly withhold annual leave payments during the summer pupil vacation period.

But the *Fair Work Act* also provides an exception if taking or accruing leave is permitted by a state's compensation laws.

The *NSW Workers Compensation Act* allows a worker who is incapacitated (and therefore on workers compensation) to accrue and take annual leave. This means the worker would receive both workers compensation and annual leave payments at the same time.

For teachers, it means you should be paid annual leave while on workers compensation during the summer pupil vacation period.

For most other staff, it means you continue to accrue annual leave and can take it when you choose.

If you are on workers compensation and concerned about your annual leave entitlements, the union can work with your employer to ensure your full annual leave entitlement is paid along with your workers compensation.

Personal leave and super

If your workers compensation payments are less than your full pay, you have the right under the *NSW Workers Compensation Act* to use personal leave to 'top up' the difference.

The school should only debit the percentage 'gap' from your leave balance. For example, if workers compensation is paying 80% of your regular pay, to top up your pay to the full amount, the employer may deduct 20% of your accrued personal leave balance – about 1.52 hours per day for a standard 7.6-hour working day.

Further, while superannuation is generally not paid on standard workers compensation, it must however be paid on the personal leave top-up portion.

The union frequently works with employers to ensure superannuation entitlements are properly paid.

Neal Bent Industrial coordinator
Liam Crisanti Industrial officer

Maitland-Newcastle staff cuts

Union vows to support members

The IEU will support members impacted by the decision of Maitland-Newcastle Diocese to cut almost 3 per cent of roles in Catholic schools.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said the union was "deeply disappointed" by the employer's decision to proceed with its restructure.

The staff cuts include abolishing teacher-librarian roles in primary schools and reducing hours for English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) and Aboriginal education workers.

"The union is still working through the impact of the restructure on our members after receiving the latest advice from the employer," she told the *Newcastle Herald* in September.

"The employer has advised that more than 200 positions will be affected by the restructure. The union understands this is still the case."

Impact on staff, students

In a letter to staff in September, director of schools Jacqueline Wilkinson said government funding had not kept pace with rising employee and operational costs.

Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle recorded a deficit of $17 million in 2025.

"Our members are very concerned about the impact of this staff restructure on student learning," Matthews said.

"The union will be vigilant about ensuring that the work the employer claims is no longer funded is not imposed on other staff members."

Strong opposition

Staff were called to a meeting in August where they were informed about an organisational restructure in 2027 that would result in job cuts.

> "The union will be vigilant about ensuring that the work the employer claims is no longer funded is not imposed on other staff members."

The IEU reacted swiftly to the announcement, expressing its strong opposition to the staff cuts in outlets including the *Newcastle Herald*, ABC Radio, NBN News and the *Newcastle Weekly*.

Matthews and local IEU organisers met diocesan leaders in September to express the union's concern about the impact of staffing cuts on quality teaching and learning.

"The union pushed strongly for teacher-librarian positions to be retained in primary schools," she told the *Newcastle Herald*.

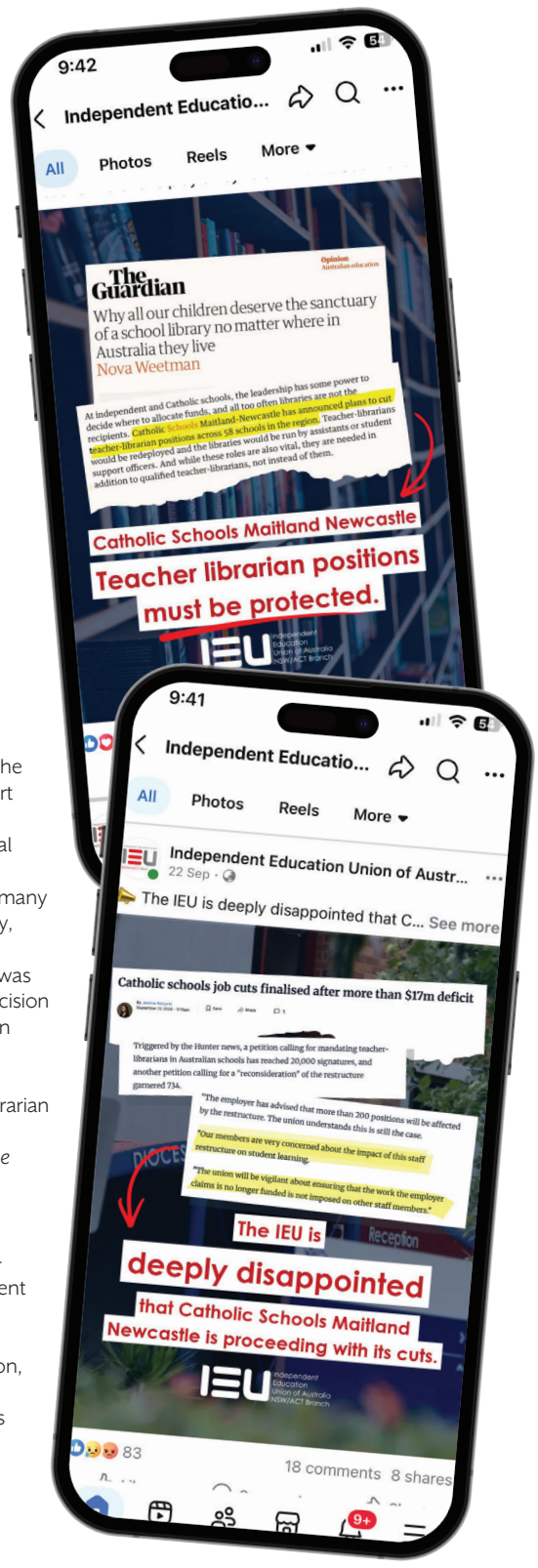
"The union is also challenging the cuts to specialist staff who support Aboriginal students and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect."

The decision was opposed by many parents and the wider community, with the Australian Library and Information Association saying it was "extremely concerned" by the decision to abolish teacher-librarian roles in primary schools.

A petition launched after the announcement to cut teacher-librarian roles gained more than 20,000 signatures, reported the *Newcastle Weekly*.

It called on governments around Australia to mandate the employment of qualified teacher-librarians in all Catholic, government and independent schools.

Children's book author Kate Temple, who launched the petition, said: "If we are serious about turning our declining literacy rates around, we need TLs [teacher-librarians] in schools fostering reading cultures and helping kids read for fun."



Broken Bay Diocese

Union forces employer to consult over "shared" principal plan

Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) has been forced to consult with the union about its shared principal model (called 'One parish, one principal' by the employer) after the union notified disputes to the Fair Work Commission in August and September.

Employer breached agreements

The IEU believed the employer had breached relevant enterprise agreements by failing to consult with the union and school staff over a major workplace change.

Under Catholic Schools Broken Bay's proposal, 14 primary schools in the Northern Beaches and North Shore will have principals who divide their time between two schools.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews told *The Sydney Morning Herald* that the proposal effectively meant schools would have a "part-time" leader.

"This change will impact staff, students and families in the affected schools," she said. "The union cannot see how this restructuring will benefit anyone."

Matthews was also interviewed on ABC Radio Sydney, telling presenter Sarah Dingle that IEU members were deeply concerned about the employer's plan for schools to have part-time principals.

Significant impacts

Matthews said the employer had not initially consulted the union about the impacts of the "shared" principal proposal when it made this decision.

"For example, we did not know whether staffing at affected schools would be increased to compensate for the loss of a full-time principal and how principals will perform their role across two schools," she said.

The union had called on the employer to provide more details about its plan for "shared" principals and to consult with the IEU.

"The proposed changes will have significant implications for workload, school operations and work health and safety," Matthews said.

Consultations will take place at each pair of schools in Term 4 this year or Term 1 next year. The IEU will also meet with CSBB (the employer) at the end of Term 1 to review the model generally.

Redeemer Baptist school

Union lodges underpayments claim for staff

The IEU in September lodged a claim in the Federal Court to recover wages for former members of staff at Redeemer Baptist School in North Parramatta.

"The union believes Redeemer Baptist has broken the law by not paying staff," IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews told *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

The union's legal action was also reported by television current affairs show *60 Minutes*.

It follows a NSW parliamentary inquiry into the school prompted by media reports alleging heavy-handed control of students through excessive restrictions on dress, study choices and contact with the outside world.

"There were also allegations that the school is not paying its staff – the school claims its teachers are 'volunteers' not employees," Matthews said.

> "The union is determined to ensure the school meets its legal obligations to staff."

Staff not paid

The union is seeking compensation for two staff members who were not paid while engaged to perform work.

"There would be other staff who also have legitimate claims for compensation," Matthews said.

Questions were raised in the parliamentary inquiry as to whether the school had complied with work health and safety and workers compensation laws.

There were also disturbing allegations about child safety. The inquiry in October heard evidence from former students who said they were made to share beds with teachers.

A student said he was scolded after reporting that Redeemer's principal had wandered naked through a common area, *The Guardian* reported.

"Practices such as students and teachers sharing bedrooms raised serious child protection concerns," Matthews said.

Extreme control over staff, students

Matthews said the school appeared to exert extreme control over both staff and students.

"This has had a chilling effect on staff seeking union support," she said. "Redeemer claims an entitlement to take control of staff property, exerting a high degree of financial control."

Teachers and professional and operational staff in non-government schools are covered by enterprise agreements that provide for salaries broadly comparable with salaries paid to teachers and support staff in NSW government schools.

If there is no enterprise agreement, a minimum federal award and legislated conditions (including superannuation) apply.

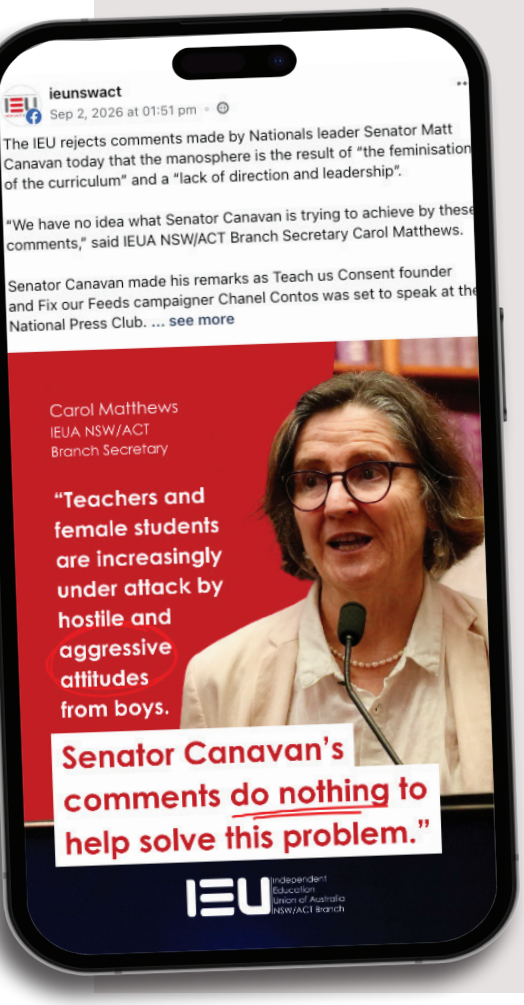
It appears that Redeemer Baptist's teacher "volunteers" were not receiving even these minimum conditions.

"The union is determined to ensure the school meets its legal obligations to staff," Matthews said.

"This includes proper payment of wages, superannuation and all other entitlements."

RESPECT FOR TEACHERS

Cheap shots reflect poorly on politicians



The IEU has called on politicians to stop taking cheap shots at teachers and support their hard work to provide high-quality education.

Hundreds of IEU members also took to social media to refute attacks on the teaching profession by conservative politicians who claim teachers are pushing an "anti-boy" agenda by educating students about consent and respectful relationships.

"The Coalition needs to give clear examples of its concerns about the curriculum and stop smearing the teaching profession," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"Our members work hard to deliver high-quality education and deserve the support of our political leaders, not this ill-informed and unhelpful commentary."

Attacks on teachers

The latest round of teacher bashing began in September when Nationals leader Matt Canavan claimed the "feminisation" of the curriculum was driving young men towards "manosphere" content online.

"I think this anti-boy ideology has no place in our schools," he said.

Asked about Canavan's comments, Liberal leader Angus Taylor said teachers were pushing agendas in the classroom.

One Nation leader Pauline Hanson regularly makes political attacks on school staff. In August, she accused teachers of encouraging students to walk out of class and protest her party.

Challenging student behaviour

The IEU rejects comments made by Canavan that the manosphere is the result of "the feminisation of our curriculum".

Matthews said teachers and female students increasingly faced hostile and aggressive attitudes by boys.

"IEU members teach a world-leading curriculum every day while regularly confronting challenging student behaviours," she said.

"Uninformed comments like those from Senator Canavan only serve to undermine the great teaching and learning happening in our schools."

On social media, members expressed concern about teachers being blamed for wider social problems. Several members pointed out it was the job of parents, not teachers, to raise children.

Many commenters said the only agenda teachers have is to provide the very best education to their students. They also questioned whether politicians understand the curriculum, which was last revised under a federal Coalition government in 2022, and the role of teachers in delivering it.

'Dog whistle'

School staff are under more pressure than ever from complex student needs, unsustainable workloads, the onslaught of artificial intelligence and escalating rates of gendered violence.

Yet IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes said some political figures prefer to spread disinformation and disrespect than address these issues.

"Teachers in both government and non-government schools work tirelessly to provide students with a high-quality education," he said.

Hayes said the curriculum is gender-neutral, but any exploration of history inevitably shows the long chronicle of efforts to subjugate women and exclude them from equal participation in society.

"To characterise telling the truth about our shared past as the 'feminisation of the curriculum' is a dog whistle to disaffected young men and perpetuates the myth of male victimhood," he said.

Combating harassment in schools

The IEU last year endorsed a policy setting out recommendations to educate, prevent and respond to harassment in schools.

A recent Monash University study also highlighted the prevalence of sexism and misogyny in Australian schools and made clear recommendations for addressing these issues.

Conducting consent and respectful relationships education in schools is not "anti-boy".

It is a way to build a society that values all its members and does not produce young people who speak and act in ways that disrespect women, minorities and others in our community, whether they are teachers or not.

Why online harm is a work health and safety issue

Bullying, AI-generated deepfakes and other forms of online harm are work health and safety issues that employers and policy makers must take seriously.

That was the message of online safety expert Kirra Pendergast, who was the guest speaker at the IEU Council meeting in August.

Online harm, she said, "is not student conduct matters alone anymore, it's not just behavioural policy, it's not just anti-bullying policy".

"It is a work and health safety issue. It is child protection monitoring. There's a whole lot of factors that we have to take into consideration now."

Pendergast has decades of experience in online safety education, cybersecurity and social media risk management.

She also has personal experience of the impact of relentless online bullying.

"Someone could have seen the case that I went through, being bullied almost to death, and blown it off," she said. "How many times people said to me, 'Just ignore it; it'll go away.' It doesn't go away."

Harmful content

Pendergast described the internet as an "ecosystem of persuasion" that children used differently to adults.



Online safety expert Kirra Pendergast addresses the IEU Council in August.

"As adults, we still just visit the internet, but the students literally live in it," she said. "It shapes every aspect of their little identities, good and bad."

Teachers are often at the forefront of dealing with the consequences of harmful online content.

"Everything that's happening online and the consequences of what is being fed to a young person online, which is often beyond their control, arrives as anxiety, sleep disruption, dysregulation, compulsive comparison, loneliness," she said.

"All of those things often end up in the classroom, and definitely end up in a school, and we're often not ready for it."

Pendergast said adults and children alike had become unwitting consumers of outrage and anger propagated online.

"We've all walked headfirst into an outrage economy," she said. "Who's seen something online in the last 24 hours that absolutely outraged them?

"It's that media spin, and amplification through algorithms. Outrage makes money, but we need to teach people to be aware of it."

Reframing social media ban

Pendergast also discussed her work with parenting author and educator Maggie Dent on digital wellbeing and screen limits for children, which was featured on ABC television's *The role of a lifetime* and in their book *Digital freedom*.

She suggested reframing the federal government's social media ban for under-16s.

"They are not banned from social media," she said. "Social media is banned from them.

"It's really that simple, and it changes the whole conversation, and it allows young people to speak up. Because if they go silent, that's when we need to be worried."

Win a copy

***Digital freedom* by Maggie Dent and Kirra Pendergast**



We have a copy of *Digital freedom* to give away.

Screen use is an essential part of modern life. It's also a leading cause of harm and mental illness in children.

In this book, Maggie Dent and Kirra Pendergast offer practical tools and advice on issues such as when kids should be given a smartphone, using social media and protecting children from being bullied and exploited online.

To enter, email by 10 December to giveaways@ieu.asn.au, with the book's title in the subject line. Include your name, postal address and membership number in the body of the email.

Smart glasses Union backs urgent review of wearable technology

With sales of smart glasses rising rapidly, the IEU is concerned about the inappropriate use of this wearable technology, particularly its impact on teachers and students.

The IEU supports federal Attorney General Michelle Rowland's call for Australia's privacy commissioner to conduct an urgent review of the use of smart glasses.

Privacy concerns were raised over wearable camera technology in August after Kmart released an $89 pair of smart glasses that can record people without their knowledge or consent, Seven News reported.

The WA government in September banned smart glasses in government schools from Term 4. Local councils in Sydney and regional NSW have introduced or proposed bans on smart glasses in public facilities over privacy concerns.

As this technology gets cheaper, there is an increasing risk of misuse in schools. IEU members are already raising concerns about students recording teachers to make and post videos online.

"Recordings can be circulated quickly and, devoid of context, risk causing considerable harm," said Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "Teachers should be able to teach without the threat of covert recording and subsequent online humiliation."

Matthews said privacy and consent matter.

"Students and teachers should always know if they are being recorded," she said. "No member of school staff should have to worry that their every interaction is being filmed."

The union calls for safe working environments for teachers and support staff and a safe learning environment for students.

"School employers have a duty of care to keep staff and students safe," Matthews said.

No cuts to community preschools

Members demand government fix funding mess

Hundreds of IEU members and supporters have protested outside Labor MPs offices, demanding the NSW government fix its new funding program for community preschools that threatens big cuts that will impact the quality and safety of services and lead to job losses.

Rallies were held in Cessnock and Lismore on 29 October and western Sydney on 30 October following the release of the NSW government's Universal Preschool Funding program, which promises millions of dollars in new funding for preschools.

"But the devil is in the detail," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "Many preschools anticipate losing hundreds of thousands of dollars under the new program."

Funding cuts

Based on the NSW government's funding estimate tool, IEU members anticipate dramatic cuts, including:

- Tregear Presbyterian Preschool estimates it will lose $320,000
- Byron Bay Preschool will lose $170,000
- Muswellbrook Preschool will lose $468,000
- Toormina Community Preschool will lose $174,928
- Cronulla Preschool will lose $232,000
- Drummoyne Preschool Kindergarten will lose $99,000.

"Yet costs keep rising, and the capacity of many community preschools to deliver safe early childhood education is under threat," Matthews said.

"After two years of talks with the NSW government, our members are shocked and angry that their preschools and livelihoods are at risk."

Safety and quality at risk

The rallies attracted media attention on radio, television, newspapers and online, including ABC Radio, NBN News and the *Newcastle Herald*.

In Lismore, IEU members and supporters protested outside the office of Labor MP Janelle Saffin.

Byron Bay Preschool director Bridget Isichei said the NSW government's new program failed to deliver more funding for fair pay in community preschools.

"We know what happens when you return to absolute minimum ratios and minimum pay," she said. "What will happen is what's happened in the private sector with all of the incidents, all of the crisis."

Clunes Preschool director Melinda Gambley said the funding cuts will make it harder to ensure child safety.

East Maitland Preschool director Jodie Cox said IEU members and supporters had rallied outside the office of Cessnock Labor MP Clayton Barr to tell the NSW government it "cannot rip millions and millions of dollars from community preschools".

"To do so would be foolish, irresponsible and dangerous," she said. "It would risk the collapse of 700 preschools and the loss of preschool access to 50,000 children in NSW, many in communities where we are their only access to quality preschool provision."

In western Sydney, Matthews told IEU members and supporters protesting outside Deputy Premier Prue Car's electorate office that the NSW government had to "fix this mess".

"They need to fix it before the beginning of next year," she said. "It's not good enough for services to be left in a state of uncertainty, worried about their future because of these huge cuts."

Call for real funding boost

Cronulla Preschool director Janene Rox expressed shock and distress about the scale of the cuts.

She told the western Sydney rally that community preschool teachers deserve to be paid the same as teachers in schools, government preschools and long day care centres.

"We have the same qualifications. We are doing the same job. But we are not getting the same pay," she said.

An experienced teacher in a community preschool could be paid up to $30,000 a year less than a teacher in a government preschool or primary school.

"Any decrease in funding may lead to pay freezes and job losses for teachers and educators amid rising unemployment and a cost-of-living crisis," Matthews said.

"The NSW government must act to ensure its new program delivers real funding increases that ensure job security and continuity of high-quality services."





















Top row: Members and supporters rally against community preschool funding cuts outside NSW Labor MP Clayton Barr's office in Cessnock; middle row: Rallying outside NSW Labor MP Janelle Saffin's office in Lismore; and bottom row: Rallying outside NSW Deputy Premier and Education Minister Prue Car's office in western Sydney.

Speaking truth to power

Members tell MPs new funding model risks child safety and jobs

IEU members in September warned NSW MPs that the state government's new funding model risks the future of not-for-profit community preschools.

Members from across the state attended NSW Parliament House to discuss with MPs the dire impact that the NSW government's new Universal Preschool Funding program and Fee Relief for Long Day Care will have on their community-based preschools.

"The new funding model threatens the viability of not-for-profit community preschools," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"It will lead to staffing cuts that threaten child safety and the quality of preschool services.

"It will also mean less funding for children with additional needs and pay cuts for preschool teachers."

The NSW government announced its new funding model in June to replace the Start Strong program, promising to fully fund the operating costs of not-for-profit preschools and increase the pay of early childhood education staff from the beginning of 2027.

IEU member and Muswellbrook Preschool educational leader Raelee Smith said members had "grave concerns" that community preschools would receive less money under the state government's new funding program.

Matthews said the NSW government's funding model is based on community preschool teachers being paid much less than teachers in schools, government preschools and long day care centres.

An experienced teacher in a community preschool would be paid about $30,000 less than a teacher in a government preschool or primary school under the NSW government's new funding model.

"Our members are upset and angered by the NSW government's failure to value their work," Matthews said. "We cannot build a universal preschool sector without supporting teachers and educators."

Matthews said the NSW government had consistently ignored rulings by the Fair Work Commission, including a recommendation that the government review and boost funding for community preschools so they can provide pay rises to teachers and educators.

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 3-to-5.

We need a fair funding model that values the work performed by teachers and educators across community preschools," Matthews said.

"The NSW government's new funding model threatens the viability of the sector. We need a real funding increase and actions taken to address pay and conditions in the sector."

Independent Education Union of Australia

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

IEU Federal Council **Priorities for education reform**

IEU delegates from across Australia attended the annual IEU Federal Council meeting in August, endorsing a set of priorities to ensure schools are better equipped for the challenges facing students and the education workforce.

The meeting identified the areas where coordinated action is needed to strengthen educational outcomes and support IEU members working across a highly diverse school sector.

Federal Council committed to progressing further reforms that address:

- greater accountability and transparency in school funding
- managing classroom complexity and challenging student behaviours
- the impact of climate change on students, staff and school communities.

These priorities reflect the most significant pressures facing schools.

They also build on work undertaken through the IEU's previous reform program, including action on gendered violence, reproductive health leave, anti-discrimination exemptions and teacher workload.

School funding

As governments invest billions of dollars into schools, the community must be confident that funding is reaching the students and programs for which it is intended.

In light of current funding scandals and corruption investigations, the IEU is calling for stronger mechanisms to improve transparency and accountability so that public investment delivers its full educational benefit.

Classroom complexity

IEU delegates also highlighted the increasing complexity of classroom environments. Teachers and support staff are responding to a wider range of learning and behavioural needs than ever before.

Without appropriate resourcing, specialist support and workforce planning, these challenges risk undermining student learning and staff wellbeing.

Climate risk mitigation

Climate change is a major education and workforce challenge. Extreme heat, severe weather and natural disasters are increasingly affecting schools.

Governments and employers must ensure that infrastructure, emergency responses and long-term planning equip schools and communities to meet these threats.

Successful reform requires collaboration between governments, employers, workers and their unions.

By addressing these challenges now, Australia can build an education system that is more equitable, more resilient and better prepared for the future.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary

Anti-Discrimination Bill provides pathway to close loopholes

The introduction of a private member's bill in federal parliament to deal with discrimination in non-government schools provides a long-overdue pathway to close discrimination loopholes.

Under current laws, staff and students in faith-based schools can be subject to discrimination that would be unlawful in all other workplaces.

The bill introduced by Independent MP Allegra Spender would finally bring this outdated discrimination to an end.

Due to sweeping exemptions in discrimination and workplace laws, IEU members can be lawfully discriminated against because of personal attributes such as marital or relationship status, gender, pregnancy, IVF treatment, family responsibilities, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Students in these schools are also denied full protection against discrimination.

The problem goes beyond heartbreaking individual cases. The exemptions deny basic rights, contribute to psychosocial harm and conflict with community standards of inclusion and respect.

Spender's bill is a sensible approach to repairing the laws. It would narrow the exemptions while still meeting the needs of schools, such as allowing preference to be given to employees of a particular faith for promotional or religious education roles.

This balanced approach would allow schools to maintain their special character without exposing staff to discrimination unrelated to their work.

Discrimination is still happening. Teachers have been sacked on suspicion of being in same-sex relationships, staff denied promotions because of a previous divorce, a graduate teacher faced threats to their employment for seeking access to IVF and a young, unmarried teacher was dismissed after becoming pregnant.

These shocking cases would be condemned in all other workplaces.

The bill is consistent with the federal Labor government's 2022 commitment to modernise the exemptions and a parliamentary report commissioned from the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC).

There has been no progress from the government since the ALRC report was tabled in federal parliament two years ago.

The special privileges that permit discrimination remain in place and unchecked.

There is no reason for any further delays. The federal government should match Spender's leadership and pass these laws.

School staff, students and the community have waited long enough.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary



International test results

Teachers excel despite mounting workplace pressures

The latest international test results show Australian teachers and students are performing above the average of countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) provides evidence at odds with recent political attacks on teachers.

The PISA results confirm that Australian teachers provide high-quality education.

Teachers and their unions know these achievements are delivered despite workforce shortages, unsustainable workloads and the increasing complexity of classroom environments.

The mental health and wellbeing challenges facing the teaching profession are a major driver of teacher attrition and the current workforce crisis.

The PISA report highlights the ongoing impact of teacher shortages, with 49 per cent of students attending schools where instruction is hindered by a lack of teachers, compared with the OECD average of 39 per cent.

In a welcome acknowledgement of the work of teachers, the PISA results show Australian teachers provide higher levels of support to students than the OECD average.

This includes a 79 per cent level of attention to students' learning compared with the average of 69 per cent across the OECD.

The strong performance of Australian students in reading, mathematics and science reflects the commitment and expertise of Australia's teachers.

Sustaining these outcomes, while also addressing identified areas of lower results, requires targeted investment in education, along with new measures to support teacher wellbeing and retention.

The PISA results are an opportunity for governments and employers to work with education unions to ensure teachers have the resources and autonomy needed to support diverse student cohorts in all educational settings.

The IEU continues to campaign for smaller class sizes, enhanced classroom support and other measures that strengthen teacher wellbeing, retention and student outcomes.

If Australia wants world-class results, it must provide world-class support for teachers.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary



Parental leave

Fathers should care too

More fathers gaining access to improved parental leave is a cause for celebration.

The challenge now is ensuring they feel supported to use it, without concerns about workplace stigma, career consequences or outdated ideas about who should be providing care at home.

IEU campaigns and bargaining wins have delivered the best paid parental leave and flexible work options ever available in schools and early childhood education workplaces.

More employers are moving away from the outdated idea that only one parent is the 'carer', and the other is just there to help.

But workplace culture often takes longer to change than collective agreement entitlements.

Despite recent progress, men account for an estimated 17 per cent of paid primary carer leave, while accessing an overwhelming 96 per cent of short-term 'secondary carer's leave'.

> "Taking parental leave should never be viewed as a lack of career commitment."

Many fathers still worry about how taking extended leave will be viewed by colleagues or employers.

Will it affect their career opportunities? Will people think they are less committed to their work?

Those concerns are real, even in workplaces that support parental leave on paper.

As teachers, school leaders and support staff, IEU members see the importance of strong family relationships in a child's development.

We know that children benefit when all parents or carers have the opportunity to be actively involved in their early years.

Access to paid parental leave should be widely available and inclusive.

It's a vital and hard-fought workplace right that helps families share caring responsibilities and supports women's workforce participation.

It provides fathers with more opportunities to build lasting bonds with their children from the very beginning.

Taking parental leave should never be viewed as a lack of career commitment.

A fair workplace is one where all parents feel supported to take the leave they are entitled to, without guilt or stigma or outdated gender stereotypes.

Brad Hayes IEUA Federal Secretary

IEU Annual General Meeting 2026

The union's annual general meeting on 24 October heard from several speakers. Here are highlights from three of them.

Suzanne Penson
IEUA NSW/ACT Branch President

When I think about our union, I think about the people.

The people who turn up every day. The people who care deeply about their students, their colleagues and their profession. And the people who give their time, often voluntarily, because they believe that together we can make a difference.

And I think about why I keep turning up.

Because this is my union.

A union I love, a union I believe in, and a union I want to see become the greatest union it can possibly be.

We have much to celebrate. Our union has achieved important improvements through bargaining, advocacy and collective action.

But the challenges facing our members continue to grow.

Workloads are increasing, expectations are expanding, and fair pay, professional recognition and sustainable working conditions remain central concerns.

This year, bargaining gives us an important opportunity.

Our salaries must keep pace with the rising cost of living. Members should not go backwards as inflation erodes their wages.

But keeping pace with CPI is not the same as achieving professional salary recognition.

Our members deserve salary increases that recognise their qualifications, expertise, responsibilities and the increasingly complex work they undertake.

And bargaining must be about more than pay.

It must also deliver manageable workloads, genuine consultation and safer workplaces.



Branch President Suzanne Penson.

As president, I want to contribute by listening, encouraging participation, building relationships and championing the issues that matter to our members.

Because the greatest union is not necessarily the biggest or the loudest.

It is the union whose members know they belong, whose voices are heard, whose health and safety are protected, and whose collective strength makes their working lives better.

Carol Matthews
IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary

The IEU won better pay and conditions for teachers and support staff in Catholic systemic schools in enterprise agreements in late 2025.

Our bargaining this year has focused on Catholic independent schools and Christian schools.

The union negotiated multi-enterprise agreements for teachers and support staff in Model A Catholic independent schools that were approved by the Fair Work Commission in July 2026.

Bargaining has also commenced for new multi-enterprise agreements for Model B and Model C Catholic independent schools.

Hundreds of preschool teacher and educator members, as well as supporters, parents and the community, rallied in Sydney, Lismore and Coffs Harbour earlier this year, calling on the NSW government to provide funding for pay rises.

Our dedicated early childhood education and care members are relentlessly lobbying MPs and the union is applying pressure after the Fair Work Commission recommended that the NSW government review and boost funding.

Our industrial team has handled numerous disputes and individual member matters. In the past 12 months, we recovered $1.7 million in underpayments for members.

The union is also supporting members after a restructure by Maitland-Newcastle Diocese impacted hundreds of employees, including teacher librarians.

The Executive is the key decision-making body of the union between Council meetings and meets at least 11 times a year.



Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

I would like to thank President Suzanne Penson and all Executive members for their support and energy in identifying issues of importance to members.

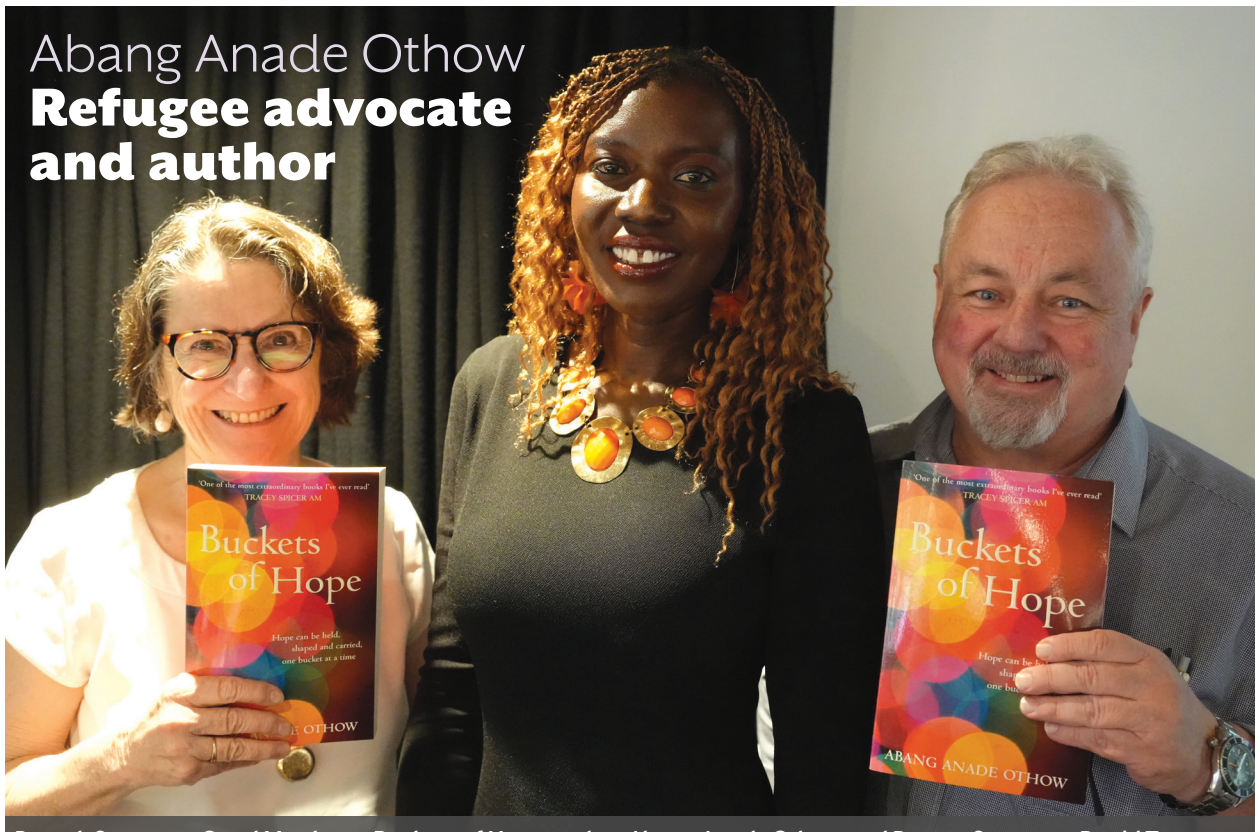
I would also like to congratulate sub branch delegates to Council elected this year.

Council plays a vital role in connecting the union leadership with members and encouraging vibrancy at the sub branch level.

Many of our sub branches have increased in activity over the past 12 months and there has been a rise in the number of sub branch delegates at Council.

Finally, I would like to thank all IEU staff for their hard work and professionalism.

Abang Anade Othow
Refugee advocate and author



Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, Buckets of Hope *author Abang Anade Othow and Deputy Secretary David Towson.*

Abang Anade Othow spoke about her memoir *Buckets of Hope,* which describes her tumultuous childhood in war torn Sudan.

I love proverbs, as you will discover in my book, including this one: "If you think you're too small to make a difference, sleep in the same room as a mosquito, and you'll soon know that you can make a difference in the world."

And that's what happened to me. I contracted malaria after being bitten by a mosquito at the age of five, and my world changed.

Life transformed by war

I was born into a middle-class family. My father was a university professor, and my mother was a secretary. I lived in Juba, a city on the Nile River in southern Sudan.

Little did I know that my life would be transformed by war.

My father became a politician because he believed he could make a difference.

When I fell ill with malaria, my mother took me to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. That was where my father was living at the time.

Little did I know that I would not see my mother again for many years.

I did not even have the chance to say a proper goodbye. My father survived four assassination attempts, and we had to flee abruptly to Ethiopia.

But another war broke out, and this time I was alone. My father had returned to Sudan. Along with thousands of other refugees, I walked for three months in search of safety.

I witnessed horrors that no child, and indeed no human being, should ever have to experience.

I was so terrified that I could not speak. I simply shut down. Then something else started happening to me. I began forgetting the memories and simple joys of the place I came from. That frightened me more than the bombing.

Power of education

One day, I remembered the colourful buckets my family used to carry, which inspired the title of my book.

I didn't know about trauma or resilience back then. I was just a seven-year-old trying to stay alive, and each time I closed my eyes, I would place my emotions into different buckets.

Yellow was for joy and gratitude: the Nile, the sunsets, and my love of mangoes. Slowly, as I continued to visualise, more memories returned, and I thought, "This is amazing."

So, I started teaching this technique to other children as well.

I went to school for the first time at the age of 11. I was mesmerised by education.

I wrote a whole chapter about being introduced to education, the transformative power of learning and what it did for me.

I loved school. I wanted to live at school.

That was where I learned to trust my voice and not be afraid of it. I started speaking, and my teachers believed in me.

It was difficult for me to catch up in maths, but I was determined to learn languages and history, and to discover a world beyond trauma, a world where people loved one another.

Win a copy

Read the latest issue of *IE*, packaged with *Newsmonth*, to find out more about Abang Anade Othow's journey from refugee camps to a new life in Australia.

Enter the draw to win a copy of her memoir, *Buckets of Hope*.

To enter, email by 10 December to giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the book's title in the subject line. Include your name, address and membership number in the body of the email.



UNION SNAPS



Diana Sillato celebrates 30 years of IEU membership with rep James McFarlane at All Saints College, Casula.



Yvonne Terweeme celebrates 40 years of IEU membership at St Finbar's Primary School, Glenbrook.



Celebrating membership milestones, from left, IEU organiser Shirley Jancetic, Eimear Farrell (10 years) and Adam Lawson (30 years) at Holy Spirit College in Bellambi.



Alent Vargas, left, marks 20 years of IEU membership with rep Katherine Smith at St Benedict's Catholic College in Oran Park.



Richard Chen celebrates 30 years of IEU membership with rep Catherine Stewart at Waverley College.



Erin Johnson at Thomas Hassall Anglican College in Middleton Grange marks 20 years of IEU membership.



Marking membership milestones, from left, Caroline Sarkesyan (20 years) with Sandra Efstathiou (10 years) at All Saints Catholic College in Liverpool.



Karen Brown celebrates her 30-year membership milestone with rep Paul Monaghan at St Anthony's Catholic Primary School in Kingscliff.



Claire McCowan, right, marks 10 years of IEU membership with rep Anna Di Lorenzo at St Brendan's Catholic Primary School in Annandale.



James Robinson marks his 10-year membership milestone with rep Lauren Milledge at St James Catholic Primary School in Glebe.

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.

James McFarlane

All Saints Catholic College, Casula



James McFarlane is the technical and applied studies coordinator and leader of learning at All Saints Catholic College's Year 11 and 12 campus in Casula.

James is full of praise for his colleagues and students at the school where he has taught for the past 16 years.

An IEU member since 1992, James has been the school's rep for more than a decade and is currently the president of the IEU's Lansdowne sub branch.

"We have successful classrooms because our students want to learn," he said. "It really makes teaching worthwhile."

However, James said unnecessary compliance and other administrative processes reduce the amount of time for teaching.

Vocational teachers are also expected to visit students' work placements, which adds to their workloads.

One of the greatest challenges James has faced was the restructuring of All Saints into a K-12 school operating across several campuses.

"That was a big change, trying to adapt to being one of the biggest schools in Australia," he said.

James said work health and safety, particularly psychosocial hazards, is a focus of his duties as a rep.

"I've seen a lot of teachers who have been affected," he said. "Whether it's classroom management issues or the fear of taking on classes that may not necessarily be successful because they don't receive additional support."

Outside of school, James has been a member of the Rural Fire Service for more than 30 years.

He is currently the captain of his local brigade and fought in the catastrophic bushfires that devastated NSW in 2019-2020.

James has been awarded multiple medals for his service as a volunteer firefighter.

He is also an active member of his local church and volunteers with Vinnies Night Patrol, which provides food, hot drinks, warm clothing and social support for the homeless.

"That's what I choose to do," he said. "I can still balance it with being a rep to make sure the system is supporting committed teachers."

Louise McLean

Freeman Catholic College, Bonnyrigg Heights



Louise McLean teaches science to students in Years 7 to 10 and physics to students in Years 11 and 12 at Freeman Catholic College in Bonnyrigg Heights.

Louise has taught at the school for 28 years and loves teaching physics, which she said can be very demanding.

"I often spend a lot of time saying to the kids, 'No, I don't make this stuff up'," she said.

Despite the challenges, Louise's senior students are passionate about physics.

"They wrote me a card just this week that was full of physics puns, and I said, 'I've turned you into complete nerds'," she said.

An IEU member since 1998, Louise joined the union when she became a teacher following a career as a medical scientist, during which she was also a union member.

Union membership is a family tradition for Louise. Her grandfather was a leader of the metalworkers union.

"He would probably come back and haunt me from the grave if I didn't join the union," she said.

Louise has been a rep at her school for two years, taking over from previous "brilliant" reps.

She said part of her role was acting as a conduit between staff and school leadership: "I can help staff who have concerns and speak on their behalf to the principal."

Louise attended an advanced reps training session to build on her skills and gain a deeper understanding of the agreements and laws that govern her workplace.

Louise identifies misogynistic behaviour by male students, influenced by the "manosphere", as a significant challenge for the community.

"It's filtering down into everything in the school," she said. "How they behave in the classroom. How they respond to teachers. How willing they are to accept discipline or correction."

Outside of work, Louise said she is "obsessive" about her grandchildren. She also enjoys knitting and baking.

"My lemon meringue pie has caused competition in the staffroom over who gets a slice," she said.

Jennifer Muscat

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Woollahra



Jennifer Muscat is a librarian and diverse learning and literacy intervention teacher at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School in Woollahra.

Jennifer has worked at the school for the past 10 years and recently welcomed a new principal who has made a difference to staff morale.

Jennifer has been a rep for more than 25 years and helped achieve 100 per cent union membership at her school.

She said personal interactions were key to recruiting members.

"People know they can come to me if they have a concern," she said. "I've said to them, 'Nothing's too big. Nothing's too small'."

Jennifer participated in the advanced reps training session to broaden her understanding of the role and responsibilities of a rep.

"I'm here for the people I support and represent," she said. "And to ensure they have the right to everything that they should be given."

Jennifer has also been involved in the union at the sub branch level and as a member of the IEU Council.

She said it was important for members to understand the breadth of the union's work, such as advocacy and policy initiatives aimed at addressing the harmful influence of the "manosphere" on student behaviour.

An IEU member since 1982, Jennifer joined the union in her first year of teaching.

"My father had always been an advocate for standing up for your rights," she said. "If you see something you don't like, do something about it. That's my philosophy too."

Jennifer also acts as a sounding board for her two daughters who are teachers.

"If they have any issues at their workplace they'll say, 'Mum, what do you think about this?'" she said.

Beyond the classroom, Jennifer runs Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College Kensington Ex-Students' Association and the Botany RSL Amateur Swimming Club, Zone and State level of RSL Swimming as well as managing her daughter's netball teams.

She is a member of her local RSL sub-branch and an executive member of Botany Historical Trust. She has also served as a local councillor.

Jennifer said her family often asks whether she will ever step back from her many commitments.

Her response is simple: "I love being out there in the community. It's a big passion of mine."

Mitchell Lowe

Amadeus program, Sydney Catholic Schools



Mitchell Lowe is an instrumental tutor with Sydney Catholic Schools' Amadeus music education program.

He teaches brass instruments such as the trumpet, trombone, baritone horn and tuba to primary and secondary students across four schools as well as conducting ensembles and orchestras.

Mitchell has worked for the Amadeus program for four years, tutoring at 15 different schools, and has been a rep for the past two years.

He is working to unite Amadeus music tutors to join the chapter and increase membership to bargain for an enterprise agreement.

Mitchell said the employer had made changes to working conditions, including reducing flexibility and increasing administrative tasks such as benchmarking without providing paid work time to complete them.

"There are staff shortages, and I've heard many stories of tutors having 50 students in a room or even cancelling lessons," he said.

Mitchell said many music tutors have been provided with iPads but have had difficulty completing administrative tasks without a computer or desk to use. This has forced some tutors to use their personal devices.

"Our main goal is to get an enterprise agreement to 'solidify' our working conditions and ensure the employer does not arbitrarily impose changes without consulting us," he said.

Mitchell's goal is to increase union membership among Amadeus music tutors to strengthen their bargaining position ahead of negotiations with the employer.

Mitchell said the number of music tutors joining the union has been growing rapidly, but recruitment was a challenge because the Amadeus program operates in more than 140 schools.

"It's really tricky to communicate with members and potential recruits when everyone is spread across so many schools," he said.

Outside of work, Mitchell is a professional trombone player and performs mainly Latin music styles such as salsa, cumbia and merengue.

"I love performing and listening to different styles of Latin music, it's something I'm very passionate about," he said.



In 2025, the IEU recouped over $1.7 million in underpayments for members

IEU Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch

MEET OUR MEMBERS

Jessica Magee Instilling a passion for maths



Jessica Magee and Deputy Premier Prue Car at the NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship awards.

This IEU member hopes to discover new approaches to inspire girls to study STEM subjects after winning a NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship, writes Andrew Taylor.

Jessica Magee is passionate about teaching mathematics. But she will have the opportunity to step outside her classroom at St Ursula's College in Kingsgrove after winning a NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship.

Jessica said it was an honour to receive the award at NSW Parliament House in August.

The scholarship provides $15,000 for a five-week study tour in 2027.

Jessica will use the award to travel to Singapore, Japan and China to investigate how schools develop mathematical problem solving and persistence, and "particularly how these skills are connected to future careers".

"I'm interested in approaches that engage girls in mathematics and STEM," she said. "I want to come home with ideas that I can adapt to my own classroom and share more broadly with colleagues and the wider teaching community."

Engaging students

Jessica teaches mathematics and PDHPE across a range of year levels, including the International Baccalaureate diploma.

A former St Ursula's student, Jessica has taught at the single-sex secondary girls school for five years.

"Our students are curious, diverse and very driven, and I particularly value being able to give back to a community that gave so much to me over my years of schooling," she said.

One of Jessica's professional challenges is finding ways to engage students with very different attitudes towards mathematics.

"Maths can be a subject where students quickly decide 'I'm just not a maths person'," she said.

"Changing that mindset can be challenging. Working through that difficulty brings the greatest sense of fulfilment in teaching."

Incredibly rewarding

Jessica was inspired to join the profession by her own teachers at St Ursula's and "the passion they had for their subjects".

"Mathematics has always been something I genuinely enjoyed," she said.

"I love the logic and the challenge of working out a problem."

Jessica aims to share her passion for maths – and especially problem solving – with her students.

"I place a lot of value on the process. I want students to feel comfortable making mistakes and trying different strategies," she said.

"Problem solving can be incredibly rewarding when students realise they have worked something out for themselves."

An IEU member since 2023, Jessica joined the union because she wanted to be part of a professional community that advocates for teachers and the profession more broadly.

"Teaching can be an incredibly rewarding career, but it also comes with significant responsibilities," she said.

"I think it's important that teachers have a collective voice and access to support when they need it."

Champion ice skater

Outside of work, Jessica is an avid photographer and traveller. She also competes in synchronised ice skating, a sport in which teams of up to 16 skaters perform intricate formations and precision movements at high speed.

Jessica has competed internationally at junior world championships and the Mozart Cup, one of Europe's biggest figure skating events.

She will compete in her 11th national competition in Perth in November.

"Sport has taught me a lot about discipline and persistence – qualities that I think are just as important in mathematics and teaching," she said.

Amy Eccleston Engaging and purposeful

This IEU member equips students with skills and knowledge that are relevant beyond the classroom, writes Andrew Taylor.

Amy Eccleston has first-hand experience of many aspects of the curriculum she teaches to her students.

The leader of learning (HSIE) and a business studies teacher at Trinity Catholic College in Adamstown, Amy completed a business degree and worked in training and recruitment before pursuing a career in teaching.

"I became a teacher because I genuinely enjoy working with young people," she said.

"I am passionate about helping them develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need for life beyond school."

Improving financial literacy

Amy was instrumental in introducing an accelerated business studies course for Year 10 students at the school.

"It provides motivated and capable students with the opportunity to engage with Preliminary and HSC Business Studies content a year earlier than their peers," she said.

"It has been exciting to see students challenge themselves and develop their understanding of business at an earlier stage."

Amy said the school is focused on improving financial literacy among students.

"Being able to navigate day-to-day financial decisions is such an important life skill," she said.

"Yet I think too many young people leave school without a strong understanding of basic financial concepts."

Amy said Commerce and Business Studies provide students with knowledge that is not only relevant in the classroom but has a direct impact on their lives beyond school.

"Incredibly humbling"

Amy's efforts won her an excellence in secondary teaching award at this year's Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle's Emmaus Awards.

The award judges said Amy's "engaging and purposeful" teaching has resulted in Commerce and Business Studies becoming two of the most popular elective subjects at Trinity.

"Her lessons combine academic rigour with real-world relevance, supported by thoughtful assessment practices that help students achieve strong learning outcomes," the judges said.

The judges said Amy leads the HSIE faculty with "clarity, organisation and vision".

Amy said it was an honour to be nominated by "people I work with, respect enormously and who inspire me every day".

She said she feels lucky to work with dedicated and inspiring colleagues who make a difference in the lives of their students.

"Knowing that colleagues took the time and effort to write nominations, and to share such compliments about my teaching, was incredibly humbling," she said.

Union solidarity

An IEU member since 2008, Amy joined the union in her first year of teaching.

"For me, it provided the reassurance of knowing I had the support of a group of professionals with a wealth of experience in the education sector," she said.

Throughout her career, Amy has witnessed the value of solidarity and having people who understand the challenges of working in education stand alongside you.

"I am incredibly appreciative of the work the IEU does to support teachers, particularly at times when they may not be sure where to turn for guidance or advice," she said.


Amy Eccleston and Maitland-Newcastle Bishop Michael Kennedy at the Emmaus Awards.

Amy has also embarked on a PhD examining different approaches to gifted education around Australia.

"One of the unexpected benefits of undertaking a PhD has been being reminded of what it feels like to be a student again," she said.

Outside of work, Amy enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons.

"Family is what grounds me and gives me purpose, and I really value the time we have together," she said.

"I play hockey, try to keep active, enjoy reading and love going to the beach or heading out for a bush walk."

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.

See details of upcoming courses on this page and register your interest via our website: ieu.asn.au/pd-and-events

Christina Ellul
Professional Engagement Lead

NOV 17

The handover

Your headstart on the year ahead

Starting a new class is one of the biggest opportunities teachers get each year; a chance to reset, build trust, and set the tone for everything that follows.

This practical 90-minute session helps teachers step into that opportunity feeling ready and confident, not overwhelmed.

We'll explore how to see an incoming class with fresh eyes, turn the handover from a hurdle into a head start, and lay strong classroom culture foundations.

Participants leave with practical tools for a calm, confident beginning to the year, ready to focus on what matters most: connecting with their new class and helping every student settle in well.

Read and interpret information about an incoming class through a useful, non-biased lens.

- Apply a practical process for transitioning from a current class to a new one, before being in the room.
- Leave with a running start on classroom culture and structure, ready to build further across the first term.
- Leave with ready-to-use scripts and frameworks for common classroom management moments.
- Build confidence to manage everyday behaviour without waiting on processes that aren't there.

IEU members in primary and secondary schools at all career stages will benefit from this session. It is particularly relevant for anyone taking on a new class or year group in 2027.

Details

When: Tuesday 17 November 4.30pm – 6pm
Where: Online via Zoom
Duration: 1.5 hours
Standards: This session provides 1.5 hours of professional development for NSW teachers maintaining at proficient teacher level.

NOV 24

Transforming difficult conversations

Building trust, confidence and connection in professional dialogue

In schools and centres, conversations are the heartbeat of our workplaces. Every dialogue has the power to strengthen trust or erode it. Yet many of the conversations we most need to have are the ones we avoid because we fear conflict, rejection or "getting it wrong".

This 90-minute interactive session is grounded in the neuroscience of trust and based on principles from Conversational Intelligence®.

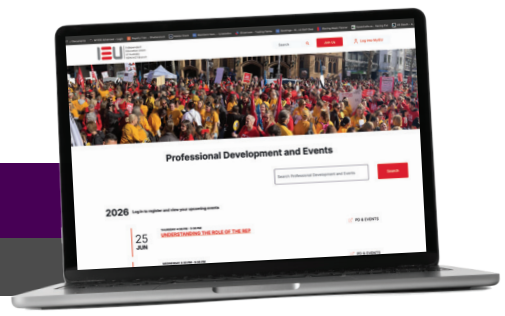
It is designed to support teachers and school staff to build stronger professional relationships, foster collaboration, and approach difficult conversations with confidence and clarity.

Participants will gain practical tools to navigate challenging conversations, shift from defensiveness and avoidance to openness and collaboration, and build trust in professional interactions.

Ideal for all IEU members, including teachers, leaders, support staff and early childhood teachers and educators.

Details

When: Thursday 24 November 4.30pm – 6pm
Where: Online via Zoom
Duration: 1.5 hours
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.



More details and register for Zoom links

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

2026 IEU environment grant winners

Every year, the IEU invites members from schools, colleges and early childhood centres to apply for grants to develop sustainability initiatives.

This year we received 70 entries from across NSW and the ACT. The 2026 environment grants, proudly sponsored by Teachers Mutual Bank, have been announced, and include a variety of innovative and exciting projects. We congratulate the winning entries listed below.

Early childhood education and care

Mother Teresa Early Learning Centre, Harrison, ACT: Ngunnawal Native

We plan to design and install a native Indigenous garden featuring Ngunnawal native plants, guided by a local Ngunnawal man and current early learning centre parent.

The triangular garden will feature kangaroo grass, with three painted totem poles decorated with flag colours, geckos, rainbow serpents and other cultural motifs.

The garden will support students' learning about Aboriginal culture, strengthen community connections, enhance biodiversity, attract pollinators and create a meaningful outdoor learning space for the school.

Primary schools

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Kogarah: Worming towards

Project Waste War empowers students to lead environmental change by dramatically reducing school landfill waste.

To achieve this, student leaders will build and manage an onsite worm farm, composting system and improved recycling network.

This initiative aims to provide sustainability education and leadership roles for students, lowers overall waste management costs for the school and diverts organic waste from landfills to enrich our local soil.

St Laurence's Parish School, Forbes: Wiradjuri bush food garden

Our aim is to establish a Wiradjuri bush food garden, guided by our local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, community and Elders.

We'll get there by designing and planting with Elders' guidance, building a Wiradjuri seasonal calendar and embedding caring for Country and sustainability learning across the K–6 curriculum.

Students will gain on-Country learning and strengthened cultural identity, while the school gains a lasting resource that it can share with local preschools and other schools.

Secondary schools

Trinity Anglican College, Albury: Poop Reloop

Anyone who runs a 3D printer knows the term.

Every print throws off failed attempts, and the maker community calls that waste "poops".

It is a growing problem in schools; it is not accepted in kerbside recycling, and almost nobody is doing anything with it.

"Reloop" is the answer to it: the waste goes back into the loop rather than into the bin. Our students shred it, melt it down and make something new, then do it again.

K-12

Korowal School, Hazelbrook: Spring to life: Dam restoration and biodiversity project

The project aims to restore the school's historically significant spring-fed dam and surrounding landscape into a safe, biodiverse and educational environment.

This will be achieved through invasive weed removal, sediment and erosion management, water-quality improvements, revegetation with native species and habitat restoration.

Students will be involved in hands-on environmental learning, gaining practical knowledge of biodiversity, conservation and water management.

The project will provide the school with an enhanced outdoor learning space and valuable environmental asset. It will also improve biodiversity, habitat, water quality and ecosystem resilience.

Delany College, Granville: Campus cultivation: Expanding our vegetable garden

Delany College has a diverse student body, with 77 per cent living in households where English is not primarily spoken.

Many students live in financially stressed communities and do not have access to adequate nutrition.

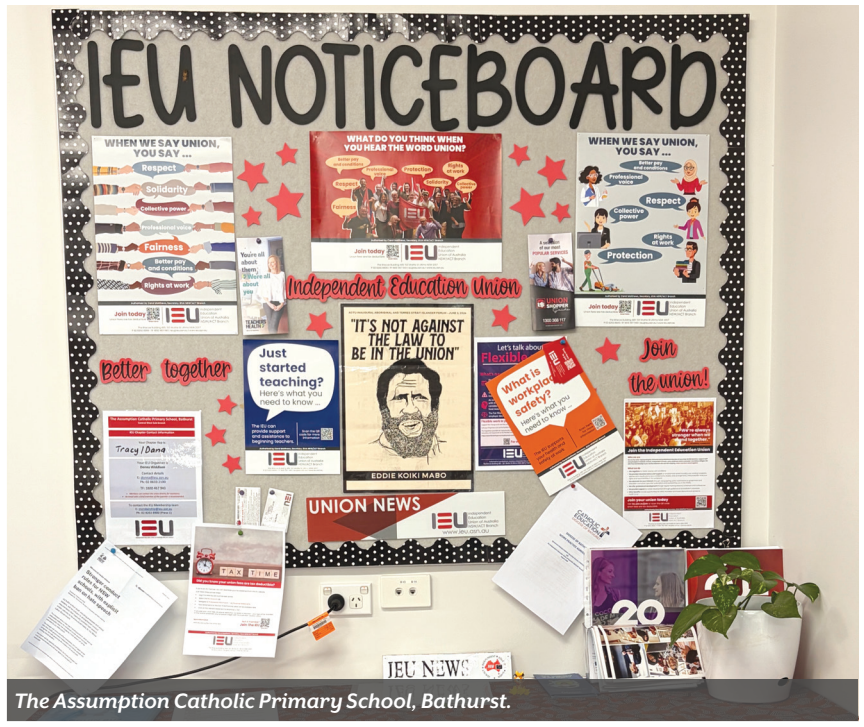
The project aims to expand the school's existing vegetable garden and increase our capacity to grow more healthy produce on school grounds.

We'll use this grant to purchase supplies and equipment needed to maintain a robust vegetable garden.

Teachers Mutual Bank



Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School, Fairy Meadow.



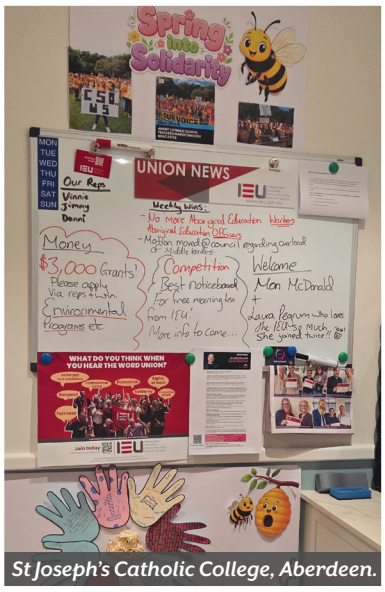
The Assumption Catholic Primary School, Bathurst.



James Sheahan Catholic High School, Orange.



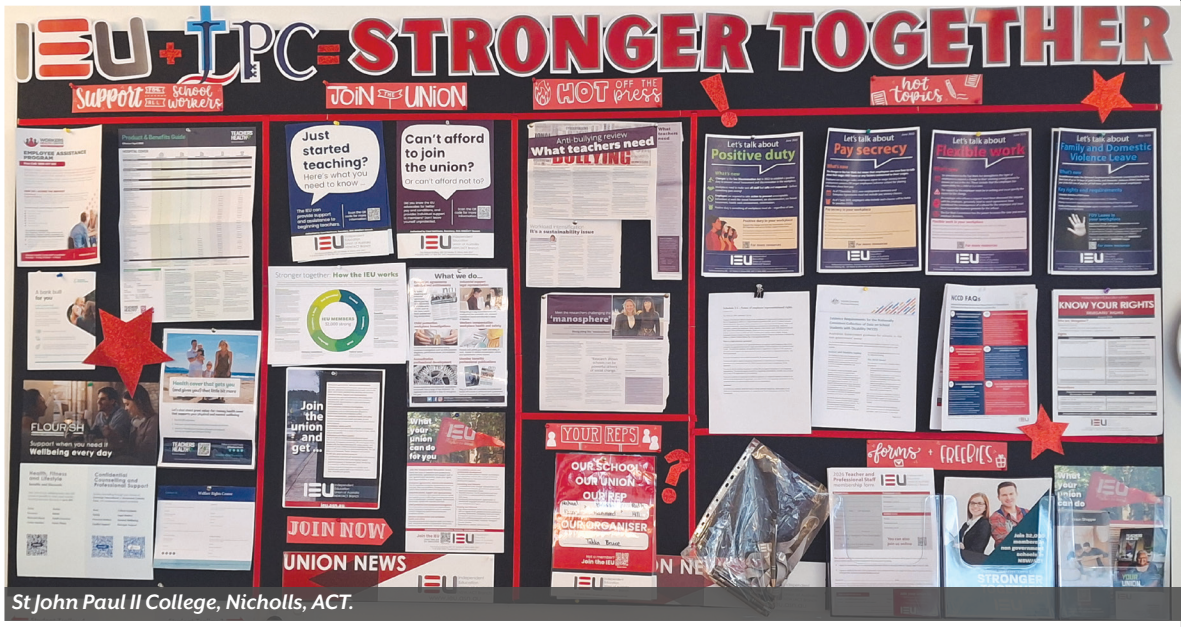
St John Paul II Catholic College, Schofields.



St Joseph's Catholic College, Aberdeen.



St Vincent's College, Ashfield.



St John Paul II College, Nicholls, ACT.



Rosary Primary School, Watson, ACT.

BRIGHT IDEAS

IEU union noticeboard competition

To highlight effective workplace communication and union visibility, the IEU held its annual competition in Term 3 to find the best noticeboards across NSW and the ACT.

"The noticeboard is a key tool for strengthening union presence in your workplace," said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "The competition was a fantastic chance for reps to give their boards a refresh while building stronger, more active chapters."

With so many excellent entries, selecting the winners was a challenge. Eight noticeboards ultimately rose to the top, combining creativity, strong visual appeal and a clear expression of union pride and membership.

The winners of the 2026 IEU union noticeboard competition are:

- Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School, Fairy Meadow, submitted by Jennifer Black
- James Sheahan Catholic High School, Orange, submitted by Julian Stewart
- Rosary Primary School, Watson, ACT, submitted by Nicole Nolan
- St John Paul II Catholic College, Schofields, submitted by Raquel Sheehy
- St John Paul II College, Nicholls, ACT, submitted by Ruth Hill
- St Joseph's Catholic College, Aberdeen, submitted by Danielle Janse van Rensburg
- St Vincent's College, Ashfield, submitted by Elizabeth Vrahnos
- The Assumption Catholic Primary School, Bathurst, submitted by Dana Jarrett.

Thank you to everyone who submitted an entry. Visit our website for a gallery of submissions and find inspiration for next year's competition.

AROUND THE GLOBE

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

South Korean teachers fight false allegations



Teachers in South Korea are demanding reforms to child abuse laws that leave them vulnerable to unfounded allegations.

An estimated 20,000 teachers gathered outside the National Assembly in Seoul on 9 October, demanding urgent reforms to child abuse laws.

South Korea's teachers say the laws leave them vulnerable to unfounded allegations and criminal investigations arising from routine classroom management.

The scale of the problem is large: Ministry of Education figures showing 1870 child abuse complaints were lodged against teachers between September 2023 and February 2026.

Of the 993 cases concluded during that period, more than 90 per cent ended without charges.

However, teachers say that even when allegations are dismissed, the damage can be lasting.

Investigations can involve considerable legal expenses, psychological distress, reputational damage and extended periods away from teaching.

Weaponising complaints

South Korea's *Child Welfare Act* is at the centre of the dispute.

Teachers say the law contains an overly broad definition of emotional child abuse.

They report facing criminal complaints for ordinary classroom activities, including disciplining students, managing disruptive behaviour and intervening in student conflicts.

In one reported case, a teacher faced a child abuse complaint after stopping a student from running out of a cafeteria. In another, a teacher was reported after instructing a student to sit down during class.

The issue of false allegations against teachers has even made its way into Netflix show *Teach you a lesson*.

In episode five, an official from a fictitious organisation refers to the law and says, "Isn't this like putting a gun in the hands of parents?"

The show highlights an institutional imbalance where parents weaponise child abuse claims while teachers face false allegations and deal with the professional trauma that can result from unsubstantiated complaints.

Teachers rally

The gathering of 20,000 teachers in Seoul in October did not come about overnight.

The movement gained momentum following the death of a young primary school teacher from Seoi Elementary School in Seoul in July 2023.

The teacher took her own life after suffering bullying and harassment.

Her death sparked nationwide protests involving hundreds of thousands of teachers demanding greater protection from harassment and unreasonable complaints.

The 9 October rally was supported by 94 education unions and associations across South Korea.

It brought together three major teacher organisations: Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations, Korean Federation of Teachers' Unions and Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union.

Despite legislative reforms, unions say teachers remain vulnerable.

The movement's central demands include amending laws to distinguish legitimate classroom practices from abuse, protecting teachers' political and civic rights, and safeguarding public education funding.

Unions stand with teachers

Education International, the global federation of education unions, has expressed solidarity with its South Korean affiliates.

The IEU is an affiliate of Education International and stands with teachers in South Korea.

The campaign by South Korean teachers highlights an issue familiar to teachers worldwide, including in Australia: while student wellbeing is of critical importance, teachers' professional rights must also be protected.

Katie Camarena Digital Communications Manager



Sub Branch reports

Term 3 | 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

Central Coast

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

The Central Coast Sub Branch meeting was held on 6 August at Ourimbah RSL, with reps from Independent, Catholic and Christian schools attending.

Reps reported several positive changes at their schools as a result of advocacy by IEU reps or chapters on behalf of members, including:

- changes to procedures in requesting an employee's long-service leave accrual
- resolving an issue about erosion of the 30-minute lunch break for teachers
- resolving an issue with casuals on a six-period day with lunch duty.

Some schools are reporting issues with enrolment variations, NCCD workload and teachers' likenesses used on TikTok by students.

Reps noted that by and large they worked with supportive staff and morale was generally positive.

The sub branch acknowledged the death of two former Catholic school principals from the Central Coast. Both had been IEU members during their careers, including one who was a member for 31 years.

The sub branch passed a motion regarding exemptions in the *Anti-Discrimination Act* that allow faith-based schools to discriminate against staff. The motion was framed as a request for consultation and did not address the merits of the exemptions themselves.

Jim Hall Organiser

Central Metropolitan

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

The Central Metropolitan Sub Branch held its Term 3 meeting on 30 July at Burwood RSL. Reps from Catholic independent and systemic schools attended, along with reps from other independent schools.

The meeting was attended by IEU staff, including Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, who discussed her participation in a panel on teacher workload at the NSW Labor state conference.

Members shared their experiences and observations about workload, helping to inform the union's log of claims for negotiations in 2027.

Increasing expectations about staff attending functions and events outside normal working hours drew strong comment. Members reported this was often presented as an expectation of employment and was frequently added to school calendars without adequate notice or consultation.

The compliance burden associated with Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) documentation in primary schools was also discussed. Assistant Secretary Pat Devery offered practical guidance on what schools are required to document.

Finally, reps expressed interest in attending the quarterly IEU Council meetings. Those who have attended spoke positively about the quality of the speakers, and the professional engagement and networking opportunities on offer at these meetings.

Michelle Mella Sub Branch President

Central West

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

Central West Sub Branch held its Term 3 meeting in Dubbo on 31 July. Members discussed NESA requirements, maths curriculum implementation, kindergarten class sizes and support staff classification progression.

Members raised questions about professional practice and development goals, child safety training requirements, pay disparities in early childhood settings and concerns about the Blocksi platform.

Several issues raised by the members will be followed up with Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst.

The union updated members on preparations for renegotiation of the Work Practices Agreement. The union will consult with members to identify key priorities and workplace concerns.

Discussion also focused on SALT professional learning, with members seeking more consistent scheduling and earlier notification of training requirements.

Work health and safety (WHS) was another key topic, including discussion about the establishment of WHS committees and the role of health and safety representatives in schools.

Attendees also acknowledged recent union wins, including support staff pay increases, improvements to superannuation arrangements, expanded parental leave provisions and increases to minimum wage rates.

Donna Widdison Organiser



Cumberland.

Cumberland

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

The Cumberland Sub Branch held its Term 3 meeting on 10 August at the IEU office in Parramatta, with nine members attending.

Much of the discussion focused on workload and entitlements under the various enterprise agreements.

Members raised concerns about whether provisions of the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Work Practices Agreement, including class sizes, release time, extras and workload, are being applied consistently in schools.

They discussed the importance of members understanding their entitlements and raising concerns when work practices are not being implemented.

Members also discussed the challenges faced by teachers in specialist roles as they seek to balance the requirements of those roles with the wider needs of the school.

The meeting considered recent changes to the SafeWork NSW Codes of Practice, particularly in relation to psychosocial hazards and employers' responsibilities to provide a safe workplace.

Recent union wins were discussed, including improvements to paid parental leave and payday superannuation.

Luke Breen Organiser



Hunter Valley.

Hunter Valley

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

Hunter Valley Sub Branch members met online and in person at Hunter Workers for their Term 3 meeting on 3 August.

The sub branch had previously asked the union to engage in discussions about workload with Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle.

The sub branch sought to raise awareness of these workload concerns, discuss their impact on staff and identify practical solutions.

Teachers are being asked to make more decisions, complete more documentation and respond to increasing demands.

Members were updated on the union's meeting with the employer, which successfully advanced discussions about workload concerns, including compliance and registration requirements, system initiatives and demands, and balancing these expectations with teachers' core work.

The union asked the employer to consider how teachers' work is organised, how professional time is protected, how accountability measures can support rather than constrain professional practice, and how increasing expectations can be matched with appropriate staffing, resources and system support.

Work health and safety issues relating to infrastructure, challenging student behaviour and risk assessments led to discussion about the establishment of workplace health and safety committees and the role of health and safety representatives in schools.

Carlo Rendina Organiser



Ku-ring-gai.

Ku-ring-gai

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

The Ku-ring-gai Sub Branch met for its Term 3 meeting at Hornsby RSL.

Members from Catholic systemic, independent schools and Adventist schools were joined by Assistant Secretary Therese Fitzgibbon and organiser Charles Wheeler.

A rep noted that the meeting date of 10 August was St Lawrence Day, which celebrates the patron saint of cooks, comedians and librarians.

The coincidence was fitting: the food was excellent, there were plenty of laughs, and members discussed workplace rights for teacher-librarians.

The meeting discussed work health and safety (WHS) and recent reforms in this area.

Members shared their experiences of WHS practices in their schools and expressed a range of frustrations.

There was also discussion about psychosocial safety, with members expressing the view that some employers could do more to identify and eliminate workplace hazards.

Charles Wheeler Organiser

Lansdowne

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

The Lansdowne Sub Branch met on 6 August at Fairfield RSL for its third gathering of the year. Twelve reps from a variety of schools and three IEU officials attended.

The increased workload associated with parent-teacher meetings and school events was the major topic of discussion.

Some schools hold parent-teacher meetings during regular school hours on days when teachers do not have classes. Other schools hold parent-teacher evenings outside normal school hours, which has a big workload impact, particularly for members with caring responsibilities.

Reps identified the need to establish clear limits on the timing and frequency of parent-teacher events as a key issue for bargaining on the Sydney Catholic Schools' Work Practices Agreement next year.

We look forward to seeing everyone at future meetings. Reps who have not attended a meeting before are always welcome to join.

Aidan Anderson Organiser

Metropolitan East

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

Reps from Metropolitan East Sub Branch met at The Juniors Kingsford on 4 August, joined by Deputy Secretary David Towson.

The meeting discussed upcoming bargaining for both Work Practices Agreements and the Catholic systemic enterprise agreement, as well as the importance of engaging with members in schools over the remainder of 2026.

Reps welcomed updates on improvements to the federal minimum wage and award rates, the federal government's paid parental leave scheme and payday super reforms.

Kendall Warren Organiser

Mid North Coast

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

The Mid North Coast Sub Branch held its Term 3 meeting on 14 August.

Heavy workloads are a significant concern. Discussions focused on class composition, increasing student complexity, staffing shortages and the pressures on teachers, support staff and school leaders.

Members are gathering evidence to strengthen the union's advocacy around workload and resourcing issues.

The meeting discussed staff wellbeing and safety. Members are concerned about challenging student behaviour, workplace incidents, psychosocial risks and the need for clear and consistent responses from employers.

The work of health and safety representatives is becoming increasingly important, with members actively pursuing risk assessments, raising safety concerns and advocating for healthier workplaces.

Support staff issues featured prominently in discussions, particularly around classification, higher duties and ensuring employees are appropriately paid for their work.

The meeting also discussed artificial intelligence, social media and online harassment of staff, highlighting the need for stronger protections and clearer employer responses.

Membership growth across the region remains strong. Members demonstrate a strong commitment to standing together, supporting one another and ensuring the voices of teachers and support staff are heard.

Sean van der Heide Organiser

Monaro

The Monaro Sub Branch covers Canberra and the ACT.

The Monaro Sub Branch met on 30 July, with 17 reps in attendance. Much of the discussion focused on changes instigated by the ACT Board of Secondary School Studies (BSSS) that are due to commence next year, as well as ongoing NCCD-related workload concerns.

The workload impact of the proposed BSSS changes from 2027 was discussed. Reps raised concerns that the changes will increase assessment, moderation and record-keeping requirements.

Teachers are already reporting that the workload associated with senior classes is discouraging staff from taking them on.

Concerns were raised about access to past papers and exemplars, the time required to develop new assessment tasks and requirements to retain student work after they have left school.

Members felt there needed to be clearer mechanisms for staff to provide feedback to the BSSS before the changes take effect.

Other matters discussed included inadequate learning support staffing for students with complex needs, inconsistent NCCD evidence requirements, cross-campus travel, learning support assistant duty loads, special education allowances and a permit-to-teach matter specific to the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Updates were provided on ACT Christian schools bargaining, Catholic Early Learning Centres, Catholic systemic bargaining, and the implementation of Annexure C relating to work practices.

Tahlia Bruce Organiser



North Coast.

North Coast

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

The North Coast Sub Branch met at Ocean Shores Country Club in Brunswick Heads on 12 August. The meeting was well attended by reps from Catholic systemic, Catholic independent and independent schools.

Assistant Secretary Therese Fitzgibbon and organisers Sean van der Heide and Richard Ryan attended the meeting.

Key issues raised by members included:

- Class size and composition: Larger class sizes are increasingly difficult to manage. This is compounded by a growing number of students with complex needs, behavioural challenges and disabilities requiring specialised support.
- Demands on teachers: Complex classrooms require more time for differentiation, assessment, behaviour management, documentation and communication with parents.
- Overstretched support staff: Support staff are spread thinly across larger numbers of high-needs students.
- Escalating staff strain: School leaders and inclusion teachers are struggling to balance administrative support responsibilities with teaching loads.
- Health and retention risks: Unmanageable workloads affect teacher wellbeing and contribute to workplace stress and retention concerns.

Reps congratulated sub branch secretary Jennifer Allen on her election to the IEU Executive.

Richard Ryan Organiser



North West.

North West

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

The North West Sub Branch met at the Tamworth Hotel on Friday, 31 July. There was strong representation from Catholic systemic and independent school reps across the primary and secondary sectors.

Challenging student behaviours are increasing in schools and affecting staff wellbeing – the problem was discussed at length.

Concerns were raised about whether the physical and psychosocial safety of classroom practitioners, including teachers and education assistants, is adequately considered in risk assessments for students exhibiting unsafe behaviour.

Reps called on employers to provide adequate and supportive responses to these concerns.These issues are complex and are experienced across all sectors and throughout the state.

The union advocates for improved systems that support classroom practitioners by minimising risk and ensuring they are recognised as key stakeholders in behaviour management planning and restorative processes.

At the same time, we must be mindful of the potential consequences of additional meetings, increased administrative burdens, heightened accountability measures and staff burnout.

There was broad consensus that reducing class sizes would make a meaningful difference.

Sue McKay Organiser

Northern Beaches

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

The Northern Beaches Sub Branch met at Dee Why RSL, with reps from Catholic systemic and independent schools in attendance.

Members discussed concerns about large class sizes and delays in providing support in Catholic systemic primary schools. Support for large classes was often not provided until late in Term 1.

The union is collecting evidence through a survey and will continue discussions with the employer to ensure support is provided in a timely manner.

Workload is an issue across sectors. Members raised concerns about assessment marking, compliance training, co-curricular expectations and demands outside normal working hours.

The implementation of the right to disconnect laws was also discussed, with members supporting clear school policies regarding after-hours communication.

The meeting focused on work health and safety issues, including mould, facility maintenance, trip hazards and psychosocial hazards. Members discussed the importance of effective consultation processes and the role of health and safety representatives in addressing workplace concerns.

Reps reported concerns about student behaviour, particularly the impact of increasingly complex and challenging behaviours, on staff wellbeing and safety. The union will continue advocating for improved support and safer workplaces.

Independent school reps discussed upcoming bargaining, workload transparency and co-curricular expectations.

Members also considered broader challenges facing schools across the Northern Beaches, including enrolment pressures and changing demographics.

Karl Tikoft Sub Branch President

Northern Suburbs

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

The Northern Suburbs Sub Branch met on 28 July, with members sharing developments and issues across Catholic systemic and independent schools.

At Marist Catholic College North Shore, chapter action and engagement with the principal and IEU organiser led to improvements including an extended recess, review of parent-teacher booking arrangements and discussions about class sizes, credits and consultation.

At Redlands, sustained advocacy secured a dedicated platform for union reps to communicate directly with staff.

Workload is a concern across sectors, with increasing demands on support staff and middle managers, unclear responsibilities, class sizes, release time and extras.

Members discussed the new legally binding WHS codes of practice, with particular attention to psychosocial hazards, consultation, fatigue and the importance of health and safety representatives and committees in schools.

The meeting discussed union wins including pay increases, pay day superannuation and improvements to the government parental leave scheme.

Caroline Brehaut Sub Branch President



Penrith/Blue Mountains.

Penrith/Blue Mountains

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

The sub branch welcomed Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, who listened to members' concerns and offered advice or identified further steps where appropriate.

Members appreciated her expertise, as well as the support and guidance of our wonderful organisers Jennifer Tait and Peter Criticos.

Members noted that psychosocial hazards are a growing workplace issue. Inappropriate behaviour from students and parents can have a detrimental impact on staff wellbeing.

With the new WHS codes now legally enforceable, members have more ways to pursue action and seek workplace protections.

Members discussed the importance of schools addressing psychosocial risks through effective consultation, risk assessment and support measures to ensure safe and healthy workplaces.

Catholic systemic members were encouraged to identify and document breaches of the Work Practices Agreement in preparation for the next round of negotiations.

A motion regarding the workload of coordinators was passed for referral to Council.

Expanding access to professional learning was identified as a priority to strengthen engagement and increase union membership among support staff.

Liz Heggart Sub Branch President

Principals

The Principals' Sub Branch met via Zoom on 17 August to share experiences and discuss issues affecting school leaders.

A key theme was the impact of ongoing change across several dioceses. Members reported staffing shortages, restructures, redundancies, recruitment delays and increasing workload pressures. Many leadership teams are being asked to do more with fewer resources.

Work health and safety (WHS) was also discussed. Principals raised concerns about staff safety, challenging student behaviour, parent-related incidents and implementing new psychosocial hazard requirements under WHS codes of practice.

Members called for meaningful consultation, effective risk assessment processes and appropriate support for staff.

Concerns were also raised that some diocesan policies may require review and updating.

Members discussed risks associated with AI-generated deepfakes, smart glasses and recording devices, including the potential implications for privacy, safety and staff wellbeing.

The IEU is gathering examples of school policies and agreements to better understand how members can be protected as these technologies evolve.

Support for students with disability, workload transparency, increasing parent expectations and arrangements for staff attending school camps were also raised.

Christina Ellul Principals Organiser

Riverina

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

On 14 August, 16 IEU members from across the Riverina met in Narrandera, some travelling up to three hours to attend, demonstrating a strong commitment to raising workplace issues and supporting colleagues.

At one Catholic systemic primary school, members have sought clarification regarding pro rata meeting attendance requirements for part-time employees and the provision of teacher assistant support for larger kindergarten classes.

At a Catholic systemic secondary school, office staff leave cover is an ongoing concern. The IEU is pursuing the case of a school learning support officer whose pay was reset to the bottom of the

classification scale despite 18 years of previous service with the diocese.

At another Catholic systemic secondary school, staff absences have reached a crisis point. In a workforce of just over 50 employees, staff have collectively taken 838 days of personal and carer's leave this year, placing pressure on their colleagues and increasing workload demands across the school. Members are calling for sustainable staffing and appropriate relief arrangements.

Elsewhere, workload is a significant concern. At one primary school, 116 hours of release from face-to-face (RFF) teaching is outstanding, largely due to staff absences.

Across independent schools, members have achieved positive outcomes on pay classification while also raising concerns about flexible work arrangements, preschool staffing, library workloads and workplace fatigue.

Lyn Caton Organiser

South Coast

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

The South Coast Sub Branch met in Wollongong on 12 August, bringing together reps from Catholic systemic, independent and Christian schools to discuss workplace and industrial issues.

Members appreciated the attendance of Branch Secretary Carol Matthews, whose expertise, feedback and practical advice on a range of matters were appreciated.

Catholic systemic reps raised concerns about staffing freezes affecting school support officers and Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong office staff.

Members discussed increasing workload pressures, leave provisions and expressed concern about uncertainty surrounding role restructures and future funding arrangements.

Independent school reps discussed new student bullying response requirements and workload concerns.

Christian school members sought clarification regarding leave without pay and long service leave provisions.

Across all sectors, members raised concerns about workload, staffing levels, transparency and the need for stronger wage growth to address teacher shortages and cost-of-living pressures.

Marco Cimino Sub Branch President

South East

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

The South East Sub Branch met on 31 July at The Statesman Hotel in Curtin, with reps welcoming organiser Angela McDonald and Deputy Secretary David Towson.

Workload transparency is a concern in independent schools. Reps discussed the request to reconvene the Archdiocesan Consultative Committee for Catholic systemic schools.

Other matters raised included religious education accreditation requirements, arrangements for job-sharing staff to attend meetings, and the equitable timetabling and allocation of release from face-to-face (RFF) teaching.

The meeting acknowledged recent wins including the support staff pay rise, superannuation contributions for employees under 18 and increases to minimum and modern award wages.

Catholic systemic representatives discussed the work practices clause in the enterprise agreement, ahead of bargaining next year. Members considered new work health and safety codes of practice, including training on psychosocial hazards and the importance of effective health and safety committees.

Linda Swadling Sub Branch President

Southern Suburbs

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

The Southern Suburbs Sub Branch met on 4 August at Tradies Gymea. The meeting discussed unsustainable class sizes in Catholic systemic primary schools, with some incoming kindergarten classes exceeding the enterprise agreement cap of 30 students.

The sub branch agreed to gather class size data, seek consultation with principals and escalate the issue to an industrial officer.

Rising NCCD documentation requirements imposed at the local level were raised as a concern.

Reps clarified that attendance at weekend family Masses is not an industrial requirement and cannot be mandated.

Members from Catholic systemic secondary schools identified key priorities for the upcoming log of claims. These include updating a 30-year-old staffing formula, reviewing coordinator time allocations, reaffirming the voluntary nature of extracurricular activities, improving overnight camp allowances and introducing reproductive leave provisions.

Members also discussed AI-manipulated images targeting teachers, calling for proactive student awareness programs across Sydney Catholic Schools.

The union urges members to consult with their chapters to identify priorities for the union's log of claims for next year's bargaining in both Catholic systemic and independent schools.

Amy Kermode Sub Branch President

What is the Help to Buy Scheme?

Under the Australian Government's Help to Buy Scheme, eligible Australians are supported to get into a home sooner. The scheme offers ownership options for both first-time buyers and people getting back into the property market.

With a deposit from as little as 2%, it means you could buy sooner. If eligible, the Australian Government will contribute up to 30% or 40% of the property purchase price – helping you secure a suitable home sooner with a smaller deposit and without paying Lenders Mortgage Insurance (potentially saving you thousands of dollars).

Through an authorised Participating Lender such as TMB, the Help to Buy Scheme may give you greater buying power. At a glance:

- You save a deposit of at least 2% of the purchase price.
- If you're eligible, the government contributes up to 30% for an existing home or 40% for a new home.
- Your deposit and the Commonwealth Share must equal at least 20% of the property value.
- You borrow as much as you can afford to repay through an authorised participating lender, such as TMB.

Teachers Mutual Bank is proud to be an Authorised Participating Lender for the Australian Government's Help to Buy Scheme.

As an Authorised Participating Lender, we guide you through the whole process: check your eligibility; complete a home loan assessment; and submit your pre-approval application to Housing Australia.

If approved, your place in the scheme is reserved for up to 90 days while you find a home.

Find out more
tmbank.com.au/home-loans/help-to-buy-scheme/eligibility-checker

Teachers Mutual Bank



Membership eligibility applies to join the Bank. Scheme eligibility applies. All applications for credit are subject to our lending criteria. Fees and charges apply. You can find our Consumer Lending terms and conditions available online or from any of our offices. Teachers Mutual Bank is a division of Teachers Mutual Bank Limited ABN 30 087 650 459 AFSL/Australian Credit Licence 238981. | 1203351-TMB-0926-IENSW



Is your super keeping up?

Your super is one of your biggest long-term investments, but it can be easy to set and forget. Taking a little time to check how your super is tracking can help you understand whether your fund is still meeting your needs and supporting your goals for the future.

So, how does your super measure up? Here are five questions worth asking.

1. What investment options are available?

Consider the investment options your fund offers and whether they suit your goals, investment timeframe and tolerance for risk. Your needs may also change over time, so it can be worth reviewing how your super is invested from time to time.

2. How has your super performed?

Look at investment performance over different periods, such as 1, 5 and 10 years. Longer-term returns can give you a broader picture when comparing investment options and funds.

Remember that performance is only one factor to consider when assessing a super fund.

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance.

3. What fees are you paying?

Fees can affect how much super you have over the long term. Check the administration and investment fees you're paying and consider them alongside the features and services you receive.

4. Does your insurance still suit you?

Check what insurance is available through your super, including any cover you already have and the premiums you're paying. It's worth considering whether your level of cover still reflects your circumstances and needs.

5. What service and support can you access?

Your super fund is about more than investments. Consider the support available to you, the services and tools offered to members and how easy it is to manage your account and get help when you need it.

Don't forget about multiple super accounts

If you have more than one super account, you could be paying more than one set of fees and your super may be harder to keep track of.

Bringing your super together may help you:

- track your retirement savings more easily
- avoid duplicate fees
- keep your super organised
- get a clearer picture of your long-term financial progress.

Before changing funds or consolidating your super, check whether you could lose any benefits, such as insurance cover, attached to another account.

Learn more about consolidating your super: ngssuper.com.au/super/manage-my-super/consolidate-super

What about NGS Super?

NGS Super is a super fund built for what matters to our members:

- focusing on strong long-term performance to help build your savings
- competitive fees so more of your money stays invested^
- tailored support and advice to help you make confident decisions about your super*.

Need help reviewing your super?

If you have questions about your super, NGS Super offers a range of advice options, including complimentary support and digital tools such as the NGS Virtual Adviser.

Whether you want to understand how your super is invested, review your options or simply check that you're on track, getting guidance can help you make informed decisions with confidence.

Explore NGS Advice

ngssuper.com.au/advice

*Fees apply for comprehensive financial advice. This is general information only and does not take into account your objectives, financial situation or needs. Before acting on this information, consider whether it is appropriate to you and read our Fees, Costs and Tax Guide, Financial Services Guide, Product Disclosure Statements and Target Market Determinations, available from ngssuper.com.au. You should also consider obtaining financial, taxation and/or legal advice tailored to your personal circumstances before making a decision. Issued by NGS Super Pty Ltd AFSL 233 154.

ngs Super

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Executive

Secretary
Carol Matthews
Eora Nation

Deputy Secretary
David Towson
Eora Nation

Assistant Secretary
Patrick Devery
Dharug Nation

Assistant Secretary
Therese Fitzgibbon
Eora Nation

President
Suzanne Penson
MacKillop College, Port Macquarie
Birpai Nation

Deputy President
Denise McHugh
NESA Liaison Officer
Kamilaroi Nation

Vice President
Catholic Systemic Dioceses
Liz Heggart
Penola Catholic College, Emu Plains
Dharug Nation

Vice President
Independent Schools and Educational Institutions
Helen Templeton
St Scholastica's College, Glebe
Eora Nation

Vice President
Support and Professional Staff
Nicole Downey
St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Orange
Wiradjuri Nation

Vice President
Early Childhood Education and Care
Vacant

Vice President ACT
David Caton
Daramalan College, Dickson
Ngunnawal People

Financial Officers
Denise McHugh
Kamilaroi Nation

Markus Muschal
St John Paul College, Coffs Harbour
Gumbaynggir Nation

General Executive Members
Jennifer Allen
St Carthage's Primary School, Lismore
Bundjalung Nation

Jacob Betts
Carroll College, Broulee
Yuin Nation

Kylie Booth-Martinez
Assumption Catholic Primary School and St Stanislaus College, Bathurst
Wiradjuri Nation

Caroline Brehaut
Redlands, Cremorne
Cammeraygal People

Sarah Gardiner
Catherine McAuley Catholic College, Medowie
Worimi Nation

Amy Kermode
Mount St Joseph Catholic College, Milperra
Eora Nation

Michelle Mella
Presbyterian Ladies' College, Croydon
Eora Nation

Peter Moore
Our Lady of Mercy College, Burraneer
Tharawal Nation

Christine Wilkinson
St Joseph's Catholic College, East Gosford
Darkinjung Nation

Amanda Wood
St Patrick's Primary School, Wallsend
Awabakal Nation

Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch

Our locations

Sydney: 485-501 Wattle Street, Ultimo NSW 2007 P 8202 8900

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

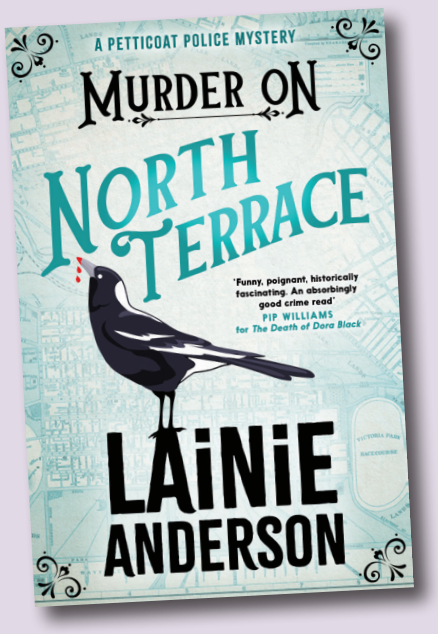
Canberra: Units 11 & 12, 3-5 Phipps Close, Deakin ACT 2600 P 6120 1500



with Professional Development and Reps Training

ieu.asn.au

Giveaways



Murder on North Terrace

Author: Lainie Anderson

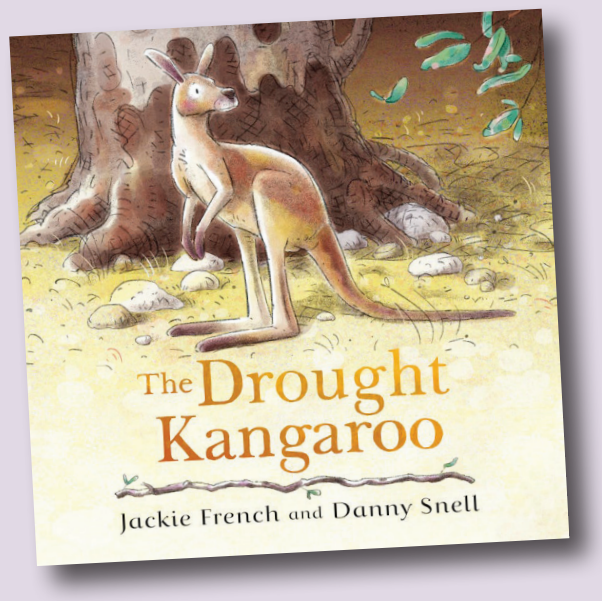
Publisher: Hachette Australia

The second novel in the Petticoat Police Mystery series, *Murder on North Terrace* is inspired by Australia's pioneering policewoman, Kate Cocks.

Adelaide, September 1917. Constables Kate Cocks and Ethel Bromley are back walking the beat. The city is unsettled. Winter won't leave. Soldiers are returning from the war with broken bodies and troubled souls.

And now a powerful board governor has been found dead in the art gallery – dumped beneath a scandalous nude painting that has attracted both pious outrage and record crowds.

Alas, murder in Adelaide is never a simple affair.



The Drought Kangaroo

Authors: Jackie French and Danny Snell

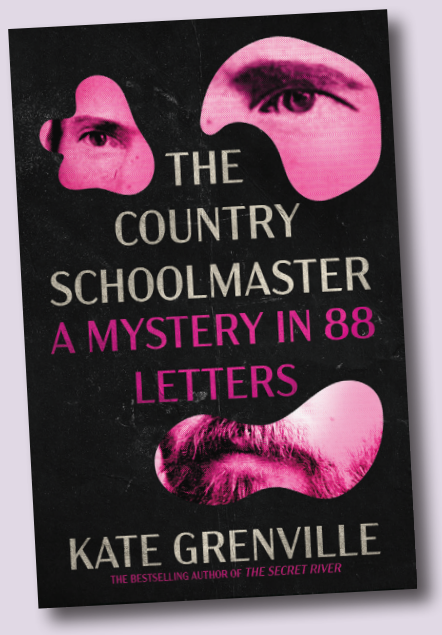
Publisher: Harper Collins

The Drought Kangaroo is the third title in a series about animals and the challenges they face in environmental disaster, be it fire, flood and now drought.

Drought has devastated Joseph the kangaroo's home. He longs for green grass and the cool, clear water he can smell in the distance.

Kangaroos can leap higher and further than any other animal. But can Joseph's strong hind legs help him reach the waterhole? And will the new mob there accept a stranger?

Created by Jackie French and Danny Snell, the award-winning duo behind *The Fire Wombat* and *The Turtle and the Flood*, this is a true story about a kangaroo who went on the longest journey of his life and ended up living by a creek on Jackie's property.



The country schoolmaster: A mystery in 88 letters

Author: Kate Grenville

Publisher: Black Inc.

Rummaging through the archives one day, Kate Grenville comes across a file of letters about a schoolteacher in country NSW.

Intrigued, she keeps reading and discovers a story far more curious and complex than it first appears.

Was Joseph Connor savagely beating the students in his care, or was he the victim of a small-town vendetta? And what went so terribly wrong between him and his daughter?

Part colonial cold case, part locked-room mystery, and part exploration of a writer's imagination navigating facts and half-facts, *The Country Schoolmaster* is a book like no other.

In it, Grenville comes to understand both the seductive pleasure of storytelling and its dangerous limitations.

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 address in the body of your email. All entries must be received by 10 December 2026.

Your career's growing.
Is your super keeping up?

ngs Super

Switch to a fund that works harder for your future.
NGS Super is focused on delivering:

- Strong investment performance
- Competitive fees
- Personalised advice, helping members build confidence for what's next*

See if NGS Super is right for you >

Built for what matters

*Fees apply to more comprehensive financial advice. This is general information only and may not be right for you. Read the Fees, Costs and Tax Guide, Financial Services Guide, Product Disclosure Statement and Target Market Determinations at ngssuper.com.au. Issued by NGS Super Pty Ltd AFSL 233 154.

BM-11374