

# ThePoint



## Two years, too long: the campaign for a Tasmanian Catholic Agreement ramps up

Overworked, frustrated Catholic educators in Tasmania are upping the ante in their campaign for a fair deal, two years since the expiry of their last IEU-negotiated Agreement.

In the first year of negotiations, the IEU had to take employers to the Fair Work Commission just to force them to attend bargaining meetings. The second year started more productively, but it was seriously derailed when the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office introduced ridiculous new claims 18 months after bargaining started.

Rather than seeking to ensure that Tasmanian Catholic schools remain competitive with government schools, employers are digging in their heels over

deeply unreasonable new claims such as the ability to **forcibly transfer staff between schools** and an **increase to the number of days that teachers can be required to work**. They also want to **extend the period of notice** that teachers have to provide on resignation and weaken vital hard-won clauses such as **the scope of Consultative Committees, redundancy provisions and performance management procedures**.

Dealing with these obstructionist additions has delayed discussion of the union's important claims, which seek to

ensure that the work of our members is properly valued and respected and that working conditions in Tasmanian Catholic schools do not fall behind those in government schools.

On the second anniversary of the tabling of the IEU Log of Claims, we asked a few members how they were feeling about the employer delays. Here are a few of our favourite responses:

■ 'I don't understand how genuine and sincere attempts at bargaining can take this long. It's either incompetence or a

deliberate attempt to not engage with their employees. How insulting.'

- 'If I was this slow at doing my job I would have been sacked by now.'
- 'If this goes on for much longer it will make the span between Olympic games look short.'
- 'I've built a house, got married and now having a child in the time it's taken them to still have done nothing.'

What is now very clear is that it's time to turn up the pressure!

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## COVID Safety for Schools Course

An initiative of not-for-profit organisation COVID Safety Australia, this resource provides schools with factual, scientifically accurate information they can use to make informed decisions about keeping staff and students safe.

Schools are a hotbed of COVID transmission, and many are poorly informed, so they aren't doing enough to prevent repeat infections. Experts believe that could jeopardise the long-term health of an entire generation of children. It's also leading to more teachers leaving the profession due to Long COVID and concerns about their health and safety.

For details, go to: [www.covidsafetyforschools.org](http://www.covidsafetyforschools.org)

## Protest HungryPanda exploitation

Zhouying Wang, a delivery rider and Transport Workers Union (TWU) member, bravely organised a protest against food delivery service HungryPanda's worsening conditions.

In retaliation to Zhuoying's protest, HungryPanda stopped giving her delivery orders, leaving Zhuoying unable to pay her rent.

Base rates for food delivery riders are as little as \$4 per order and a new bonus scheme requires riders to complete a set number of orders in a dangerously short timeframe, leading to a rise in rider injuries.

Sign the petition asking HungryPanda to stop punishing delivery riders at [rb.gy/i70a0s](https://rb.gy/i70a0s)

## The non-profit, pro-climate power company

Cooperative Power is a non-profit cooperative taking the power back from huge energy corporations for the benefit of people and the planet.

Backed by Australian union and environmental groups, Cooperative Power offers a way for people to buy clean, sustainable, and affordable energy while having a say in how it's created and how much it costs.

The revenue it generates from electricity fights poverty, tackles the climate crisis, and supports communities, and every customer is entitled to vote on how this revenue is distributed.

Cooperative Power offers:

- Energy usage at wholesale rates
- No exit fees or lock ins
- A commitment to community renewable energy

Go to: [www.cooperativepower.org.au](http://www.cooperativepower.org.au)

## Report a rip-off

Working people are suffering through some of the biggest cost-of-living increases in a generation.

From food to petrol to electricity to flights: prices everywhere are skyrocketing. Meanwhile, big business profits and executive salaries and bonuses are going through the roof, and in some cases, outstripping even pre-pandemic levels.

Last year an ACTU commissioned inquiry into corporate price gouging identified several ways big business seek to unfairly profiteer from (and further fuel) the inflation crisis.

Now it's time for your input.

Have you experienced unfair pricing practices? Share your story at [reportaripoff.australianunions.org.au](https://reportaripoff.australianunions.org.au)

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## Two years, too long (continued from front page)

Late last year, the union held urgent meetings with Reps from around the state, who decided to escalate the campaign unless there was rapid progress at the bargaining table. Sessions in Hobart and Launceston received enthusiastic support from Reps fed up with the interminable delays – and also gained significant media attention.

A Campaign Strategy Meeting was held with Reps from around the state in February, in which plans for a ‘week of action’ from 18 March were finalised. During this week, IEU officers will be out in force across the state, backing up Reps and meeting with staff to talk through the key issues – and most importantly to help sub-branches brainstorm the kinds of actions they’d take to turn up the pressure on employers to agree to a fair deal.

In the next phase of the campaign, we want to show employers that collectively we are strong and determined, and to remind them that if they continue to obstruct bargaining they will give us no option but to consider formal industrial action.

We don’t want to disrupt the education of our students – that is a last resort – and we sincerely hope that local campaigning will move the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office to the negotiating table with meaningful offers.

But it would be no shock to see exasperated educators choose this more combative approach if their legitimate needs continue to be ignored and disrespected. Any such actions would be a direct result of the TCEO’s intransigence.

We’re determined to get a good deal for members in Tasmanian Catholic education finalised, and a new level of campaigning will be unveiled across the state to make this happen.

### Tasmanian Catholic members deserve the following improvements, to match those already in place in government schools:

- full payment of the Lower Income Payments delivered in government schools
- a reduction in scheduled class time for primary teachers (to match government schools)
- a better School Support Employees classification and wages structure
- improved paid parental leave entitlements
- top-up payments for Deputy Principals and Education Officers
- 15 days personal leave for all staff
- workload reductions for graduate teachers and mentors
- limits to meetings
- preparation time for Teacher Assistants.

### What IEU members in Tasmanian Catholic education can do:

- Attend the campaign meeting in your school in the week of 18 March and bring your colleagues along.
- Invite non-members to join you in your union. We need to keep growing to win this campaign!
- Keep the conversations going in your workplace.
- Support your Rep! A campaign like this is demanding for our hard-working Reps, and your support will mean a lot.

## Unions in the community: The People’s Kitchen

Solidarity and community are not just high ideals for unionists, they are practical strategies to help those in need.



In the Latrobe Valley, where the community has been hard hit by a changing industrial landscape, unionists are making a difference with hands-on action.

On Friday 9 February a group of unionists from the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council joined together in Morwell to prepare and cook meals that were distributed to community members in need.

The Morwell Neighbourhood House, led by Latrobe City Council Deputy Mayor and proud ASU member Tracie Lund, hosted IEU Gippsland Organiser Rupert Stephenson; Janine Duncan, Tammy Borg and Chelsea Lee from the ASU (private sector); Darryn Snell from the NTEU, and Simon Lund from the ASU (Victoria Tasmania), in a day of cooking and goodwill.

They were working in the kitchen of A Kinder Cup café, a business venture of the Neighbourhood House that makes a great cup of coffee but also provides training opportunities for locals interested in entering the hospitality industry.

The day began with activities, mostly (according to Rupert) ‘embarrassing physical challenges’, that fostered team spirit and left the team all smiles and ‘ready to smash food insecurity’.

The unionists went on to prepare, cook and pack 110 meals of sweet and sour sausage casserole with baked potatoes and steamed vegies that filled the Neighbourhood House’s foodbank freezer.

The successful haul was a credit to Morwell Neighbourhood House and the unionists who volunteered their time.

Rupert says food insecurity is a global issue, but it needs to be confronted with grassroots actions.

‘Small local projects can tackle this very serious issue for many people in the community. It also shows how a group of unionists with passion and a sense of community spirit can make a difference.’



**GENERAL SECRETARY**  
DAVID BREAR

## Planning for better outcomes for members

Over the past few months we have begun developing our new strategic plan, a process vital for the future of our union.

This important task began with a facilitated meeting involving all staff and all the members of the Committee of Management (COM). COM is the ultimate decision-making body of the IEU and is made up of elected Reps and members from Independent and Catholic schools across Victoria and Tasmania.

In this first meeting we discussed where we are as an organisation and where we needed to be, the effectiveness of what we are currently doing and what we need to focus on going forward.

This led to more discussion around how we need to be structured and how we need to plan to optimise our effectiveness.

What we know already is that a very significant amount of the work we do involves supporting individual members who are dealing with often complex and confronting issues at work. The introduction of the Reportable Conduct Scheme in Victoria added considerably to this industrial workload. Similar legislation is now also in place in Tasmania.

Negotiating Enterprise Bargaining Agreements in independent schools is also resource intensive and the IEU has over 100 EBAs in place across two states.

Then there’s the negotiation of the Agreements covering Victorian and Tasmanian Catholic schools, which are

huge undertakings involving thousands of members across many schools.

The IEU won significant improvements to conditions in the recent Victorian Catholic Agreements, including a one-and-a-half-hour reduction of scheduled teaching time and the abolition of extras. However, workload remains a major issue.

And we’re also aware that everyone is feeling the pinch right now with the cost of living – so campaigning for meaningful wage increases is also a top priority for our forward planning.

With IEU members facing big challenges to win necessary improvement to wages and conditions, we must ensure we are a

fighting fit organising and campaigning union whilst continuing the important work of looking after the day-to-day legal and industrial needs of our members.

That’s why we’re taking this chance to examine how we run. To win for members we must continue to build power and that means campaigning around key issues like pay, workload, parental leave, superannuation, and better classification structures for Education Support Staff.

The goal of our strategic plan is to review what and how we do these things – to sharpen up so we can be the best union possible for every member across Victoria and Tasmania.



# New faces bolster expanding IEU staff

The transformation of your IEU workforce continues with the addition of three eager new Organisers.



New Tasmanian Organiser **Abbey Butler** has hit the ground running, taking a leading role in arranging the strategy of the next phase of the Tasmanian Catholic campaign.

American by birth, Abbey worked as a Year 7-12 English teacher for 16 years, and a Rep for six years, working in New South Wales and Queensland before settling on the Apple Isle.

She's been a union member since the age of 18, when she was working in a factory.

Last year, when supporting the Yes vote for the Voice to Parliament referendum, Abbey's words revealed her ethos: 'I would remind people that we need to use our privilege and power to uplift the voices of those oppressed by the system we live in... When there is something harmful that happens, it isn't our place to silence those who are impacted. It is our place to listen and act accordingly.'

She believes that the 'untenable' workload facing educators is the biggest issue facing IEU members.

'I wanted to work for the IEU because I think our educational system needs reform and union members deserve to use their collective power to create change,' Abbey says.

**Dean Haydock**, who taught at Eltham College, says he applied to work for the union because he wanted to advocate for

the rights of workers.

'I believe in the importance of fair treatment, better working conditions, and just wages for all workers. To do this I wanted to assist in creating a set of conditions that are manageable right now for everybody working in our schools. These conditions also need to be fair, just, and equitable.'

He says the biggest issue facing education staff is 'without a doubt, the increase in expected workload'.

'The amount of work expected of teachers and education staff has become beyond manageable. This is leading to an educational crisis, especially in teaching, as many are simply walking away from their profession.'

Dean says he's already been amazed by the 'incredible insight and knowledge and the unwavering support' of fellow Organisers.

He says no question for his colleagues has been too big or too small and their ability to recite the detail of Agreement clauses has been 'mind blowing'.

Hamilton-born **Belinda Wrigley** first got involved with the IEU as second year teacher at St Joseph's Primary School in Warrnambool. She'd previously taught for a year at St Mary's School in Swan Hill after completing a Master of Education Studies at Federation University.

Over her 24 years as a primary school

teacher, Belinda was an Arts Co-ordinator, an assistant Religious Education Co-ordinator, and a Year Level Leader.

She became a Rep at St Francis Xavier Primary School in Ballarat East in 2019, where she had extensive experience of a committed sub-branch and a functional Consultative Committee 'working issues through' with school leadership.

Belinda enjoyed her five years as a Rep and she saw the difference she could make for staff working on a Consultative Committee and helping members on individual matters.

She became more involved with the IEU when invited to be one of the IEU delegates at Ballarat Trades Hall.

'This is where I had the opportunity to listen to organisers from other unions speak about issues that they were helping their members with. Attending IEU meetings gave me a great perspective on the incredible work Reps and Organisers were doing throughout Victoria and Tasmania.'

'I felt that I could further assist members by working at the IEU. There are also great opportunities at the IEU to build knowledge through training and by being part of committees. Working for the IEU allows me to support reps in Melbourne, Ballarat, and Regional Victoria. I enjoy meeting people and I am looking forward to visiting schools this year.'

Belinda also says workloads are the main issue facing educators.

'There is always so much to do to keep up with the paperwork. Even being highly organised at school still meant additional hours to complete marking, entering data, writing reports and ILPs.'

'The teacher shortage is also a major issue, and it is often difficult to get relief teachers and fill vacancies in schools. Looking after the amazing staff we already have in schools, so that they feel valued and supported, goes a long way to retaining staff. The demands on a teacher are ever-present as well as the scrutiny. Staff wellbeing needs to be an active consideration throughout the school year.'

## VICTORIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

# Implement workload improvements and staff will stay

More than one IEU Organiser, when meeting with school leaders, is being asked, 'Do you still have your VIT registration? Are you good to take a class?'

The teacher workforce crisis, long mooted, is here, and it is having a big impact.

It underscores how important it is to make jobs in education more attractive and working conditions more reasonable.

IEU members campaigned vigorously to win new measures that tackle workload. They now need schools to properly implement the workload wins in our Agreements - and adhere to the spirit of and intention behind these documents, rather than seek loopholes!

The Victorian Catholic Agreements are meant to maximise the time educators spend on their primary duties in the classroom and preparing for them, rather than on extraneous tasks.

An example is the use of staff members' class focus time for events such as swimming sports. This is occasionally unavoidable, but if educators are

consistently missing class time because of such events, it is unacceptable. The 30 + 8 model is a big step forward, but it cannot fix every situation; it takes a genuine desire to keep teachers' class focus time sacrosanct to make the Agreement work.

That's where planning comes in. All a year's major events are booked in long ahead of time. Consultative Committees should ensure that duties at extracurricular events are shared as evenly as possible.

Those committees are so important - make sure your Consultative Committee Reps make the most of their entitlement to paid leave to attend training sessions which offer insights into how to ensure genuine consultation in your workplace.

In case you are in any doubt about the right to your class focus time, here it is in lawfully binding black and white from the CEMEA: 'Class focus time includes work directly related to the learning and teaching

program of a Teacher's class(es) (such as planning, preparation, collaboration, assessment). The Teacher has professional autonomy to determine the duties undertaken in class focus time.'

That's your time, it's in the allocated 30 hours for scheduled class time and class focus time laid out in the Agreement. You have autonomy over it.

Where schools fail to consult or where employers fail to properly follow the arrangements set out in the Agreement, the IEU can contest this, and if necessary will file a dispute at the Fair Work Commission. On the other hand, schools that treat staff well, genuinely consult with employees and apply the spirit of the Agreement will find it easier to attract and retain staff in a highly competitive market.

### Reportable Conduct Scheme

It is important that there is a vigorous mechanism to safeguard children in all schools, but as you will read throughout this edition of *The Point*, this scheme, in its current form, needs to be reformed.

In the meantime, it's important that we do what we can in discussions with employer bodies to minimise the number of frivolous and vexatious claims that become fully fledged reports.

To that end, the union has been meeting with employer groups to help refine the reporting process. If a little more time is spent assessing original reports, much time, money, and psychological harm can be avoided.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

# Fixed-term contracts

Under reforms which came into effect in December 2023, there are now three rules about the use of fixed-term contracts in employment. All three must be followed or the contract's end date may no longer apply, which means employment won't automatically finish at that date.

These changes will have significant benefits for many contract workers in education, and it's important to be aware of them.

Broadly speaking, the three rules are as follows:

- **Time limitations:** a fixed-term contract can't be for longer than two years. This includes any extensions or renewals.
- **Renewal limitations:** a fixed-term contract cannot:
  - Renew or extend if the second contract would result in the total period of fixed-term employment exceeding two years; or
  - extend or renew the contract more than once.
- **Consecutive contract limitations:** a fixed-term contract cannot be renewed more than once, even if the total period of fixed-term employment is less than two years in duration. This means a third consecutive fixed-term contract cannot be entered into with an employee.

There are more specific details about how the above rules apply and when they may not apply to a fixed-term contract; the IEU can provide specific advice on individual circumstances.

For all fixed-term employees who commenced employment

after 6 December 2023, employers must provide the employee with a Fixed Term Contract Information Statement.

**If your fixed-term contract doesn't meet the rules, the end date in the contract will no longer apply, which means the contract won't automatically come to an end at the end of that time.**

This will not affect the validity of any other terms of your contract. If the limitations are breached, civil penalties could apply to an individual or a company.

If you and your employer disagree about whether the limitations or exceptions apply, you must first attempt to resolve the dispute at the workplace level. If the dispute is not resolved at the workplace level, the matter can be referred to the Fair Work Commission.

If the matter is referred to the Commission, it must deal with the dispute by means including mediation or conciliation. If both parties agree, the Commission can deal with the dispute by arbitration.

Of course, if you have any concerns about your contract, your first step should be seeking advice from the IEU – we can advise and represent members through the whole process.

The Fair Work Act has also introduced **anti-avoidance** protections so that your employer

**can't do certain things** to avoid the rules, including:

- ending your employment or not re-employing you for a period of time
- employing someone else to do the same or substantially similar work instead of you, or
- changing the type of work or tasks that you do or changing your employment relationship.

If an employer does any of the above, this may be considered unlawful 'adverse action' (an unlawful action taken against you because you have a workplace right).

In addition to the above rules, if your employment is covered by a union-negotiated Agreement, it is likely to contain further limits on the use of fixed-term contracts. Those provisions apply in addition to the new rules in the *Fair Work Act*.

There are exceptions to the rules set out above on when a longer fixed-term contract can be offered, including for example if you are covering for another person on leave. However, if you have been on a fixed-term contract for two years or more, this may be unlawful – we strongly recommend that you contact the union for advice.

## Reportable Conduct Schemes must be improved



**DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY**  
KYLIE BUSK

Tasmania's Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) became operational on 1 January, meaning all IEU Victoria Tasmania members now work under similar 'child safe' schemes.

This means further significant legislative frameworks and even more compliance obligations affecting the work and lives of people working in schools.

Let me be clear: the IEU fully supports creating child safe environments and addressing the genuine harm and abuse of young people in institutional settings.

However, the professional and personal safety of members must also be a priority for employers acting under these schemes.

After six years of operation of the RCS in Victoria we've learned much about how the scheme impacts members. It is a mostly negative tale of matters being pursued that don't meet the legal threshold for the scheme; investigation processes which sometimes stretch to years; investigations not based in procedural fairness; and an alarming lack of support for those involved.

And we've seen that the financial and emotional resources needed for school leaders and staff to deal with conduct issues or allegations are enormous.

Fundamentally, education is human work, complex and dynamic, and our members do it incredibly well. The average person working in a school makes 2000 decisions every day and has hundreds of interactions every week. It is impossible for every one of these to be 'perfect'.

Every day, educators address low level issues through reflective restorative practices. Often these issues are just a moment of less-than-perfect practice from overstretched staff dealing with challenging behaviours 'on the fly'.

Most concerns raised in schools are not instances of wilful wrongdoing. They are more often misunderstandings arising from the complexity of dealing with students of various ages and needs and staff with varied levels of experience and approaches.

On page 14 of this publication, you can read about the harrowing RCS experience of 'Chris', a veteran of Catholic education. After finally being cleared after a confronting process which dragged on for nearly two years, Chris wanted to speak about their experience to promote awareness of the pitfalls of the RCS. Having worked closely with Chris over the past 18 months I witnessed first-hand the 'dark place' the RCS took them to. Chris was exonerated, in part, because they had been a meticulous record keeper, so they had evidence to prove the allegations could not have occurred. Not every person working in schools has access to such data.

Seeing how this experience devastated such a dedicated professional puts a fire in our belly to continue campaigning for improvements to this process for our members.

The introduction of these schemes should not be something for those working in schools to fear. However, in union with one another we must ensure that these schemes don't diminish the good work of good people, and that workplace concerns are addressed by efficient, procedurally fair and supportive processes.

## FEDERAL POLICY

### Don't forget teacher workload and staff retention

The federal IEU commends a report targeting inequality and student disadvantage but says a complementary strategy to address excessive teacher workloads is required.

The union supported much of National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) Expert Panel's report to the Federal Government which informs the Education Funding and Reform Agreement being developed this year.

But while the NSRA report acknowledges teacher workload and work intensification in schools, 'it fails to recommend any specific or enforceable workload interventions at a school or system level,' says IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes.

'Unsustainable workloads and work intensification are universally accepted as the most pressing workplace issue facing education employees across the country. It's the key reason that teachers are leaving the profession in record numbers.'

Brad says many of the worthy objectives in a new NSRA will remain unfulfilled 'due to staffing shortages and the reality that schools are unable to fully commit to new student programs or initiatives due to already overburdened teachers and school leaders'.

The IEUA continues to pursue these issues with the Federal Education Minister and to work collaboratively

with education and regulatory authorities to clarify the boundaries of compliance tasks being imposed on staff.

In a letter to the Minister, the IEUA welcomed the many positive aspects of the NSRA report, but said, 'Employers must be held to account to demonstrate quantifiable workload change in their schools'.

There are six specific targets in the report; none propose specific targets relating to workload.

Brad says teachers need appropriate 'time, resources and support' to ensure that no student is left behind.

In Victoria the IEU is working with Catholic employers around the implementation of important commitments negotiated in the last Agreement which are designed to help deal with burgeoning workloads.



## Consultation is key



**UNION PRESIDENT**  
TERRY HUDDY

In Catholic schools and a growing number of independent schools, Consultative Committees are the most important mechanism for improving working conditions and policies.

A properly functioning Consultative Committee provides a voice for all staff members and a place where developing issues can be canvassed, and problems resolved. It allows staff to feel their input to their workplace is taken seriously and that issues that affect them can be discussed in an open forum.

Eltham College, where I work, has had a working Consultative Committee since 2020. In that time, when school leadership developed and reworked policy documents, the Consultative Committee was an integral part of the process.

**Our Consultative Committee has been developed through the EBA Committee and getting it into the Agreement was crucial because that means it operates within an enforceable legal framework.**

As Rep at Eltham College, I have the benefit of an amazing leadership team from each section of the school (ELC, Junior, Senior, and Professional staff). These wonderful volunteers help me learn what issues are developing in each section. We have an IEU Staff OneNote which we use to disseminate information and keep notes of meetings. This also allows the leadership team a place to collect and store information in one place.

Many important policies have been fine-tuned by discussions in the Consultative Committee. An example? When proposed car parking changes posed a major safety risk, the Consultative Committee was a great way for staff and executive to work through the issue and come up with a resolution that worked for everyone.

Our Consultative Committee has been developed through the EBA Committee and getting it into the Agreement was crucial because that means it operates within an enforceable legal framework.

The Consultative Committee has allowed staff to have a voice and has ensured a positive working relationship with school leadership, so that when issues develop, we can work them out before they become critical.

If your school doesn't yet have a working Consultative Committee, talk to a colleague in a school where one is operating, or contact the IEU. There is training available to ensure your school can also reap the benefits of these engaged and collaborative forums.

## INDUSTRIAL NEWS

### The right to disconnect: What does it mean for IEU members?

The federal government recently passed changes to the *Fair Work Act 2009* that include the 'right to disconnect'.

These changes will be beneficial to IEU members and allow them to better manage their work and personal lives and the ever-increasing expectations of employers (and parents!) regarding workload outside of normal working hours.

#### What is the 'right to disconnect'?

Broadly speaking, the 'right to disconnect' is a new workplace right that provides employees with the right to not respond to out-of-hours contact from their employers and, relevantly for employees in education, contact from third parties such as students and parents. Employees can still respond if they want to but will be protected from unfavourable treatment if they decide not to.

#### Great, so can I switch off my phone and not check my work emails as soon as I leave school today?

Not quite. Although the 'right to disconnect' has been passed into law by the federal government, it doesn't start right away and needs one final approval as a formality before it can start operating as law. We'll update members once we know the date the law will start.

Once the law starts, it states that an employee is allowed to refuse to monitor, read or respond to contact, or attempted contact, outside of the employee's working hours. Importantly for IEU members this refusal can be in relation to contact from your employer and from third parties, e.g. students or parents and including emails, text messages, or other forms of communication. However, if the refusal to respond is 'unreasonable', an employee isn't protected by the right to disconnect.

#### When is a refusal to read or respond to contact outside of working hours unreasonable?

The law states that the following must be considered to determine whether a refusal is unreasonable:

- The reason for the contact or attempted contact
- How the contact or attempted contact is made and the level of disruption the contact or attempted contact causes the employee
- The extent to which the employee is compensated:
  - to remain available to perform work during the period in which the contact or attempted contact is made; or
  - for working additional hours outside of the employee's

ordinary hours of work

- The nature of the employee's role and the employee's level of responsibility
- The employee's personal circumstances (including family or caring responsibilities).

The above isn't an exhaustive list and other factors may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

#### What if there's a dispute with my employer about a refusal to respond outside of my work hours?

If you refuse to respond to a communication outside of work hours and your employer believes that this refusal is unreasonable, the first step is to try to resolve the dispute through discussions at the workplace level. If those talks don't resolve the dispute, either you or the employer can ask the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to deal with the dispute.

#### What can the FWC do to resolve a dispute?

The FWC can make orders against either the employee or the employer. In brief, if the FWC thinks the refusal to respond is unreasonable, it can order the employee to stop refusing to respond. If it considers the refusal not to be unreasonable, it can order the employer to not take action against the employee or to not require them to respond.

#### Can the IEU represent me in a dispute?

Yes. If you have a dispute with your employer, you have the right to be represented by the IEU.

#### What if my employer disciplines me or terminates my employment for refusing to respond?

If your employer takes adverse action against you, you may be able to bring a general protections claim for reinstatement and/or compensation. General protections claims are difficult, and we recommend you contact us immediately if your employer takes, or proposes to take, disciplinary action against you.

#### Do I still have this right if it's not in my workplace Agreement?

Yes. The 'right to disconnect' will automatically become a part of every employee's employment rights.

#### What if my workplace Agreement already has a term that provides a 'right to disconnect'?

If you are covered by an Agreement that has a 'right to disconnect' term that is more favourable than what the new law provides, the term from the Agreement will apply. If it is less favourable, the new law will apply.

Existing school email or communication policies that contravene the new right to disconnect will be overridden by the changes to the Fair Work Act. School administrations will need to comply with the federal laws regardless of their own policies.

#### What about if my workplace is covered by a Modern Award?

In addition to automatically becoming a part of your employment, the law amends the *Fair Work Act 2009* to require that all Modern Awards are updated to include the right.

#### Will this apply to all workplaces?

Yes, but there will be a 12-month delay for small businesses with fewer than 15 employees.



## IEU backs workplace law reforms

IEU Victoria Tasmania General Secretary David Brear has welcomed further improvements to workplace laws after the Senate passed the Closing Loopholes Bill #2 in February.

The legislation, designed to restore fairness and create a level playing field for employees, amount to the biggest changes to workplace laws in 25 years.

'These improvements are the result of years of campaigning by union members,' David said. 'Change like this isn't just handed over. It takes a lot of repeated effort to get laws which give working people fair wages, secure jobs, and better working conditions.'

IEU members played a central role in advocating for these changes, sharing their powerful stories with politicians, participating in Senate hearings, and engaging with the media to highlight necessary reforms in schools, pre-schools, and kindergartens.

Tasmanian Abbey Butler, now one of the newest additions to the IEU Victoria Tasmania staff (see page 4) was one of the Reps who ventured to Canberra to inform parliamentarians. As reported in the Term 4 edition of *The Point* last year, Abbey made a submission about the importance of Reps/delegates to workplace rights. Those rights are now about to become enshrined in law.

One of the key provisions of the new laws is the federal 'right to disconnect' set to take effect later this year (see the story on the previous page). This will offer overworked school staff the right to refuse monitoring, reading, or responding to employer or work-related contact after hours or on weekends, helping to address workload pressures in schools.

Last year, the Senate Select Committee on Work and Care drew attention to

'availability creep' where employees are increasingly expected to complete work outside of work hours.

Smartphones have made it easier for managers to contact workers at any time and the shift to remote working during the COVID pandemic further eroded boundaries between work and personal life.

According to a 2022 report by the Centre for Future Work, 71% of workers surveyed had 'worked outside their scheduled work hours often due to overwork or pressure from managers'.

This led to increased tiredness, stress or anxiety for about one-third of workers surveyed, disrupted relationships and personal lives for more than one-quarter, and lower job motivation and satisfaction for around one-fifth.

The Centre's most recent annual *Go Home on Time Day* survey revealed the average Australian worker performed 280 hours of unpaid time per year, worth \$130 billion in annual lost incomes.

Parliamentary inquiries have highlighted the negative consequences of working outside scheduled hours for mental and physical health, productivity, and turnover.

Availability creep has led to significant unpaid overtime which 'takes workers away from a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'.

Jim Stanford, economist, and director of the Centre for Future Work says opponents of the right to disconnect misunderstand the nature of work.

'A proper understanding of

productivity recognises that work is a valuable input and must be treated as such, by encouraging its prudent, efficient use.

'That is exactly opposite to the old-school assumptions of Mr Dutton and other boomer critics, who devalue and degrade work – to the point of assuming workers must be available to work for free, even on evenings and weekends.

'That not only undermines productivity. It undermines quality of life – which, after all, is the whole point of the economy.'

### Changing Loopholes #2 – Key changes at a glance:

#### Gig economy

Part two of the Closing Loopholes Bill includes a raft of changes that will extend minimum working rights and protections to gig economy workers.

The Bill will allow individuals and organisations to apply to the Fair Work Commission for orders for minimum standards, including on pay, penalty rates, superannuation, payment terms, record-keeping, insurance, and deactivation.

#### Casual rights

The Bill includes reforms that introduce a common-sense definition of casual employment and makes it easier for casuals to convert to full-time work if they choose. Casuals who work full-time hours would be able to access leave entitlements and guaranteed hours if they change their employment status.

#### Intractable bargaining

The first tranche of Closing Loophole

changes in 2022 allowed the Fair Work Commission to arbitrate intractable bargaining disputes so unions could win pay rises without reaching a new agreement with an employer.

Late in 2023, the new laws were amended so the terms of an arbitrated outcome 'must be not less favourable to each' employee and union covered by an existing workplace pay deal.

#### Right of entry

Currently, union officials can visit workplaces with 24 hours' notice to check for any breaches of the *Fair Work Act*. The Fair Work Commission can also waive this notice if there are worries about documents being destroyed.

The new Bill adds another reason to waive the 24 hours' notice. If the Fair Work Commission believes a union member at the workplace is being underpaid, they can skip the 24 hours' notice requirement.



### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

## Procedural fairness in workplace investigations

Your union can, if necessary, challenge unfair processes during workplace investigations.

The general rule is that employers should apply procedural fairness during any investigation process.

Where this is not the case, the union can challenge this either through clauses in Enterprise Agreements which mandate procedural fairness, or in schools without such clauses through unfair dismissal or general protections proceedings.

There are four main elements to procedural fairness.

**The right to know the case one has to meet:** this means that you must be informed about the case against you. In situations where limited information is given to you about allegations, you can write to the employer to get further information stating the exact details of the case against you. In an investigation, the information that the employer intends to rely on should be put to you. It is vital that you contact the IEU as soon as you

receive any information about a possible investigation. The sooner we are involved, the more likely the process will run fairly and smoothly.

**The hearing rule:** this means that you must be given a reasonable opportunity to respond and put your case forward. You should be able to put your own evidence forward and to nominate any witnesses that you think should be interviewed. The union can assist with preparing this material and advise you about your options and how to best frame your case. The school should also give you a reasonable amount of time to respond. If they don't, the union can write to the school on your behalf to seek further time so you can consider the allegation and the evidence the school has put to you.

**The rule against bias:** this means that investigators and decision-makers must not prejudge or have a personal interest

in the outcome and must be unbiased in the matter to be decided. For example, the person conducting the investigation cannot be the person who made the complaint against you or a witness in the case.

**The 'no evidence' rule:** this one is at times an issue, because some employers refuse to provide the investigation report or the details of how they arrived at their outcome, often citing student confidentiality as a reason for this. The 'no evidence' rule requires that the decision must be based on logical evidence and that irrelevant information should not be considered. The decision must also be reasonable, meaning that a reasonable person, based on the evidence presented, could reach the same conclusion. If the decision is so unreasonable that no reasonable person could agree with it based on the evidence, it may be subject to challenge.

The union can inquire in situations where an outcome is reached and there is a real question about the veracity of the evidence.

Ultimately, the power of the IEU to agitate for procedural fairness will depend on the circumstances, including what the relevant Enterprise Agreement says and what processes the school has followed. In any event, it is wise to contact us for advice and support even if you are confident that your school is following correct processes.



## INDEPENDENT BARGAINING ROUND-UP

## Ready... Set... Bargain!

The year has started with a bang, with 11 Agreements already approved by the Fair Work Commission in 2024.

With the cost of living biting, a big focus at the bargaining table in Independent schools has been negotiating wage increases for all staff.

Securing workload reduction measures has been key to all negotiations within independent schools. We have had differing levels of success in winning these measures within enforceable Enterprise Agreements rather than within school-based policy. At schools such as **Xavier College**, active sub-branches that have built their strength and capacity have pushed their employer to deliver fundamental changes to address workload issues.

Work for our Education Support Staff continues to focus on delivering improved classification structures that allow for accurate and fair classification and opportunities for further recognition of experience.

**At the table****VICTORIA**

Bargaining at **Ilim College** has yielded an offer placing teachers 2.5% above VGSA rates. Other wins include the removal of unpaid extras, an increase to parental leave, and an increase to the camp allowance to \$150 per night. Workload claims have been addressed in policy, and Consultative Committee provisions have been referenced in the Agreement. Consultation with members is occurring to determine if in-principle agreement can be reached.

At **NECA Education and Careers**, bargaining has been successful and all items other than salary have been finalised. The employer is currently considering its next offer with the current offer of 4% per year deemed unacceptable by the unionised workforce.

The **Braemar College** sub-branch have been developing their employee log of claims for the coming round of bargaining.

With negotiations continuing in February, employees covered under the **Monash Foundation Year** Agreement received an interim salary increase of 4% with six months of back pay included.

The **Camberwell Girls' Grammar School** sub-branch is considering the employer's position on a range of items. Salary increases are currently positioned at 3% per year for three years with a substantial buffer above government rates to take them into the 2026 school year. Small improvements to parental leave have been gained, however concerns around workload remain and the school has not shifted on its excessive co-curricular expectations.

Bargaining for the **Seventh Day Adventist Schools** Multi-Enterprise Agreement commenced late last year. Meetings resumed in late February with the employer group to respond to employee claims.

An interim salary increase of 3% was gained for 2024 at **Kardinia International College**. Bargaining continues, but IEU members are holding firm to their higher salary claim.

**Approved Agreements so far in 2024**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ✓ <b>Xavier College</b>  | ✓ <b>Oakleigh Grammar</b>                            |
| ✓ <b>Lutheran Education (Victorian Schools) Multi Enterprise</b> | ✓ <b>Bayview College Portland</b>                    |
| ✓ <b>Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School</b>                    | ✓ <b>Beaconhills College (teachers)</b>              |
| ✓ <b>The Friends' School (teachers)</b>                          | ✓ <b>Scotch Oakburn College (non-teaching staff)</b> |
| ✓ <b>North-Eastern Montessori School</b>                         | ✓ <b>Fahan School (general staff)</b>                |
|  | ✓ <b>Fahan School (teachers)</b>                     |

At **Korowa Anglican Girls' School** employees have rejected the school's current proposal and sought a revised offer. The employer is drafting a workload policy despite the members' claim to include workload provisions within the Agreement.

Both general staff and teacher bargaining are being finalised at **St Catherine's School** with the draft Agreement going to bargaining Reps and to the IEU for consideration. Members have agreed to the salary offer and to the inclusion of two days of non-attendance time. The Agreement won't contain every workload item that was claimed, but the drafted policies now provide clarity and feedback for the co-curricular policy. Salary increases will be delivered on a positive vote so members will not have to await the approval process at the FWC to gain the financial benefits of the deal.

**TASMANIA**

In late December 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the IEU and **Eastside Lutheran College**. This secures a competitive pay increase back-paid for 6 months for all staff, with bargaining commencing in Term 2. The log of claims will be based on improvements won in the Victorian Lutheran Schools Agreement and additional claims that the sub-branch has raised. Members will shortly receive a survey to gather claim data.

During the approval process for the **Hutchins School** General Staff Agreement,

the FWC questioned why casual staff were not covered by the Agreement. The IEU had flagged this issue during the bargaining process. The employer then withdrew the Agreement and returned to the bargaining table in search of agreement on new clauses including casual staff before recommencing the access period and voting process.

Bargaining at **St Michael's Collegiate** has been intensive with Agreements covering general and childcare staff and teachers being negotiated. The IEU is waiting on the final draft Agreement covering general and childcare staff to ensure that all previously agreed clauses have been included. There is concern that the employer wage offers tabled could be reduced. IEU Reps are seeking greater inclusions within the duties clause of the teacher's Agreement. They want face-to-face teaching time, guaranteed preparation time and a cap on meetings and duties to be included. They are also seeking the establishment of a Consultative Committee to monitor workload and Agreement implementation issues.



## EDUCATION SUPPORT STAFF

## IEU members tell AITSL about the crucial work of ES staff

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has heard first-hand just how important teacher assistants are in schools.

In online forums on February 19 and 20 teachers and teaching assistants provided feedback to help AITSL develop guidelines to support the optimal deployment of teaching assistants as part of Action 21 of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP): *Identify the most effective use of initial teacher education (ITE) students, teaching assistants and other non-teaching staff.*

AITSL was keen to be inclusive about what does and doesn't work for teaching assistants in order to be inclusive and collaborative as they establish the guidelines.

While teachers' ranks have grown by 62% since 1990, the number of Teacher Assistants (TA) has risen by nearly 300% and there are now more than 105,000 assistants employed in Australian schools. The 'average' demographic for this workforce is women aged in their mid-40's with a Certificate III or IV.

AITSL sought input on training, work practices and work which reduces teacher workloads, details of timetabling and work tasks, clarity of TA roles and relevant training.

Asked to contribute at short notice, IEU

members made a strong impact.

IEUA Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall thanked the participants for their involvement, saying, 'IEU members are always so impressive in the way they understand and can articulate the issues. We are extremely grateful that you were able to share your expertise and give of your time to communicate such important messages so clearly.'

The NTWAP was developed to address the national issue of teacher workforce shortages. It emerged following consultation with unions, principal

associations and other education stakeholders in 2022.

The federal IEU consulted with state branches to ensure all relevant cohorts were well represented at the online forum.

The IEU will continue to ensure our members' voices are heard in such forums which help shape education policy, and therefore working conditions for all employees long into the future.



## NDA's are still being overused: report

A new report has confirmed that strict non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) remain the 'default option' for sexual harassment settlements.

The use of non-disclosure agreements in workplace disputes results in sexual harassment and gendered violence remaining hidden.

NDAs enable harassers to continue with impunity and allow employers to hide health and safety risks from their employees, prospective employees, clients and the public.

If we're to end gendered violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, victim-survivors must be empowered to speak out.

The Redfern Legal Centre paper, *Let's Talk About Confidentiality*, has revealed that despite the *Respect@Work* report by the Human Rights Commission issuing guidelines about the use of NDAs a year ago, approximately 75 percent of Australian lawyers working on harassment cases had 'never resolved a sexual harassment complaint without a strict NDA'.

The IEU has backed the campaign against the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for years, and we have run several stories about the issue in *The Point*.

The report's findings underline that more is needed to combat the practice.

Authors Regina Featherstone and Sharmilla Bargon say, 'broad and exhaustive NDAs (being blanket confidentiality and non-disparagement terms) remain the default confidentiality term used by lawyers in workplace sexual harassment settlements in Australia'.

As a result, the 'widespread use of strict NDAs means we continue to know very little about what is

happening with sexual harassment in our workplaces and the impact of recent law reform in curbing perpetrator behaviour'.

Many of the lawyers surveyed considered the agreements 'standard practice', and NDA use was now 'so entrenched that many practitioners do not advise of the option of not having one'.

They said their use became 'concerning when it is adopted as a blanket, standard agreement, and victim-survivors are denied true choice'.

The *Respect@Work* report guidelines state that NDAs 'should not be seen as standard terms in workplace sexual harassment settlement agreements'.

The six-point guidelines state that the complainant should have access to independent support or advice, and the scope and duration of the agreement should be as limited as possible.

Featherstone and Bargon said their research showed the guidelines 'have had limited effect in addressing the misuse of NDAs'.

In the UK, *Can't Buy My Silence* (CMBS) anti-NDA campaigners have urged the legal profession to support legislative reform to stop the abuse of non-disclosure agreements.

CMBS wants the UK government to expand the law which bans NDAs in cases of harassment, sexism, bullying and discrimination to the entire workforce.

Jennifer Robinson, co-author of the book, *How Many More Women? Exposing how the law silences women* wrote the foreword to *Let's Talk*

*About Confidentiality*. She says, 'we need an approach to NDAs which better protects freedom of speech and the public interest in employees being able to speak out about sexual harassment and gender-based violence – and ensures that women are not being unfairly silenced'.

'How can those that misuse their power be held accountable if they are protected by a legally enforced culture of silence that enables impunity?' Robinson asks. 'How can there be a cultural shift if we cannot know or learn about how the most powerful operate?'

In July 2022, it was announced that Victoria would be the first Australian jurisdiction to introduce legislation which prohibits the use of NDAs in workplace sexual harassment cases.

However, the Victorian Government said 'significant further work' was required before any legislative amendments could be made to regulate NDAs.

Those laws can't come soon enough.

**You can sign the Victorian Trades Hall petition against the misuse of NDAs at: [weareunion.org.au/end\\_ndas](http://weareunion.org.au/end_ndas)**

## EDUCATION SUPPORT STAFF

### Extended visits the answer to accessing overworked members

We have all noticed the intensification of work in schools across Tasmania and Victoria. For the IEU, it means trying to engage with staff during recess or lunchtime isn't as effective as it used to be.

Staff are so busy that they run into the staffroom, bolt down a drink and something to eat and run out to duty (hopefully managing a toilet break on the way out). In response, we have trialled extended visits to increase our capacity to have meaningful conversations with staff.

We found this approach has many benefits. In secondary schools or larger primary schools, we can organise an extended morning visit so staff can find time for a chat if they have spare periods between student breaks, and potentially follow this with a sub-branch meeting at the end of the day.

In smaller primary schools we often request to support staff from the beginning of lunch and continue through to when part-time staff finish. This means staff can catch up with us as they finish work.

Extended visits mean we can have more meaningful conversations and go deeper into issues that affect support staff. That enables us to give members a better understanding of the terms and conditions they work under and some of the legal issues they need to be aware of, such as the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

**We want to hear from you to organise one of these visits! Contact your school's Organiser or our Education Support Staff Officer Tracey Spiel via [tspiel@ieuvictas.org.au](mailto:tspiel@ieuvictas.org.au)**

## EDUCATION SUPPORT STAFF

### The Reportable Conduct Scheme does not discriminate – Education Support Staff are also in the spotlight

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) has been with us since the middle of 2017, with a similar scheme coming into effect this year in Tasmania.

the RCS is patchy at best.

When we ask ES members if they've been briefed about reportable conduct, they invariably refer to Mandatory Reporting – a completely different beast!

An allegation made under the RCS can lead to a lengthy time under investigation, a possible stand-down and an inability to work in schools if a finding affects your eligibility to hold a Working With Children Check.

We support all our members through this process, but foreknowledge of this scheme is key – so please take the time to read the

other articles about the RCS in this edition.

We encourage you to speak to your Rep or Organiser about arranging a briefing about the RCS for all staff, support staff included.

And speak to your colleagues and encourage them to join the union – we welcome all support staff at IEU sessions, but we are unable to support any non-members who find themselves a target of an allegation.

Similarly, if a worker joins the union once an allegation is made, it's too late. We will at best be able to provide limited

phone advice, and we have heard horrific stories about the legal costs borne by non-members defending themselves against an allegation. As a full member you will have our expert resources marshalled to assist you, at no cost!

Be aware. Be protected.

**IEU officials can on request run in-school presentations on the key issues all staff should know about the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Contact your Organiser or the IEU office for details.**



## IEUA says AI Framework needs tweaks

The federal IEU has welcomed the new Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools praising its focus on 'education outcomes, AI ethical practices, equity and inclusion and recognition of teacher subject expertise'.

It has expressed concerns, however, about three key areas neglected by the Framework:

- ongoing consultation with the teaching profession and their unions
- the need for comprehensive workload impact assessments
- the commercial encroachment of private AI providers in education.

The IEU has highlighted these issues with government and policy makers, including in its submission to the AI in schools taskforce inquiry held last year, and wants them considered in the first annual review of the Framework, due later this year.

'The voice of the teaching profession must be paramount to support the use of AI tools to serve students and the education workforce and help guard against inherent AI risks,' said IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes.

'New AI compliance tasks and strategies deployed by schools to police academic integrity must not fall on already over-burdened teachers.'

And he says the Framework should 'explicitly mandate that employees have adequate release time to attend AI-related professional training during standard work hours'.

## BACCHUS MARSH GRAMMAR

### Consultation builds an educational windfall

A constructive relationship between the IEU and school leadership has helped Bacchus Marsh Grammar grow from 300 students on a single site in 1998 to 3600 and four campuses in 2024.

Retiring long-time Principal Andrew Neal has always engaged in respectful negotiations with the IEU.

Andrew has also had a collaborative working relationship with the IEU through his involvement as a board member of the Centre for Strategic Education, a professional development organisation established by the IEU in partnership with members in Independent schools focussed on 'leading educational thinking and practice'.

'I have been involved in at least four bargaining rounds (I have lost count) with various IEU Reps from David Brear to Earl James,' Andrew told The Point. 'While we have had our disagreements, I entirely respect their professionalism and their desire to not only get the

best deal for their members but to support a flourishing independent school sector.'

Salaries at BMG are higher than in government and Catholic schools and clauses of particular pride in the school's Agreement include protection for employees working outdoors in excessive heat and additional leave for support staff.

IEU Rep Duncan Malcolm says Andrew 'has certainly taken this school from a small regional school to one that has a reputation which is known far and wide'.

'I was on a flight from Uluru and got talking to the flight attendant... and when she heard I was at BMG she quizzed me on it for her own children!'

Duncan says Andrew has always shown a compassionate side.

'Of course, we are all hoping

that the next EBA negotiations give us all a well-deserved double digit pay rise so, Mr Neal, if you are listening... you know what your final gift to us all could be!'

The BMG board conveyed its 'heartfelt thanks to Andrew for his enormous contribution and leadership' as BMG's Principal, and for his 'service to education generally' over his 38-year career.

IEU General Secretary David Brear acknowledged Andrew's support of the union's pre-service teaching program and praised the outgoing school-builder 'for his long service to the school community and for his willingness to work through issues affecting both individuals and groups of staff'.

## WORKLOAD

### Korowa timetabler tackles burn out

Educator workload is an issue at Korowa Anglican Girls' School, as it is in all schools. But staff and leadership, led by timetabler (and IEU member) Alisha Brown, have come up with what could be a ground-breaking response.

They are trialling a year-long system whereby once per fortnight, every full-time senior school teacher gets the first two periods and the last two periods free of duties. During this time they are to be considered 'unavailable' and have no obligation to attend the workplace.

That's two blocks of free time for teachers to use as they wish. Off-campus or on. No questions asked.

The trial is being rolled out in the senior school first. Stage 2 will occur in the junior school; Stage 3 will cover part-time employees and Stage 4 general staff.

The initiative commenced after a review of all full-time teacher timetables, which might be an initiative other schools can consider to combat workload pressures and staff burn out.

HR Director Susan Coates worked closely with Alisha to devise the trial. She answered our queries about how this new initiative came about and how it will work.

#### What prompted the idea to 'free up' teachers' timetables?

Korowa is invested in working with our staff to provide flexibility in the workplace where possible. Due to the nature of teaching and the restrictions in the school day such as the timetable, student supervision and duty of care, there are limits to the flexibility available to a teacher. As a trial in 2024, we have allocated two periods (doubles where possible) to full-time senior school teachers where they

don't need to be on site. They are free to arrive late or leave early on these days.

For junior school teachers, the current timetable restricts this – but further exploration of this initiative will try to free up a single or double period each week for junior school teachers. At present, all junior school teachers have been allocated one period per fortnight during period six. However, it is the school's aim to make the distribution of 'unavailables' as equitable as possible in future timetables.

#### What was involved in moving from a concept to a trial?

Once the timetable was completed, a review of all full-time teacher timetables was undertaken to address flexibility in the timetable cycle. An announcement to staff was made to explain the initiative and to provide a forum for discussion.

#### Have there been any unseen negative consequences so far?

Overall, the consequences have been minimal. The disparity between senior school and junior school is an ongoing cause for concern which the Principal, Head of Junior School and School Operations Coordinator are continuing to work on.

#### How have teachers responded?

Teachers have responded very positively, expressing gratitude and appreciation to the Principal for the trial. Junior school teachers have expressed their desire to

have the same flexibility as their senior school counterparts.

#### What were some of the barriers making the implementation difficult?

At Korowa, our Senior School Mentor groups (homeroom) occur after recess, making it easier for Senior School teachers to have unavailable periods scheduled for Period 1 and 2 and/or Period 5 and 6. In addition, teachers are expected to be on site for the commencement of recess and not leave the grounds until the end of lunchtime. This ensures that we have adequate staff onsite for yard duties and emergency yard duty covers.

Covers for emergency classes (extras) are also timetabled and ensure that a reasonable number of teachers are available at all times throughout the day. This was factored in when allocating the unavailable times.

#### Stage 1 is for full-time secondary teachers. Why not start with part-timers?

Phase 1 has a focus on full-time teachers as they are on site Monday to Friday for full days and have limited time at the end of each day to undertake personal administration compared to part-time teachers. Part-time teachers already have a level of flexibility in their working week due to the nature of their employment and timetables.

#### What makes it hard to implement for junior school teachers?

In the junior school, it is preferred that literacy and numeracy classes occur in periods one and two, which limits the ability to allocate unavailables for classroom teachers at this time. Classroom teachers take their release time when specialist classes such as PE, Art, Languages and Music are run. As Korowa specialist teachers work across both the junior and senior school, there are limits to the number of classes that can be timetabled in the junior school in periods 5 and 6.

#### Could this solution actually place more pressure on teachers to perform the same work in less time?

We trust our teachers to manage their workload in a way that best suits their needs. Should they prefer to work at home during these times or work at school, that is an option they can make for themselves. The purpose of 'unavailables' is not to take away planning time, but to provide some flexibility about how staff choose to use their planning time in a way that best suits the individual.

#### What about meeting days? Are these off-limits?

All periods marked as unavailable fall on non-meeting days and teaching staff are expected to attend all relevant meetings as per normal school procedure.





## BACCHUS MARSH GRAMMAR

# The Principal, Andrew A. Neal

For someone now recognised as a model educator, Andrew Neal's career started a long way from the classroom!

### Where had you worked and studied before you came to Bacchus Marsh Grammar?

I completed an Art (Hons) degree majoring in geography at Melbourne University and then worked as a graduate trainee in the Victorian public service in 1983. I spent a number of years working in health and water resources before I did my Dip Ed. at Monash University. In 1988 I commenced teaching at Trinity Grammar in Kew. I was at Trinity for just over 10 years as Director of Curriculum and as a member of the school executive. I started at Bacchus Marsh Grammar in the middle of 1998.

### What were your main challenges when you took over as Principal?

Bacchus Marsh Grammar was fairly run-down at that point having suffered a period of uncertain funding. I took over a

school that was effectively broke and with declining enrolments. The school had also just been through a period of considerable internal disruption. Looking back, to be frank, I don't know why I took the job! My only excuse is that I was relatively young. Because the school was not in good shape it was clear the primary task was to build a program that would attract enrolments.

### What are the main challenges you faced as Principal recently?

COVID was a particularly difficult period for all parts of our community. I think the real challenge in schools at the moment comes from the changing role of schools in society. Some like to get stuck into schools for their perceived failings, however, the reality is that they are increasingly the centre of most communities.

Not only are we required to teach

but we are also required to minister to the welfare and wellbeing of whole communities. This has become more pronounced with the disintegration of other organisations which used to be integral to the community flourishing.

### What were some of the most satisfying achievements of your tenure?

Well, still being here, in a game which is increasingly marked by short tenure and unhappy departures.

More significantly the fact that the school has become such a large and diverse community. We have a significant proportion of families at the school who are first generation Australians. The degree to which they are committed to the education of their children is humbling.

In terms of the physical nature of the school, the establishment of a second

campus with over 1000 students has been a major achievement. The development I am most proud of is our environmental centre located at Staughton Vale about 20 minutes from the main campus. Here students have the capacity to engage in activities that get their hands dirty in a way that has disappeared in urban life. Having students understand the land and having a bond to it is a behaviour that will be of enormous value to them and all of us in the years to come.



## BACCHUS MARSH GRAMMAR

# The IEU Rep: Duncan Malcolm

Duncan is a born Rep, a self-described 'leftie' always asking questions who wants every student to get an opportunity to learn. Here, he speaks about the challenges of Victorian weather, the COVID years and keeping things personal in a big, growing school.

### How did you come to work at Bacchus Marsh Grammar (BMG) and become the IEU Rep there?

Having left the UK in Aug 2017 – because of Brexit – I initially headed 'down under' to Perth, my favourite area. Sorry Victoria, while you may have the best coffee, the weather is too good over there. Finding an ongoing position there wasn't easy and so I applied to any job anywhere in the country. I always used to joke that I would work anywhere apart from Sydney or Melbourne and... Well, the cards which were dealt decided that Melbourne would be the winner!

The opportunity came up at BMG and I remember submitting my application whilst seated at a café in Perth on a sunny winter's day (take note Victoria!). One month later I was interviewed via Zoom and I was appointed.

I became the IEU Rep at BMG by chance. I was a school Rep in the UK, but in a strange position because I also occupied a middle leadership role. I had promised to keep my head down and my opinions to myself when I started at BMG. However, that didn't last long, and I suppose I was elected by virtue of having always asked questions and spoken up – something that is needed

to aid any good employer-employee relationship. I have often been told that I say what many are thinking.

### What were the biggest challenges as a teacher and Rep when you first started, and now?

I think the biggest challenge as a teacher and Rep when I started was the sudden onset of COVID and the need to adopt a totally new way of working. It wasn't easy for anyone. Teachers need support, as do students when working in a high-pressured environment and during the 'COVID Years' we had more IEU meetings just to stay connected and check in with each other.

As for now, we all know that the biggest challenge is the financial situation. It is hitting us all hard and ensuring that wages and conditions do not take a backwards step is really on everyone's mind. I do worry that some teachers will see membership cancellation as way to enact savings – which will be detrimental should they need advice and help at any point in the future. Please don't abandon your membership! We want you to be protected and have the support of the IEU should you ever need us.

### What unique challenges does a fast-growing school present for staff and unionists?

The biggest challenge, in my view, is that with rapid growth people will no longer have the human interaction and concern for each other that comes with small schools. In the UK I was in a school of 36.7 FTE members of staff – now I am in one of the biggest schools in Victoria with over 3000 students and hundreds of staff!

Communication between all stakeholders is the key to success. I urge all members to keep the social interactions of our profession alive – your colleagues need a simple 'hello' as much as anyone else in a school. When we lose that human touch with each other, we risk losing it with students – we are a caring profession after all.

Being a unionist, for me at least, means helping our members, encouraging others to join – but also reaching out to non-members when we can. If they see how we can help each other in times of strife they will often come on board later.

### What are your hopes for the future of your school and for the staff there?

Every member wishes their students to achieve their personal best. Every member wishes to see their contributions continued to be valued and recognised for the hard work which they put in.

Negotiations will start next year for the new Enterprise Agreement, and I fear that these will be more difficult than was previously the case, given the economic situation at present. I may or may not be part of that, that all depends on the membership at BMG. At least Rep tenures are longer than those of an Australian PM!

I would hope that our school will continue to grow in popularity and that its enrolments will continue to match those of many older and more expensive independent schools in Victoria. I would also like to think that we will continue to provide an excellent education at a much cheaper cost than other schools for all in the west of Melbourne.

As a 'leftie' I have always believed that lack of money should not preclude any student from having a good education and the means to achieving their individual goals. That is one of my guiding tenets.



## STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

# Neurodivergent educators are a resource, not a burden

One in five students are neurodivergent – they have a brain that works differently from the average or ‘neurotypical’ person – and admirably, schools are beginning to adapt for their needs.

But while the focus on neurodivergent students is commendable, what about staff? Your colleagues? How many of them are neurodivergent? Are you aware of the challenges they face? What they find difficult? Do you know how their ways of looking at things are unique and useful?

Teacher and IEU member Natanya Thrift says in too many schools we are more compassionate and enlightened about neurodivergent students than staff whose brains are also wired differently.

‘Often the things that most people find easy I find hard,’ Natanya says. ‘Yet, if you were to need me to create, analyse or edit a great deal of data, I find that easier and more satisfying than many people.’

She cites the example of organising a sports event involving 80 students, 13 staff and many different events in many categories. ‘I’ll do that. I’ll make it visual; it will work.’ She’s probably better at it, and much happier to take on the challenge, than the majority of her colleagues.

But for Natanya and other neurodivergent educators, the ‘simplest’ things are often the hardest.

Natanya was diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in 2014 and with level 2 autism in late January this year. And she’s bravely speaking to *The Point* because she doesn’t want other educators to go through what she did to get this diagnosis.

Natanya suffered burnout in her previous teaching role; left the profession; struggled in a new job; and eventually chose to take three months off work. Only then did disability services help her get the professional evaluation she needed.

Being diagnosed autistic as an adult is a ‘double-edged sword’ with dramatic positives and negatives, Natanya says.

‘It’s validating, it empowers you, it’s revealing and helpful in giving me a language to find specific strategies to be more productive.’

Neuropsychological tests uncovered vital information about how her brain works – she now recognises, for example, that once she’s on a track she’s laid out it is very hard for her to deviate from it.

‘I am only beginning the process of understanding how to reduce my cognitive load. While I’ve tried different strategies for a morning routine many times, I now know that a detailed, step-by-step routine from waking to stepping

out the door on a school day is the most effective way to keep stress levels down before the work day even begins.’

Without such structure there is a ‘direct impact on her productivity’.

Another important recent learning for Natanya occurred after she attended a ‘self-advocacy’ presentation at the Victorian ADHD Conference in 2023.

Natanya now knows to ask for all her classes to be held in the same room rather than being spread across three locations. Little things like that make a big difference to her brain, and hence her output as an educator.

Learning such ‘practical strategies’ for coping and thriving mean the diagnosis was a blessing.

Less welcome was the emotional impact of having her condition confirmed. Natanya was distressed by seeing a fellow teacher snigger and whisper about another staff member who ‘clearly thinks in a different way’ and she believes may also be neurodivergent.

‘I think ‘that’s how they’ll react to things I say or do...’

It uses up a lot of energy to constantly tell yourself not to care about such nastiness, to ‘not worry about what other people think’.

‘Friends and family have to hold me up when I go through that. It takes a toll on them as well.’

Having gone through such a difficult journey, Natanya is extremely thankful for the support and understanding she’s receiving from leadership at her new school and she is keen to help others who may not realise they are neurodivergent. Being excluded for being ‘quirky’ or thinking in a different way is workplace bullying, pure and simple. There’s too much of it and she feels a lot of it could be avoided with a little education.

It’s why she put her name to this article despite concerns about being singled out for being different, and the exclusion it might bring.

‘It’s taken me years to get the support I needed. If there’s any way I can help someone else avoid that, it’s worthwhile. I don’t recommend my pathway!’

‘My job is to focus on students, I don’t have a position of leadership, I don’t have a responsibility for this entire area – the school does. But I do feel I have a role to play...’

That’s why Natanya says if you feel you may be neurodivergent, talk to the

experts. Go to your GP and get a referral to a psychiatrist. Make sure you have open conversations with people you love and trust about your potential condition. And in the meantime, consider joining the Neurodivergent Educators Australia Facebook group for people who work in the education sector in Australia ‘who are neurodivergent or suspect they may be’.

It has 2900 members.

Natanya finds that number revealing, a stunning reminder that these conditions apply to so many of our educators.

She says the NEA group offers ‘solutions, suggestions, and peer support’, helps normalise her condition and reminds her that she isn’t alone.

The problem is that to join the group you have to have an inkling that you may be neurodivergent. That’s another reason Natanya wanted to contribute to this article – to help raise awareness of neurodivergence and push for it to be part of the education and professional development of teachers.

‘There is so much focus put on the mental wellbeing of students but if your teachers don’t have good wellbeing and emotional intelligence... if the teacher is dysregulated emotionally, students won’t get the best outcome.’

Natanya is sympathetic towards people who struggle with her. She knows her ‘rigidity’ on some matters ‘pisses people off’. She accepts it when she’s told she can be ‘hard to read’.

But she feels lucky with her current leadership, and knows it isn’t necessarily the norm.

How many employees feel they can go to their leadership and tell them about neurodivergent diagnoses? Natanya says she feared she’d lose her job if she told a previous employer that she had ADHD.

But after two and a half years, she finally discussed her condition with her school and the response was, ‘I wish you could have told us sooner’. They may have known how to approach things differently.

She believes adding mention of neurodivergent educators in professional development would help all staff. ‘Throw a line in there about the percentage of colleagues likely to be neurodivergent. We’re in education, after all; it’s all about things being brought to your awareness. We could start by encouraging teachers to embrace difference.’

She bases this in part on her experience

with a neurodivergent student. ‘Ordinarily his behaviour would have irked me. But the day I understood and accepted his quirks I realised I had accepted them in myself.’

Natanya is hopeful about the future for neurodivergent educators, in large part because of the attitude of students.

She remembers a Year 11 psychology class in 2019 where a student said, ‘Miss, there isn’t such a stigma around mental health any more. We just don’t think like that.’

Many educators now report the acceptance of younger people for different levels of mental capacity.

Natanya, a PE teacher, still struggles at work because of her neurodivergence. She has a high degree of noise sensitivity and wears noise dampening earbuds to decrease her anxiety.

‘It can be a real challenge... I struggle a lot at different times.’

There are times when her nervous system ‘just says no’ and she has no choice but to ride out the distress. Last year she had ‘complete meltdown, hyperventilating under her desk’.

It took her ‘time, therapy, and a lot of positive self-talk’ to get through the feelings of humiliation around such tough times. Not to mention the thoughtful understanding of a couple of key staff members who were ‘so incredibly supportive’.

But she now knows how to process the emotion involved with such temporary challenges, and she knows she can get through them. With the support of enlightened leadership, she knows she can carry on and make a strong contribution to her school and her students.

There might be easier jobs than teaching for Natanya, but she fights on because of one simple phrase: ‘I love what I do’.

Just like so many other teachers.

**IEU LEARNING HUB**

**Browse the catalogue at [ieuvictas.org.au/webinars](https://ieuvictas.org.au/webinars)**

Have you checked out the IEU Learning Hub? Our free member-only professional development webinars are offered live or on-demand and cover a huge range of topics. Our 2024 program includes several webinars for supporting students with diverse learning needs, including ASD.



**STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY**

# Benefits of neurodiverse teachers

Leaders should consider the numerous strengths that can exist alongside and outweigh the challenges of neurodiversity.

Leaders who foster positive inclusive attitudes will also facilitate strategic planning that utilises the particular talents of each member of staff.

Doctoral Researcher Simon Preston MBA says students benefit immensely 'when their schools and classrooms reflect the rich tapestry of human diversity'. He says neurodivergent teachers bring 'a unique perspective and add tremendous value to education'.

'Neurodivergent individuals offer a fresh approach to teaching that can create thriving, inclusive learning environments. In a truly inclusive education system, teachers from all backgrounds, including neurodivergent teachers, play a vital role in shaping the minds of future generations.'

Beth Radulski and Nyssa Jaworowski from La Trobe University say that 'neurodiversity is the next frontier'.

'The concept of 'assuming diversity as the default', while not revolutionary itself, certainly represents a huge cultural shift...'

**What is Neurodiversity? (structurallearning.com)**

The term Neurodiversity indicates the viewpoint that brain differences are normal and acceptable, rather than deficits. In other words, the natural

neurological difference between how a person's brain functions and processes information represents neurodiversity.

Being neurodivergent means having a different brain structure, chemistry, and/or functioning than what is considered normal or typical. This may mean having ADHD, autism, dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome, learning differences and more which are included in the umbrella of neurodiversity. All these can lead to often challenging differences in how one processes information or behaves socially.

Those who identify as being neurodivergent often find ways to make their lifestyles work for them, using strategies like alternate thinking styles, recognising and embracing their unique skills and strengths instead of only focusing on potential limitations.

**Specific benefits of neurodivergent educators: (theadteacher.com)****1. Unconventional Thinking:**

Neurodivergent teachers often have alternative ways of thinking, perceiving, and problem-solving. This distinct perspective can be instrumental in challenging the status quo and promoting innovative teaching methods.

**2. Empathy and Sensitivity:**

Neurodivergent teachers often possess a heightened sense of empathy and

sensitivity towards students' emotional needs. Having experienced their unique struggles and challenges, they can relate to students who face similar difficulties.

**3. Advocacy and Understanding:**

Neurodivergent teachers serve as powerful advocates for their students. They often possess first-hand knowledge of the support and adjustments that neurodivergent individuals require to unlock their full potential.

**4. Shattering Stereotypes and Stigmas:**

By being visible in the education system, neurodivergent teachers challenge stereotypes and diminish stigmas associated with neurological differences. Their presence alone helps to dispel misconceptions about the capabilities of neurodivergent individuals.

**How to be encouraging of neurodiversity at your school**

- Have a truly inclusive ethos, in which neurodiverse pupils and adults are welcomed equally
- Ensure you have in place genuinely supportive line management systems where people feel comfortable disclosing their neurodiversity
- Be prepared to provide extra time and accessible technology such as screen readers and voice activated dictation, which might be beneficial

to staff with dyslexia

- Provide support and be flexible with prioritising and meeting deadlines if you have staff with ADHD or dyspraxia (a condition affecting physical co-ordination)
- Adjust your socialising expectations and consider providing a quiet space as an alternative to the staffroom for staff with autism to decompress when needed.

**Resources:**

- **Neurodiverse Educators Australia Facebook group:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/neurodivergenteducatorsaustralia>
- **The Autistic School Staff Project** has published *Amazing Autistic Teachers - how to learn from them.* <https://autisticschoolstaffproject.com>
- **Learning from Autistic teachers - How to Be a Neurodiversity-Inclusive School** (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2021)
- **The Neuroteachers YouTube channel** offers advice and guidance for both neurodiverse pupils and staff from the perspective of neurodiverse teachers: [www.youtube.com/@neuroteachers](http://www.youtube.com/@neuroteachers)

**OHS**

## Health and Safety Reps – more powerful than you think

Elected Health and Safety Representatives in Victoria and Tasmania have legislated powers and rights to represent the safety concerns of workers. If your workplace doesn't have an HSR, you're without a crucial voice for safety.

**A** HSR has no legal duty to resolve issues, as that responsibility sits with the employer. However the HSR has the right to be consulted about the way the employer identifies and controls hazards within the workplace, as well as powers to compel action on identified health and safety hazards.

**Can't get access to training?**

Employers must allow HSRs to attend an approved training course of their choice and pay all costs. The IEU is an approved provider of HSR training.

**No Health and Safety Committee at your school?**

The HSR can insist on the establishment of a Health and Safety Committee, at least half of the members of which should be employees.

**Employer claims they can't provide information to a HSR because it's confidential?**

HSRs have the right to see all information an employer has about a hazard (apart from medical records without the employee's consent). Examples of information which an HSR might want to access include camp supervision rosters, safety escalation plans for violent students, risk assessments conducted by external safety consultants, and workplace hazard registers.

**Is there a reported hazard still not being addressed despite efforts by the HSR to consult with their employer?**

An HSR can issue a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN) citing the suspected breach of safety law and requiring this be rectified within the specified time frame. If the employer fails to comply or they dispute the PIN,

WorkSafe will attend to determine the matter. In the case of serious hazards, a PIN can require that work affected by the hazard ceases.

**The HSR has no way of communicating easily with all members of the work group?**

Employers must provide facilities and assistance to the HSR to enable them to perform their role. That includes an OHS notice board, access to an all-staff email list, and paid time away from duties to perform the role.

**WorkSafe visiting but the employer won't release the HSR?**

HSRs have the power to accompany a WorkSafe inspector and are entitled to receive a copy of the WorkSafe entry report following a visit.

**An employer makes and communicates decisions about health and safety without consulting the HSR?**

Employers must consult with HSRs and provide information to HSRs a reasonable time *before* providing it to employees and must consider the HSR's view about the matter before making a decision.

**So, if your workplace does not have a properly elected HSR, you're missing out.**

Speak to your IEU organiser about how to get an HSR elected.

HSRs can use their entitlement to training by attending training at the IEU, either a 5-day Initial Training Course or 1-day Refresher Course. See the IEU website for dates and details.

## Reportable Conduct Scheme

### REPORTABLE CONDUCT CRISIS

## The human cost of the RCS

'I was totally destroyed. This will not go away unless it is fixed; it will destroy other people...'

Chris\* is a highly respected veteran educator who has worked for decades as a teacher, vice principal and Principal. They were the victim of 'completely fanciful' accusations which became a Reportable Conduct charge that dragged on for nearly 12 months.

Despite being completely exonerated – 'totally innocent, no case to answer' – Chris feels shattered by the experience. It was 'a debacle... involving completely utterly false claims' that ruined their life.

They are now on prescription medication to sleep and deal with the 'dark places' the ordeal has taken them. They lost their part-time job; they lost money; they lost a voluntary role dispensing priceless free mentorship to a needy school.

They lost their health.

'I held on to my reputation very strongly; I feel now that it is just totally wrecked. It was heartbreaking. I'm anxious, I'm sad. My blood pressure has gone through the roof. I just really lack confidence, I lack self-esteem. I don't want to go to social occasions, I force myself because of my partner...

'I'm not one to rush into a bushfire in a nylon shirt, I've dealt with a lot of difficult situations in my time in schools. But this has rocked me. I'm demoralised. I'm bewildered, overwhelmed. I've struggled to do simple tasks and had panic attacks. And so much of it was preventable...'

'I loved teaching and schools were my happy place,' Chris says of their career prior to the allegation.

Chris was a protector of children all their career, all their life.

'I acknowledge and respect that anyone

can make an allegation and it must be investigated.' But Chris was baffled by the allegations, then shocked when they changed during the process.

'I was given the student's name and the year of the incident, nothing more.'

Chris is at pains to praise the efforts of the investigator and employer representative. But they say the former was overloaded with cases and the latter was 'out of his depth' dealing with the case on top of all his other responsibilities.

In the 1970s, Chris risked it all to report a priest behaving inappropriately with primary school kids. That priest was later jailed for 8 years for sexual offences and is now considered one of the 10 worst offenders in Victorian history, but Chris's concerns at the time were 'completely dismissed'. Chris left that school, and for a time, left education.

This latest ordeal brought back all that trauma.

'The whole thing of not being believed, of not being trusted. I thought I'd got over it, but this brought it all back.'

There just isn't enough care for people in Chris's position.

They were initially offered a single counselling session. Later, after their distress became too pronounced to be ignored, there were more. But throughout the entire process, Chris – and the IEU – had to continually push to get any information, to get any support.

After an initial three-hour meeting, it was six months before they received the letter clearing their name.

As a result of the investigation, their VIT registration was cancelled, and after three calls over two years, is still not

reinstated. At the end of it all, they were asked to keep the case confidential – the IEU said no, that is not necessary.

'I cannot thank the union enough; they were just brilliant. I don't know how I would have coped without them. I think everyone should be in the union.'

#### What needs to change

Chris doesn't want others to go through what they have 'for no reason'.

'They've got to get it right... they need to work smarter. There has to be a better way...'

'It's too much of a 'tick the boxes' process which doesn't address the problem the way it should.'

Chris knows of two younger people in similar positions. They will not submit complaints about their treatment because they feel their career would be jeopardised.

'What about a poor CRT just out of college? They'd be wrecked. They'd have no wage while they were investigated. Their career would be destroyed.'

Chris says employer organisations must get more people to work RCS cases; it will speed up the process and save them money in the long run, because they won't have teachers on full pay sitting at home while replacements take classes.

'The cost is unbelievable... and the stress it is putting on principals is huge. All these cases are so disruptive to schools and we don't have enough teachers as it is – to have to pay another person is crazy. I don't see why my case couldn't have been handled a lot quicker.'

'They need to get the initial allegation right, not change them during the process. They need to hire someone to do the first

interview before they are sending out letters charging people and standing them down from teaching.'

Chris says there is also not enough support for the accused.

'I had to research my own support... I was lucky I had someone from the IEU to be my support person.'

More resources are required; more support must be offered to educators who are accused; and there needs to be much improved clarity of information about the charges.

When they asked about the long delays in reaching the inevitable verdict, they were told that 'procedural fairness' had to be observed.

'Well procedural fairness belongs to me as well – 12 months waiting was not fair.'

Chris also says accused educators need someone qualified at the start of the process to explain the legal framework of the allegations and answer basic legal questions about how it will unfold.

'The (employer organisation) is ignoring the elephant in the room. (The RCS process) is ugly, it's difficult, it's embarrassing but it will not go away, it will destroy others...'

'It was the worst time in my life, and it was for nothing.'

**\*Our member's name has been changed to respect their privacy.**

**The IEU employs five in-house lawyers who support our members through these very challenging situations. Please contact the union as soon as possible if any allegation is made against you.**

### REPORTABLE CONDUCT CRISIS

## Tasmania, we hope your reportable conduct scheme is better than Victoria's

The careers and mental health of far too many IEU members are being devastated by unfair allegations made under Victoria's Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS).

Now, a similar scheme is about to start operation in Tasmania, bringing a renewed focus on the need for balance when investigating allegations against educators.

Given the dangers the RCS presents to Victorian members, the union will continue to push for urgent reforms, and inform staff about how to protect themselves.

The IEU wholeheartedly supports robust child safety measures – but unfortunately the Victorian RCS in practice all too often punishes staff without good reason.

Trivial or vexatious allegations against education staff are abounding.

Staff have been cited for restraining a child to stop them running across a road, for accidentally stumbling against a student, for using a raised voice in a noisy classroom. There have also been vexatious reports made against education workers

by aggrieved ex-partners.

Sadly, when the union put out a call to Organisers for case studies about unfair reportable conduct, there was no shortage of horror stories.

Claims of lengthy investigations into unsubstantiated allegations leaving teachers too damaged to return to work; an educator who won a claim at VCAT to get her wrongly cancelled Working With Children Check reinstated, but still couldn't work because of Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) red tape; an employee teaching sexual health lessons who was stood down for a year despite following the curriculum; a member who was reported and stood down for yelling at a student who was stealing from her car; a teacher accused of reportable conduct by a parent of a student who auditioned unsuccessfully for a major part

in a school theatrical production.

Like many educators subjected to this process, that teacher was exonerated of any wrongdoing, but the damage was done. They had been stood down for months, including for the duration of the production, and subjected to incredible stress.

One organiser alone reported having 14 RCS matters running last year. One involved a staff member being accused of failing to prevent ongoing bullying of one student in his class by another. Another involved the investigation of four senior teachers over complaints by students who had already been internally investigated and sanctioned for acts of bullying and serious physical assault against the student that they claimed assaulted them. Another involved the investigation of four senior teachers over their handling of complaints by a group of students against

another student that they had bullied and physically assaulted.

The union outlined its concerns in a detailed submission to a review of the Scheme in late 2022, but the review report is now over seven months overdue – and at time of publication there was no word when it will be delivered. The rights of educators must be recognised in a revamp of this well-intentioned but faulty scheme.

**IEU officials can on request run in-school presentations on the key issues all staff should know about the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Contact your Organiser or the IEU office for details.**



## STUDENTS AND GRADUATES

### From Young Worker's Centre to Union Summer

Madeleine McIntosh says her Union Summer internship was a great opportunity to learn more about the workings of Trades Hall, and to gain insight into a specific union. Here are her impressions of the internship with the IEU.



I heard about Union Summer because I'd signed up to the Young Workers Center mailing list hoping to hear more about their projects. I'm a law student who is interested in potentially pursuing a career in employment law, and the personal advocacy involved in a lot of union work really appealed to me.

I really enjoyed both getting to sit in on a meeting with a new member facing a VIT review and getting to witness a union meeting at a school in Lilydale. Previously, my main insight into the teaching profession was being a student at school, so it was very informative to witness the struggles of the profession.

It was also interesting to learn more about VIT, and the way criminal charges can intersect with a teaching career. Even when a court process might be handled with reference to mental health and rehabilitation, any charge could have significant, damaging impacts on a professional career. Another highlight was getting to witness the supportive culture at the IEU, and work with some really lovely people!

It was interesting and slightly unexpected to see the differences between the public sector and the private sector, and to hear that independent school teachers often face different issues.

It made sense that a school that is essentially a business would present divergent challenges. I was also interested to hear about the practices of some select religious schools. Not knowing much about governmental regulations, I had expected the schools to be more rigorously monitored, particularly given the funding they received.

The Trades Hall training days will also definitely inform my future life. I'm more aware of my rights as an employee and the importance of being part of a union. I think it will also make me more conscientious about the places I choose to work, eat and shop at – I want to engage with places that pay their employees fairly!

### Power outages, fire threats close Victorian schools

The IEU urged staff and students to put safety first after destructive storms caused damage and power outages that closed at least 15 non-government schools on Tuesday February 13.

Many affected schools were in the east of the state where the Loy Yang A power station was shut down by the storm damage.

Schools closed because they had no power, no phone systems and unreliable mobile coverage.

The union advised members to make safety their priority and to stay home if it wasn't safe to travel due to downed trees or powerlines. Natural Disaster Leave could apply if their home was impacted.

The Diocese of Sale contacted its Principals about school closures, though the absence of mobile coverage and internet in some regions made it difficult to reach every school.

Fortunately, due to systems put in place during pandemic lockdowns, most schools have robust off-campus learning systems, and switched to remote learning mode much more quickly than prior to 2020.

#### Fire threat, February 28

Many schools were also affected by extreme and catastrophic fire danger ratings on Wednesday 28 February.

Seven non-government schools, from Edenhope to Donald, had to shut because of the catastrophic fire rating in

the Wimmera district.

Schools with an Extreme Fire Danger Rating had to enact approved pre-emptive action plans, which included the options of relocating classes or shutting the school.

On the 28th of February, extreme fire danger applied to five of Victoria's nine weather districts: Mallee, Northern Country, North Central, South West and Central.

#### In emergencies, stay informed via:

- The Country Fire Authority: [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)
- Vic Emergency: website ([emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au)), hotline (1800 226 226), mobile app, social media (@vicemergency)
- ABC local radio and ABC emergency: [abc.net.au/emergency](http://abc.net.au/emergency)



## APHEDA

### Unions respond to war in Gaza strip

When the war erupted in Gaza following the horrific attacks of 7 October, Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA (the Australian Union Movement's international aid organisation) swiftly established direct communication with their longstanding partner organisation in Palestine, the MA'AN Development Center.

Despite the escalating humanitarian crisis, MA'AN committed to delivering emergency relief aid in the Gaza Strip with 250 brave local staff. In response, APHEDA rallied support, and through the solidarity of union staff and activists, raised over \$600,000 to reinforce MA'AN's critical humanitarian operations.

Over the years, APHEDA has constantly supported development and humanitarian initiatives alongside MA'AN, a secular, national, and independent organisation dedicated to combating the enduring crises of unemployment, poverty, environment, and food insecurity in Gaza and the West Bank. Previous projects focused on empowering women through cooperatives and agriculture, aiming to provide them with avenues to earn decent incomes.

The projects in Gaza unfolded in an

extraordinarily challenging context, including the destruction of MA'AN's offices in Gaza. However, the dedicated workers, many of whom have lost family members and homes, persist in their mission to deliver aid. In this dire context, they provided:

- **Cash Assistance and Vouchers:** Immediate relief for affected families
- **Mental health and psychosocial 'first aid':** Services designed to aid children and families affected by the aggression
- **Dignity and hygiene kits:** Distributed to displaced individuals and households, these kits include essential items
- **Non-food items for internally displaced persons:** Winterised tents, bedding sets, winter clothes kits, and other necessities
- **Emergency WASH interventions:** Ensuring vulnerable populations have

access to clean drinking water and sanitation services

- **Provision of hot meals and food baskets:** Addressing immediate nutritional needs.

While the APHEDA annual appeal has concluded, the crisis persists, and MA'AN remains committed to providing emergency support as long as needed, and then transitioning to the immediate recovery phase, when millions of people will still be homeless. The challenges ahead demand a sustained and intensified effort to rebuild Gaza.

The Australian union movement has a long history of campaigning for peace and international social justice, and has demanded an immediate ceasefire along with restoration of badly-needed aid to

people in the Gaza Strip. International union bodies have called for the restoration of funding for the main UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, and have called for respect for the rulings by the International Criminal Court.

**Become a Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA member and contribute to our ongoing global justice efforts in the Asia Pacific, Palestine, Lebanon, and other regions where working people are fighting for social justice. Your support can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by conflict and crisis.**

**Go to: [apheda.org.au/join/](http://apheda.org.au/join/)**

## New IEU Middle Leadership Program offers unique opportunities

The IEU Learning Hub has announced an exciting new extended Middle Leadership Program, to run over 18 months, in addition to a revamped and expanded series of professional development seminars in 2024.

The Middle Leadership Program (MLP), exclusive to IEU members, is a tailored ongoing educational opportunity which will help develop the skills and knowledge of experienced educators looking to take on positions of leadership and help build a generation of school leaders and principals informed by IEU values and principles.

The program is set apart by its foundation in a philosophy of consultation, collaborative and ethical decision making and its incorporation of Australian educational leadership research. It will culminate in the awarding of a Professional Certificate in Education Leadership from the IEU.

### As Pauline Thompson, a leadership academic from the University of Melbourne, has written, 'Yoga classes may be good for staff wellbeing, but solid leadership is better'.

Michael Victory, well known to readers of *The Point* as a regular columnist (see page 17), and a former IEU Organiser, is the director of the Teacher Learning Network, which has helped the IEU devise the MLP. He says Learning Hub courses 'aim to solve problems for teachers and support staff' and support career advancement for educators, which is why the MLP is so important: 'Middle level educators are the most rapidly expanding group in schools'.

'We want to help build their confidence to make sure they can succeed.'

Michael says educators at this level also have the most profound influence on new staff, and if their leadership skills are enhanced, they will help schools – and the profession – retain valuable and often overwhelmed new staff.

He believes the MLP's access to educational leaders and elite academic talent who can impart how to implement their research in the classroom will make the program 'unique and highly valued'.

The extended nature of the course, held in person, online and through live and on-demand modules, will ensure excellent networking opportunities for members.

As Pauline Thompson, a leadership academic from the University of Melbourne, has written, 'Yoga classes may be good for staff wellbeing, but solid leadership is better'.

Pauline holds that, 'Teachers are the biggest in-school influence on student learning outcomes... How teachers feel everyday impacts on their teaching practice. If we want teachers to be the best they can be, attention must turn to a leadership mindset that can contribute strongly to teacher wellbeing'.

## TRAINING

### Extensive training regime focuses on Rep skills and consultative committees

The two Victorian Catholic Agreements now contain an entitlement to paid training leave each year for employee Reps sitting on Consultative Committees in addition to a day of training for IEU Reps.

With around 500 Catholic schools in Victoria, this means that there is the capacity for 1500 employee Consultative Committee Reps to be trained in the functions of the Consultative Committee by the IEU.

Given the crucial importance of Consultative Committees to the correct implementation of those workplace agreements, the union urges all eligible members to take up those training days and become experts in how to get the voice of staff heard in decision-making at their schools.

Our sub-branch Rep training has undergone a revamp with the inclusion of some targeted offerings for experienced Reps such as building sub-branch power and mapping/recruitment for sub-branches.

Sub-branch Reps who are new to the role or have not yet attended training are encouraged to enrol in Level 1 Rep training, which introduces you to the role, provides an understanding of how the union operates and offers insights into some recruitment basics.

Past participants have also thrived on the camaraderie and solidarity they experience at these introductory sessions. It's a rare opportunity to chat with colleagues from different schools to compare strategies and to see what they have in common and what they can learn from each other.

Sub-branch Reps located in regional Victoria are also catered for with training provided in key locations around the state.

For our Reps in Tasmania, watch this space as we look to reignite

in-person sub-branch Rep training in the second half of 2024. Your Organisers will keep you up to date with the latest information.

#### IEU Rep Training dates for 2024

*(details may be subject to change – check our website for current info and booking links)*

##### Term 2

- Regional Rep: Mildura – 1 May (The Grand Hotel)
- Level 1 Rep – 3 May (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Regional Rep: Ballarat – 8 May (Ballarat Trades Hall)
- Level 2 Rep: Conversations that build power – 17 May (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Regional Rep: Warrnambool – 22 May (Lady Bay Hotel)
- Consultative Committee: Intro to CC/the basics – 4 June (half day via Zoom)

##### Term 3

- Consultative Committee: Intro to CC/the basics – 29 July (half day via Zoom)
- Consultative Committee: Consulting on POL structure – 14 May (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Level 1 Rep – 2 August (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Consultative Committee: Consulting on TIL – 12 August (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Level 2 Rep: Representing members effectively – 23 August

- (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Regional Rep: Geelong – 28 August (Geelong Trades Hall)
- Regional Rep: Bendigo – 11 September (Bendigo Trades Hall)

##### Term 4

- Consultative Committee: Intro to CC/the basics – 10 October (half day via Zoom)
- Consultative Committee: The consultative process – 16 October (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Level 1 Rep – 25 October (in-person IEU Office Southbank)
- Level 2 Rep: Trades Hall history, work & tour – 15 November (in-person Victorian Trades Hall Carlton)

**To participate in the program, contact Training Officer Andrew Wood at: [awood@ieuvictas.org.au](mailto:awood@ieuvictas.org.au) or call 9254 1860.**

## YOUR IEU OFFICE

### Changes at Clarendon Street

The IEU office is now operating with a shiny new database and in our next edition we will provide details to members about how to access the streamlined members' portal.

The upgrade will create a much smoother experience for members, with information easier to access and enter and everything from emails to finances now better integrated.

New office spaces are opening upstairs at IEU headquarters to fit a growing specialist staff, with more Industrial Officers and Organisers coming on board in recent years to cater for increased demand from members, particularly for legal assistance.

The physical, technological and personnel changes come as the union completes its strategic plan overseen by the Committee of Management (see David Brear's column on page 3 for details).

That process is designed to ensure we are doing the right things for the right reasons in the most effective manner for members and will help clarify our priorities and guide our decision-making. The union believes in its mission and purpose being clear to members, and this planning

has been embraced by our staff and Committee of Management.

These changes all aim to help us to deliver the best possible resources and support for hard working members, and we believe that they will set up our union for continuing growth and strength over future decades.



# Taking control of your professional development



Teacher Learning Network

One of the best things about education is that each year we have a new beginning. Across Australia we come through the long break of the summer holidays, the sun is shining (usually), and we are open to new possibilities.

**W**e have new classes, new subjects, new students, sometimes a new school, and the opportunity to renew the relationship with familiar students. At the beginning of each year we work with our students to set new goals for the school year.

The challenge is to do the same for ourselves; to set new goals for our school year. In my experience, this is not something that educators always do well. Our energy can be consumed in supporting the students we work with, ensuring they reach the goals that are set by the state (NAPLAN and PISA results), by the school (school improvement plans), and by the parents and students (ATAR scores). Even our own professional development plans can be heavily influenced by the needs of the school.

One challenge for every educator is to set goals that are meaningful to you that allow you to take control of your own career.

## Some questions worth asking yourself:

- What are your strengths? Do you want to build on these strengths?
- What have you found challenging? How might you work to overcome those challenges?
- When you look around the staff at your school (or other schools you have worked at) what are the skills and attributes of the educators that you admire and would like to develop in yourself?
- When you look at the students you are working with this year, who do you need to understand and connect with more effectively?
- Where would you like to be in your career in one year, three years, five years?

These are just some sample questions that you could ask yourself to begin setting your goals for the year. It is good to ask these questions in the company of others. Feedback from colleagues is valuable when setting goals.

For teachers, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers provide a good starting point for goal setting. I suggest that you form a goal from each of the three groups of standards. Some examples are set out below.

### 1. Professional Knowledge – Know students and how they learn

When you look across the classroom, you will have students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, students who are new to English and those who have experienced trauma. You may have students from a First Nations background. Some classrooms will be stretched by students who are gifted. Your goal can be as simple as:

*In 2024 I will take the time to increase my knowledge about ( ... ) so that I can adapt my teaching practice to better meet the needs of student X. This will increase my own confidence in meeting the needs of all students.*

### 2. Professional Practice – Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

This has become a more significant challenge post-COVID, in a world where there is major conflict, and given the complex lives of many families. As one teacher said to me recently, 'we need to re-teach learning behaviours'. Learning itself is a skill and we can teach it, but we need calm classrooms to do that. Your goal might be:

*In 2024 I am going to reflect on the routines and rituals that I have created in my classrooms. I am then going to*

*seek out one new idea that challenges my current practice and I am going to implement that idea in my classroom until I have mastered it.*

### 3. Professional Engagement – Engage in professional learning

I always think about this group of standards as the leadership standards. How do you construct a meaningful career for yourself? How do you construct a career that builds on your strengths and offers you opportunities to learn? How do you build a career that keeps you engaged? At the Teacher Learning Network, we contend that every teacher is a leader, and at the appropriate time every teacher should aim to extend their influence by actively seeking out formal leadership roles. Your goal might be:

*In 2024, I am going to engage in professional development that will enhance my leadership skills, so that I am more successful and fulfilled in my current leadership role (or I will learn skills and knowledge that mean I can apply for a leadership role in 2025).*

## What next?

If your school is a member of the Teacher Learning Network, you have access to a wide range of courses to support your ongoing professional development (email [admin@tln.org.au](mailto:admin@tln.org.au) or call 7064 4362).

As an IEU member you have access to a unique set of programs on the IEU Learning Hub that are available to you throughout 2024 (live online and on-demand). Go to [www.ieuvictas.org.au/](http://www.ieuvictas.org.au/) webinars for details of our 2024 offerings.

IEU teacher members can access a great range of courses on:

- Classroom management and student engagement

- Learning diversity and inclusion – meeting the needs of all students
- And coming soon – The IEU professional Certificate in Middle Leadership (see page 16).

There are also exclusive courses for Education Support Staff as well as graduate and early career teachers.

To make 2024 a success for you as an educator, reflect, set your goals, check in with colleagues, and then do what you need to do to achieve your goals.

You have control over your professional development, and the opportunity, in December 2024, to look back and feel good about your year and your career.

**Michael Victory**  
Executive Officer  
Teacher Learning Network



## IE MAGAZINE

### John Falzon, change-making thinker

'Unthinkable things are made possible, not because you have benevolent or wise leaders, but because you have a social movement. It's always social movements that create social change.'

**S**o says inspirational unionist, sociologist, and educator John Falzon in the latest edition of *IE* (Independent Education) magazine. It's the glossy journal of our national unions and contains stories from all over the country, showcasing the work of members in schools and the IEU's take on the big issues facing educators in Australia.

*IE* is published three times a year and is one of the free benefits of your IEU membership.

John's viewpoint is pertinent to many stories in this edition. On page 23, we examine increasing industrial action and unionisation around the world, as workers seek remedies to unfair conditions; on page 26 we look at how children get educated about unions; and on page 15, we discuss how schools must play a leading role on climate literacy, resilience, and engagement.

Education itself is a form of 'social movement' and the way

we educate, and the subjects we teach, help change our world.

That's why we need to recognise the importance of non-teaching assistants in the classroom and on school grounds (pages 9, 10); the nuances of personal development, as laid down by Teacher Learning Network boss and ex-IEU staffer Michael Victory (page 34); and the implications of AI for teachers (page 20).

Education also creates

social change by broadening the perspectives of students by discussing topics like First Nations' scientific knowledge (page 31); the war in Ukraine (page 28); and weapons industry awareness (page 30).

But, as John emphasises, change comes from the ground up, not the top down, which is why we are so pleased to report on the inspiring student-led campaign for menstrual equity at St Paul's Catholic College

in Booragul, NSW. It's been so successful that it's now being rolled out for an entire Diocese.

We believe *IE* brings you inspiration to think the unthinkable inside and outside the classroom. Cast your eye over it when it lobs in your mailbox or staff room.



## TASMANIA

### IEU throws down a May Day challenge to the AEU!

The IEU has always been a great supporter of Tasmania's May Day Parade. We'd like to believe we usually have the AEU covered on a pro-rata basis.

This year we are taking it up a notch and challenging the AEU based on the total numbers of members participating in the parade, so if you're Hobart based, come along to help us win! If you have never come, now is the year to join with union members from all over the state as we celebrate the many things that the union movement has done to help the working lives of Tasmanians.

After the parade, there is a fantastic street party with lots of activities for kids and adults to participate in.

Get a group together from your workplace and head along – it would be fantastic to see as many schools as possible represented this year.

#### Tasmanian May Day parade

Saturday 11 May  
11.30 assembly for 12noon sharp  
kick off Victoria Street (Behind CPSU office) Nipaluna/Hobart  
Free BBQ and drinks, games, face painting, balloon art, animal show and more!

#### Tasmanian Union Awards 2024 – nominations now open!

Friday 10 May  
7.00pm–11.00pm  
Hobart Town Hall  
Tickets \$70 + GST at [unionstas.com.au/uttoast24](http://unionstas.com.au/uttoast24)  
A night of solidarity, entertainment, food, and drink.  
The annual Tasmanian Union Awards are presented on the night. Those awards celebrate the

delegate of the year; health and safety representative (HSR) of the year; local workplace campaign of the year; and the year's most outstanding contribution to the union movement.

These awards recognise exceptional achievement in raising union density; promotion of union values and innovative, member-first engagement workplace organising.

The Toni Miles-Bennett Community Contribution Award celebrates a unionist who makes a positive contribution to their local community through activism outside of their union engagement.

**Nominations close**  
**Friday 12th April 2024. Go to:**  
[unionstas.com.au/nominate](http://unionstas.com.au/nominate)

## A new roadside attraction

Tasmanian IEU members – and stalwart Retired Unionists – supported a 'wobble board action' Tuesday 13 February in support of Hobart Clinic Nurses in the Health and Community Services Union who are fighting for pay equal to their public sector counterparts.

They received plenty of support from motorists who 'honked for health'!

Our members say the Hobart Clinic's CEO and management must listen to their nurses and value the work they do before it's too late. Psychiatrists are quitting and nurses under immense strain are being bullied into silence by their employer, leading to patients being discharged too early despite desperate pleas for ongoing help.



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## CAREER CORNER

# Cast a gender lens over your career

How can you protect, or even boost your employability after a period of employment at a single-sex school?

The demise of Shelford Girls' School, which is in the process of merging with Caulfield Grammar (which will become the employer), demonstrates the tight competitive market amongst low-enrolment, high-fee, single-sex girls' schools in Victoria.

There are 44 single-sex Catholic and Independent girls' schools in Victoria, many similar to Shelford. A quick glimpse at their financial reports (available on the Charities Commission website) exhibits the financial pressure these schools are under. By contrast, there are only 25, predominantly Catholic, single-sex boys' schools. Barring a handful of select-entry government schools, the remaining 2,700 Victorian government and non-government schools are co-educational.

It follows that the overwhelming majority of school employment vacancies – teaching or general staff – are in co-educational schools, with a commensurate proportion of promotion opportunities available to those in the sector. Therefore, if you want to be confident of advancing your

career, you need to consider how the type of school you have worked at will impact your candidacy for future roles.

### Case Study 1

A female teacher has been employed at a high-fee independent boys' school for almost 20 years. During this time, she has applied repeatedly for leadership positions in girls' schools, citing her transferable skills. Each time she was unsuccessful, and each time the feedback was the same: 'We are seeking someone with experience in providing pastoral care programs for girls'. Fortunately, the teacher has gained an internal promotion to Head of Year and can continue working in boys' schools for the foreseeable future.

### Case Study 2

A male teacher employed in successive Catholic girls' schools over a period of 15 years rises to a leadership position. He recognises that it is extremely unlikely he will be appointed principal of a girls' school

(there are very few examples of a principal of a different gender leading a single-sex school), so he seeks to implement a plan to ensure greater career progression. He is successful in moving sideways to an equivalent position in a Catholic single-sex boys' school and is now better equipped to apply for senior roles in boys' and co-educational schools.

### Points to consider

The teacher in Case Study 1 has effectively elected to remain a specialist in boys' education, to build on her experience and expertise in that environment. While this is a completely legitimate decision, had she sought to diversify her school experience in a co-ed or girls' school earlier in her career, she may have improved her chances for attaining leadership positions in other schools.

Conversely, the teacher in Case Study 2 recognised the need to shift gears in order to maximise his career progression, albeit at the very highest level. This will better

equip him to seek promotion to a senior role in a familiar setting in which he has a successful track record.

### Summary

There is no wrong option here, but there can certainly be missed opportunities. Consider whether you wish to be a single-sex specialist or if you wish to work in any setting, keeping in mind that there are almost twice as many employers for girls' schools than for boys' schools.

It may also be worthwhile considering whether there is a nuanced distinction here, depending on whether you are seeking a curriculum-focused or pastoral-focused role, as arguably there is less difference between schools for the former than the latter.

Whichever path lies ahead of you, as always, make sure you chart it consciously rather than as an afterthought. Safe travels!



## Free COVID Safety for Schools Course launches in Australia

No-one wants to talk about COVID any more, but it hasn't gone away! As the latest waves of the scourge continue to disrupt our lives, workplaces and communities, we can't ignore the need to make schools as safe as possible.

If you or your school need guidance on how to tackle the ongoing challenge, non-profit organisation COVID Safety Australia now provides an online course which sets out to 'correct common myths and misunderstandings, and to provide schools with accurate information to help them reduce the risk of the virus spreading among staff and students'.

COVID Safety for Schools, intended for teachers and principals, features leading scientific, medical and policy experts explaining the latest science in clear, simple language. It covers the health impacts of COVID, the science of how it spreads, how to assess and manage risk, and how to use layered protections – such as ventilation, CO<sub>2</sub> monitoring, HEPA filters, masks, and testing.

The course's creators hope that it will 'empower schools to implement evidence-based approaches to minimise the spread of COVID, without disrupting their core role of giving kids a great education'.

The course is designed to be a professional development activity for staff in Australian primary and secondary schools and a resource for parents who want to know how to reduce the risk of COVID to their family.

Professor Brendan Crabb, Director and CEO of Burnet Institute, says the course addresses 'the disconnect between the prevailing attitude about COVID – which is that it's no longer a big deal, and the

reality – which is that there are very real long-term health risks, particularly with repeat COVID infections'.

'Given what we now know about the long-term health risks from COVID, schools need to minimise the risk of COVID spreading. This course will equip them with accurate information so they can make informed decisions about how to keep staff and students safe.'

Amanda Sharpe, a Queensland high school teacher who was forced to leave teaching in 2023 after developing Long COVID says, 'I don't know if I'll ever be well enough to teach again. I hope that other teachers will use the learnings in this course to protect themselves and their students from Long COVID and the other harmful long-term effects of this virus'.

### COVID Safety Australia explains the rationale for the course

'Research over the last four years has shown that we should take COVID very seriously. There's now substantial evidence that even a mild initial infection can lead to serious long-term health impacts – including cardiovascular disease, neurological disease, immune system damage and Long COVID – even in otherwise healthy kids and adults.'

'Research also shows that schools are a major source of COVID transmission in the community. According to a US

study, around 70% of household COVID transmission starts with a school-aged child. That matches with the experience of many Australian families who have had COVID come into their home via an infection picked up at school – sometimes multiple times a year.

'Schools and parents have been strongly influenced by the 'COVID is mild' narrative. It has led many to think that there's no longer any need to take precautions against catching or spreading the virus. This laissez-faire approach is putting students, teachers, their families, and the wider community at unnecessary risk – not just from the acute phase of COVID, which has caused over 24,000 deaths in Australia so far – but also from the many long-term health impacts.'

'School staff often don't know that COVID is airborne and is spread mainly by inhaling virus particles breathed out by infected people – as evidenced by the fact that many schools are diligently disinfecting surfaces, while failing to improve ventilation...'

'Similarly, schools seem blissfully unaware that the majority of COVID infections come from people who are asymptomatic – they have COVID, and are infectious, but have no idea they are spreading it to others.'

ACTU secretary Sally McManus said employers still had a health and safety obligation to their workers who

couldn't rely on sick leave.

'It's a way of ensuring that people don't come to work,' McManus said. 'COVID isn't the flu and there's all the issues around Long COVID, and so, for that reason, it's a health and safety obligation.'

**COVID Safety for Schools is available free at [www.covidsafetyforschools.org](http://www.covidsafetyforschools.org).**



## LABOUR DAY

# Eight is better than 14: a brief history of sane working hours

'On 21 April 1856 stonemasons working on the University of Melbourne downed tools and marched to the Belvedere Hotel, demanding a radical improvement in working conditions not yet won anywhere else in the world: a limited 8-hour working day, with no loss of pay.'

So says Trades Hall of the strike that started momentous change for working people in Australia.

'It was the first of a long, hard-fought series of victories that led to Australia having one of the most progressive labour environments in the world by the early 20th century,' writes the National Museum of Australia.

The 'staunch spirit of the united workers' led, by James Stephens, a veteran of the Chartist movement in Scotland, was vital.

In early colonial times the relationship between employers and employees was governed by the *British Masters and Servants Act*. It was as bad as its name suggests; 'weighted heavily in the interests of employers'.

'Employees could be prosecuted for a range of contraventions including drunkenness, absence without leave and inattention to duty.

'Penalties could include deduction of wages or imprisonment. These were only enforceable through the courts, but since magistrates were of the same class as the employers most cases were found in the employers' favour.'

In the 1830s, skilled workers formed the first unions, but they were heavily opposed by employers and governments.

When street lighting came in 1841, shop employees typically worked 14 hours a day, sparking the Early Closing Movement which from 1844 sought to have working hours reduced – to 12 hours a day!

## Negotiations between the union and the building companies broke down and on 21 April 1856 stonemasons downed tools at the construction site of the law faculty buildings at Melbourne University and walked off the job.

Convict transportation to New South Wales ceased in 1840 and in Tasmania by 1852, ending one source of cheap and plentiful labour, and creating a shortage of workers that increased dramatically through the 1850s as hordes of working men tried their luck on the goldfields.

This put unions in a far stronger position from which to campaign for better working conditions.

### Eight-hour day campaign

On 4 February 1853 the Operative Masons' Society was re-formed at a meeting in Clark's Hotel, Collingwood, Melbourne, and a committee was formed to confer with building contractors on the introduction of the eight-hour day.

'The eight-hour day had first been proposed by Robert Owen in 1817 at his socialist community in New Lanark, Scotland. The sentiments of the movement were captured by the slogan, 'Eight hours labour, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest'.

'The union put forward three main arguments for a shorter working day. The first was that Australia's harsh climate demanded reduced hours. The second was that labourers needed time to develop their 'social and moral condition' through education. The third was that workers would be better fathers, husbands, and citizens if they were allowed adequate leisure time.'

On 26 March 1856 workers called a public meeting at the Queen's Theatre to make a stand on improving working conditions.

Negotiations between the union and the building companies broke down and on 21 April 1856 stonemasons downed tools at the construction site of the law faculty buildings at Melbourne University and walked off the job.

In the months to come, negotiations with employers and the government continued until an agreement was reached whereby stonemasons would work an eight-hour day but collect the same wage they had previously been paid for 10 hours.

It was the beginning of the end for the 'Master Servant' style of industrial relations in Australia and ushered in a new era. Of course, it did not put an end to the profit motive or the inclination of employers to squeeze ever more from their workers, and eternal vigilance is necessary to resist the erosion of that precious 8/8/8!

### For more:

- [rb.gy/ozqr3h](http://rb.gy/ozqr3h)
- [weareunion.org.au/8hours](http://weareunion.org.au/8hours)



## LABOUR DAY

# An IEU member's link to the fight for the eight-hour day

Fiona Jenkins has a reason to take a keen interest in the Labour Day holiday in March which celebrates Melbourne Stonemasons winning the eight-hour working day in 1856.

Her great-grandfather, Augustus Julius Freinick, played a key role in the ongoing union push to extend the eight-hour day beyond the building trades. Though the landmark 1856 win is rightly remembered, initially only a minority of workers won the entitlement, and the fight went on for decades.

As the National Museum of Australia states, 'Most workers, including women and children, generally worked longer hours for less pay'.

'The fight for working conditions continued throughout the 19th century. It was not until 1916 that the Eight Hours Act was passed in Victoria and New South Wales.

'It would not be until January 1948 that the Commonwealth Arbitration Court approved a 40-hour, five-day working week for all Australians.'

Augustus was one of the workers who kept up the fight, being awarded

a gold medal at the 47th Eight-Hour Day Convention in 1903 to mark his contribution to the movement.

It was a brave and significant stance considering the exclusion and prejudice he faced.

Augustus was born in 1863 in Osterode, then a small town on the south-western edge of what is now northern Poland.

When Augustus was three years old, Osterode was annexed by the Kingdom of Prussia.

Augustus' parents, Johann Freinick and Wilhelmine Teichert, spoke German, but had Eastern European parentage.

'The fervent nationalism that followed Napoleon the Third's defeat in 1871 meant that Augustus grew up in a society that viewed his family as outsiders,' says Fiona, an instrumental teacher Melbourne Rudolph Steiner School in Warranwood.

'Augustus decided to leave what was now Germany in the hope of building a

life in a new country where his Eastern European name wouldn't be a hindrance. 'He had visited Australia as an able seaman in 1883 aboard the *Fawn* and must have decided that this country was the right place to start a new life.'

Augustus migrated to Australia in January 1886.

He married Annie Furneaux Pople, a girl from the Bellarine Peninsula, in 1891 and they lived in South Melbourne, raising two sons and two daughters.

Augustus became a cable-tram driver and was 'keenly aware of the class divide that was then apparent in Melbourne society'.

'He wanted to improve the lives of his fellow workers and joined the eight-hour day movement, giving many hours to the cause.'

The couple brought their four children up in a worker's cottage at 459 Coventry Street, South Melbourne.

Unfortunately, Augustus suffered discrimination at the outbreak of war

in 1914 due to his German accent and Germanic-sounding name.

Despite this hardship, Augustus' son Ernest Garland Freinick enlisted in the Australian army in 1916 at the age of 18.

Fiona says Augustus' children were proud of their father's commitment to improving the lives of workers in Australia and her grandmother, Dorothea Freinick, kept an archive of photographs and documents relating to her father's life.

'Grandma always remembered the eight-hour day poem:

*'Eight hours to work,  
Eight hours to play,  
Eight hours to sleep,  
Eight bob a day.  
A fair day's work,  
For a fair day's pay.'*



## LABOUR HISTORY

### Mechanics' Institutes: building for culture

They catch the eye, these sturdy, often impressive 19th century structures, especially in country towns. However, their original use and the ideas behind them are often not immediately evident.

Stefan Petrow, writing in the *Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies*, states the 'worthy ideals' of the founders of Australia's Mechanics' Institutes as 'self-improvement, self-discipline, class co-operation and cultural egalitarianism'. He says these ideals have 'long been forgotten'.

He may be right: too often these days unions and associated organisations for workers are associated purely with the pay and conditions of members.

But the movement has always been concerned with the broader wellbeing and education of workers. Last year, we reported in this column on the grand Trades Hall building in Carlton, the 'People's Palace'. Though important for union organisation and meetings, it was always meant for 'healthy recreation and education for the labouring men...', as reflected by its official name: 'The Trades Hall and Literary Institute'.

The arts and education were always front of mind.

According to the Victorian History Library mechanics' institutes originated with Dr George Birkbeck, who gave a series of free lectures for the working men of Glasgow in 1799.

'At the time, 'mechanic' meant artisan, tradesman or working man. The definition became more specific over time, especially during the Industrial Revolution when

workers became increasingly associated with machinery.

'The lectures were extremely popular because they were offered free of charge (at a time when formal education had been available only to the wealthy and the clergy) and offered in the evenings (when workers would be able to attend them). These lectures led to facilities dedicated to workers' education – the Edinburgh School of Arts (1821) and the London Mechanics' Institute (1823).

'Mechanics' institutes were established throughout Britain and its colonies including Canada, New Zealand, America, and Australia. In Australia, where they were extremely popular, they had less to do with educating 'mechanics' and more to do with providing a model for setting up community facilities and amenities.'

Australia's first mechanics' institute was established in Hobart in 1827 and Petrow says the facilities here 'sought to give skilled working men education for life and work, providing lectures, classes, libraries and even museums'.

The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Incorporated (MIV) says its buildings were the precursors of adult education and libraries in Victoria.

'The first Victorian Mechanics' Institute was the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute established in 1839 and renamed The Melbourne Athenaeum in 1873. The

Athenaeum continues to operate a library, theatres, and shops in its original building at 188 Collins Street, Melbourne.'

There was clearly an unmet need for cultural outlets for working people. MIV says from the 1850s, Mechanics' Institutes spread throughout Victoria 'wherever a hall or library, or a school was needed'.

'Nearly a thousand were built in Victoria and 562 remain today.' Eight are still lending libraries.

MIV says in the past each Mechanics' Institute, Athenaeum, or School of Art was not only the most important centre of adult education in its district, but it was also the area's 'hub for social and cultural activities'.

'Nearly every town in Victoria had a mechanics' institute generally comprised of a hall, library and reading rooms, facilities for games and programs of educational and entertaining activities.'

Stefan Petrow believed most mechanics' institutes failed in their educational aims and became 'congenial places of resort for middle-class patrons', the libraries pandering to 'non-demanding tastes', and says 'lectures proved less attractive than musical performances and entertainments of various kinds, such as penny readings'.

There's a hint of the disapproving patriarch about his harsh judgement, as many of these supposedly inferior

activities involved women, who undoubtedly required an outlet as much as working men.

The less ornery MIV believes mechanics' institutes gradually lost their pre-eminence partly because 'local and state governments increasingly provided libraries, education and community spaces'.

Yet today more than 500 mechanics' institute buildings in Victoria are still used as halls and homes for local organisations. Pre-eminent amongst them are the Meeniyan Hall, now a superb musical venue, the Melbourne Athenaeum, with its lending library and magnificent, intimate theatre and the Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre, currently hosting a comedy by Emma Wood.

These buildings remain priceless gifts to their communities. Less well known, perhaps is that they are monuments to the irrepressible collective social and cultural ambitions of the working class.

**To check out your local Mechanics Institute and read more about their history, go to the Mechanics' Institute Victoria Incorporated site at: [mivic.org.au](http://mivic.org.au)**



## WOMEN AND EQUITY

### Mind the gender pay gap

At the IEU we continue to work towards eliminating the gender pay gap in our workplaces.

In late February, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency published gender pay gaps for nearly 5,000 Australian private sector employers for the first time.

Australia's total remuneration gender pay gap is 21.7%.

For every \$1 on average a man makes, women earn 78c.

Over the course of a year, that difference adds up to \$26,393.

The median base salary for a woman is 14.5 per cent or \$11,542 lower than for a man. When the total salary with bonuses, overtime, superannuation, and other sales incentives are included, the wage gap grows to \$18,461, or 19 per cent.

The 21.7% gender pay gap includes base salary, overtime, bonuses, and additional payments. It also includes the annualised full-time equivalent salaries of casual and part-time workers.

While education is doing better on these metrics than many other industries,

there is an overall dearth of women in positions of leadership in schools and a preponderance of females in the most lowly-paid positions. Women make up over 80% of part-time workers, but just over 40% of key management personnel.

The IEU will continue to work at getting gender equity clauses into our workplace agreements including improved part-time arrangements and reproductive leave.

#### Anna Stewart Memorial Project 40th anniversary

Anna Stewart was a journalist and active Victorian union official who tragically lost her life aged just 35. Following her death, the Anna Stewart Memorial Project was created to honour her legacy and encourage more women to be active in their unions. The first Anna Stewart Memorial Project was held in 1984 and since then more than 1000 women unionists have completed

the Project in Victoria alone. In 2024 we are celebrating the success of the Project, it's alumni, mentors and all union officials who have been involved over the past 40 years. The next edition of *The Point* will feature several IEU 'Annas' who outline their impressions of the project and its influence on their careers. We will also report on the anniversary dinner on March 14.

**To get involved in the Anna Stewart Memorial Project head to [weareunion.org.au/asmp](http://weareunion.org.au/asmp)**

#### ACTU Congress

ACTU Congress is being held on Kaurna Country (Adelaide) at the Adelaide Convention Centre, on 4, 5, and 6 June with a strong focus on the women and equity agenda. This is the first in-person congress held since 2018. The tone has been set for the event by the ACTU: 'The world is shifting; people want change, and they see

how essential unions are in creating a more just and equal society for all'.

**The IEU is looking forward to another busy year engaging members with women's issues. Put the following dates in your diaries:**

- March 7 – 19: Women's Rights at Work (WRAW) Festival including Anna Stewart Memorial Project 40th anniversary dinner
- March 25: Women HSRs - Leaders at Work Networking Night
- May 20 to 31: Anna Stewart Memorial Project (Vic)
- August 23: WRAW Conference (Vic)
- August 19 – 23: Anna Stewart Memorial Project (Tas)
- August 23: Unions Tas Women's Conference
- September 9 – 13: Anna Stewart Memorial Project (Vic) Week 1
- October 14 – 18: Anna Stewart Memorial Project (Vic) week 2

## NATIONAL IEU ROUND UP

### NSW/ACT: Time for action in independent schools

After winning unprecedented pay increases for teachers and support staff in Catholic systemic schools last year, the IEU NSW/ACT is turning its attention to independent schools in 2024.

Existing MEAs were negotiated in the period when inflation was lower, the public sector pay cap suppressed pay rises for NSW government teachers to 2.5% (including superannuation), and schools were recovering from the disruption of the COVID pandemic. Bargaining rights for employees were also far more limited than those under the current provisions in the Fair Work Act.

'It is time for independent schools to match the pay rises in other education sectors,' says IEU NSW/ACT Secretary Carol Matthews. 'More than 100 schools have made additional payments to match the public sector increases, but many schools have not, and the amount of the payments varies widely.'

Conditions in independent schools are also lagging well behind those in government and Catholic schools.

The IEU has begun contacting members and consulting about priorities for the claim.

Carol said it was important for members to remember that unions also have new rights under the Fair Work Act

that strengthen their ability to bargain effectively for MEAs.

'A priority will be ensuring our Reps understand how we can wield these rights effectively.'

#### Qld/NT: 'Right to disconnect' a key win for education workers

The IEU Qld/NT has welcomed the 'right to disconnect' being enshrined in legislation as part of the Closing Loopholes Bill, saying it represents 'a major win for IEU members facing unrelenting workloads in schools'.

Branch Secretary Terry Burke said new laws mirrored what had been won last year by IEU members in Queensland Catholic schools through their collective bargaining action.

'Employer requests, parental queries and student contact regularly encroach on the personal time of staff,' Mr Burke said.

'With the growth of mobile technology and assumed 24/7 connectivity, critical workload and work intensification issues have only been exacerbated.'

'Teachers cannot be permanently 'on

call', particularly when our sector is facing an attrition crisis.

'Employees need a break from work and are entitled to valuable downtime.'

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

Mr Burke said pushback against the legislation from business lobbies and the federal opposition was alarmist and the new laws simply enact fundamental common sense – workers need time away from work.

#### South Australia: crunch time in Catholic school negotiations

The new school year has brought a renewed focus on the upcoming Catholic Enterprise Agreement (EA) negotiations for the South Australian branch.

'Rep packs' have been sent to all IEU Reps in Catholic education, who have been asked to welcome new staff and invite

them to join the IEU because 'often the reason that people don't join the union is simply that they haven't been asked'.

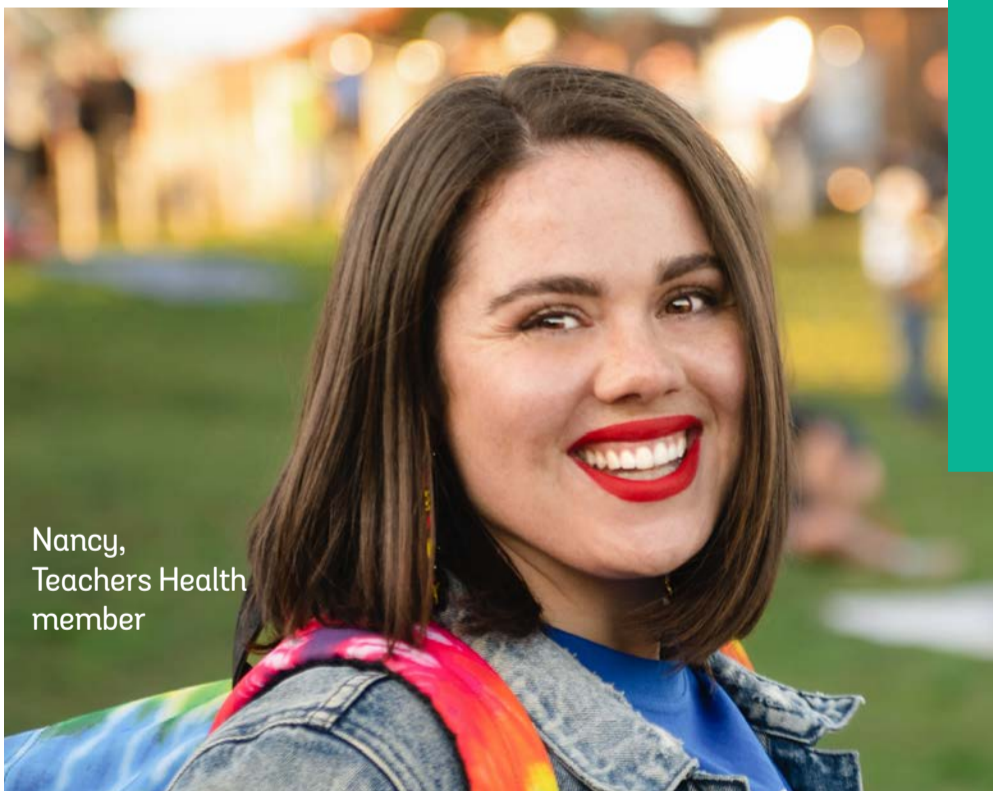
Reps have also been busy updating membership lists and encouraging the first sub-branch meetings of the year to be held as soon as possible.

The Rep packs helped achieve these goals by providing campaign flyers (highlighting that SA Catholic school employees are some of the hardest working but lowest paid in Australia), meeting agendas, information sheets, and member joining forms.

SA Organisers are also helping organise meetings in schools without a Rep 'where the first order of business can be to call for Rep nominations'.

'Now is the crunch time.'

'It is only through acting collectively and getting ourselves organised that we will be able to mirror the gains achieved in Victorian and New South Wales Catholic schools.'



Nancy,  
Teachers Health  
member

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## NATIONAL UNION ROUND UP

### The new language of price gouging

Have you heard of ‘excuse-flation’? ‘Rocket and feather pricing’? ‘Drip pricing’? These mysterious new phrases describe big drivers of inflation and our current cost-of-living crisis.

An independent report from the *Inquiry into Price Gouging and Unfair Pricing Practices* found that big business have been increasing prices by more than they need to and have been increasing their profits at the same time as most of us struggle to make ends meet.

Australian Unions explains the new rip-off tactics:

**‘Excuse-flation** is when businesses blame inflation for price increases, even when their costs haven’t gone up at all (or at least not as much as their prices).

**‘Rocket and feather pricing** is when prices go up immediately when costs increase, but they never seem to decrease quite as quickly when costs drop.

**‘Drip and confusion pricing** involve advertising prices that are lower than the actual price, or using pricing systems that are so complicated that consumers find it hard – or even impossible – to compare.

‘These tactics are as common as they are unfair and will spark renewed calls for action on big businesses who have taken advantage of the crisis to get rich.’

Soon after the report was released, Woolworths’ chief executive, Brad Banducci resigned after becoming frustrated by questioning from the ABC about the market power of large companies.

‘Profit margins for the chain’s Australian food business increased to 6.1% in the six-month period to December, up from 5.8% a year earlier,’ *The Guardian* reported.

‘It recorded a 5.4% lift in the value of sales from the division to \$25.9bn.’

Banducci was scheduled to appear before a Greens-led Senate inquiry in

March into grocery pricing practices. The major supermarkets are also being investigated by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission over pricing decisions and their relationships with agricultural suppliers.

Woolworths and rival Coles have consistently defended their pricing decisions and credited strong profits to ‘improved productivity’. The two chains collectively control two-thirds of the groceries market.

**Been ripped off? Tell Australian Unions your story at: [rb.gy/t4eozf](https://rb.gy/t4eozf)**

#### Working from home under the spotlight

The Fair Work Commission is investigating whether it needs to change the basic rights for over two million Australians on awards to accommodate working from home.

If working-from-home rights are included in Awards, several million workers on Enterprise Agreements could negotiate for the same flexibility.

Last year, Community and Public Service Union Secretary Melissa Donnelly said working from home was ‘a new frontier in what employees want in their working life’.

Greens senator Barbara Pocock, who chaired the Select Committee on Work and Care, said some employers want to ‘flip back to a pre-pandemic scenario’. But many workers see the advantages to working from home, like a reduction in commute times, and the research says, ‘they share their saved time with their boss’.

‘That’s a win-win,’ she said.

In August 2023, 37 per cent of Australians regularly worked from home, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, up only 5 percentage points on pre-pandemic working from home levels.

Australian Unions says 35 per cent of Australia jobs can be done from home.

‘Studies have shown that... the flexibility to work from home has increased (workers’) job satisfaction, productivity, sense of wellbeing and ability to balance the demands of work and life, particularly for working women, parents, and others with caring responsibilities.

‘Despite these positives, a recent KPMG report – which surveyed 1,300 employers globally – confirmed that two-thirds of employers are eagerly anticipating a full return to the office within three years.’

Last year the ACTU revealed that 38% of senior executives in large Australian corporations told a Herbert Smith Freehills ‘Future of Work’ global survey they planned to pay workers less if they work from home.

It says, ‘... a return to the 9-to-5 full-time office grind is the way to go, is not only short-sighted, it’s likely to lead to reduced productivity and a higher worker turnover.’

The IEU will continue to explore options with members and employers around flexible work arrangements including working from home and not being required to be on site outside of scheduled duties.

#### Unions call for increased loading, leave for casuals

The ACTU has called for a boost to casuals’ loading, leave entitlements and roster stability in a submission to the Fair Work Commission’s job security modern awards review.

The ACTU has urged the FWC to concentrate on improving the safety net entitlements of casual workers ‘to better meet the amended modern awards objective and ensure that any remaining entitlement gaps are fairly compensated’.

This should include assistance in developing options to ‘increase the casual loading; provide for additional or improved forms of paid leave; and adjust other conditions relevant to job security including restoring greater predictability and security to permanent work’.

The ACTU has also asked the bench to record its concerns about ‘legislative shortcomings’ regarding the ability of s352 of the Fair Work Act to protect casuals who are dismissed because of a temporary absence due to illness or injury.

The ACTU in addition recommends making sure part-time workers receive paid overtime for working outside agreed hours, avoiding short notice periods for roster changes, and increasing ‘certainty and stability in rostering, particularly where the span of ordinary hours is wide’.

## INTERNATIONAL ROUND UP

### Palestine: Global Unions Call for Unified Action Following Ruling on Gaza

A Council of Global Unions call for urgent steps to protect civilian lives in Gaza has been co-signed by the IEU’s umbrella union Education International.

‘Our members in Gaza are being killed while they go about their work including teachers, healthcare workers, transport workers, journalists, UN staff, international aid workers and many others,’ the Global Unions statement read.

The signatories also request the following actions from the international community:

- All States Parties to the Genocide Convention to fulfil their obligation to prevent genocide: The UN Security Council and member states must take collaborative action to ensure that the provisional measures are implemented in full.
- International Criminal Court prosecutor must expedite investigations into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel and Palestinian armed groups: A

thorough and independent investigation is crucial to bring perpetrators to justice and prevent future violations.

- World leaders to prioritise diplomacy and dialogue over violence: Secure the release of all hostages and work towards an immediate and lasting ceasefire that guarantees the safety and security of all Palestinians and Israelis.

#### USA: Unions must innovate

Writing for *Jacobin*, Alex N Press has called for the ‘bold experimentation that once characterised the US labour movement’, after US union density fell in 2023 despite high profile strikes.

‘The only way out is through, and with the possibility that the United States will elect an anti-worker billionaire within the year, unions do not have time to waste.’

‘Unions can tweak the standard

organising playbook as the UAW is currently doing at non-union auto plants. They can experiment with sectoral bargaining to raise wages industry-wide, as is underway in California. They can spend more on organising and not only that but do so in coordination with one another. They can train workers on organising basics, and if those workers go on to try something risky, or even unprecedented, the movement can throw its weight behind them to tip the scales.’

#### Argentina: Unions dig in against austerity measures

Unions are vigorously protesting austerity measures imposed by new President Javier Milei that are denting wages and pensions.

The CGT umbrella union group brought the country to a standstill with

a general strike on January 24, when Milei was barely a month into office. Thousands filled the streets in the earliest demonstration of its kind against a new president in recent history.

After that, there was a 24-hour strike of the nation’s train service, healthcare workers walked off the job and government employees stopped work on February 26.



Wednesday  
10 April

10:00am to 11:00am

## Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Presented by  
Dr Al Fricker

Thursday  
11 April

11:30am to 12:30pm

## Supporting students with ASD (for ES Staff)

Presented by  
Belinda Webb

Thursday  
2 May

5:00pm to 6:30pm

## Supporting EAL students

Presented by  
Marika Convey

# Coming up at the IEU

## Wednesday 10 April

- [PD Webinar](#) - Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

## Thursday 11 April

- [PD Webinar](#) - Supporting students with ASD
- [PD Webinar](#) - Supporting students with ADHD

## Wednesday 17 April

- HSR Initial OHS Training Course (Day 1/5) Also 18, 19, 23 and 24 April

## Wednesday 1 May

- Regional Rep Training - Mildura

## Thursday 2 May

- [PD Webinar](#) - Supporting EAL students

## Friday 3 May

- Level 1 Rep Training

## Wednesday 8 May

- Regional Rep Training - Ballarat

## Thursday 9 May

- [PD Webinar](#) - Parent teacher interviews
- [PD Webinar](#) - Productive discussions with parents

## Tuesday 14 May

- Consultative Committee Training - Consulting on POL structure

## Thursday 16 May

- [PD Webinar](#) - Supporting students with ADHD

## Friday 17 May

- Level 2 Rep Training - conversations that build power

## Wednesday 22 May

- Regional Rep Training - Warrnambool

## Thursday 23 May

- [PD Webinar](#) - Strategies for tracking student progress
- [PD Webinar](#) - Building effective relationships with students

## Thursday 30 May

- [PD Webinar](#) - Supporting students with Dyscalculia

Events and training updated regularly. To find out more and register head to

[www.ieuvictas.org.au/all-events-training](http://www.ieuvictas.org.au/all-events-training)

## UNION QUIZ supplied by the IEU members at St Peter's Primary School, East Keilor

- On what date did State and Catholic school staff rally in Melbourne in 2013?
  - 14 February
  - 1 January
  - 16 July
  - 25 December
- Who is Australia's Minister for Education?
  - Jason Clare
  - Clare O'Neill
  - Dr Jim Chalmers
  - Katy Gallagher
- In what year did the IEU Tasmania amalgamate with VIEU?
  - 2010
  - 2011
  - 2008
  - 2015
- How much more per week do union members earn than non-members?
  - \$22
  - \$312
  - \$52
  - \$112
- The Trades Hall building in Melbourne opened in what year?
  - 1890
  - 1859
  - 1901
  - 1913
- For how many years was Deb James the General Secretary for the IEU?
  - 10
  - 13
  - 15
  - 18
- At which school did our Deputy Secretary Kylie Busk begin her teaching career?
  - St Bernard's East Coburg
  - Rydell High
  - Springfield Elementary
  - Methodist Ladies College
- What is the Trades Hall Council slogan for this year's International Women's Day Rally?
  - Think Equal, Build Smart
  - Celebrating the Past, Planning for the Future
  - End the Silence!
  - My Body, My Right
- In what year was the eight-hour work day initiated?
  - 1869
  - 1865
  - 1860
  - 1856
- What does the abbreviation 'LWP' stand for?
  - Love Wet-day Programs
  - Let's Win Powerball
  - Leave Without Pay
  - Long Weekends Please

## PAY IT FORWARD TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

St Peter's has chosen St Martin de Porres School, Avondale Heights, to provide the curly ones for the next quiz and then to pay it forward to another school!

## PICTURE THIS

What does this OHS sign mean?



- Karaoke happening in the staff room
- Cleaning in progress
- Time for golf
- Beware: Hurling Zombies