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# COMBATING THE GENDER BIASES IN AI



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## Editorial

**As this edition of *IE* goes to print, we give a fond farewell to one of the journal's Executive Editors as she embarks on an exciting new adventure -- retirement.**

Deb James, the esteemed and formidable General Secretary of the IEU VicTas Branch and President of the Victorian Trades Hall Council is retiring after 33 years in state and federal IEU leadership roles.

To honour Deb's monumental contribution to the IEU and the broader union movement, journalist Will Brodie recounts her remarkable career journey, including the highlights and challenges on the path to leadership, through a special InFocus profile (p6).

Elsewhere in this edition, we speak to an academic whose area of expertise is the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on teaching and learning (p10).

Members know the proliferation of AI in schools and workplaces has implications for workload, academic integrity and job security, but what about its effect on gender equity?

For the A Day in the Life segment, Dubbo-based IEU member and Aboriginal Education Worker Tracey Rapley shares what a typical day at work for her looks like and why she loves her role (p13).

Queensland-based teacher member and IEU Wellbeing Chapter Representative Bec Webster discusses why wellbeing is vital and how new resources mapped to the curriculum will benefit staff and students throughout Australia (p15).

We answer all your questions about the upcoming referendum on a First Nations Voice to Parliament and discuss why the union movement and IEU members are supporting a YES vote as the next step towards meaningful reconciliation (p22).

We hope you find this edition of *IE* informative and, again, would like to say an emphatic thank you to Deb James for her outstanding contribution to our union over many years.

Contact us with your feedback via email: [ie@ieu.asn.au](mailto:ie@ieu.asn.au)

### Terry Burke

**Secretary**  
IEU Queensland and Northern Territory Branch

### South Australia

#### Royal Commission into ECEC

The State Labor Government made an election commitment to have a Royal Commission into the Early Education and Care (ECEC) sector. They appointed Julia Gillard as the Commissioner. The Royal Commission has three terms of reference relating to: The first 1000 days of life, Universal three-year-old Preschool and Access to Out of School Hours Care.

The IEU was invited to be a part of the roundtable into preschools. Government, employers and unions were represented. It was pleasing to see that many matters were not contentious. For example, there was a unanimous view that teachers should be developing and running programs for preschools. Despite this view, the Commission has recommended that while workforce supply is being developed, programs could be developed by diploma-qualified educators. This will need to be monitored and we believe that stringent checks and balances need to be in place. We are also supportive of a birth-to-five degree, but note the regulatory challenges, particularly accreditation from the Teachers Registration Board. It was pleasing that there was a commitment to a play-based, culturally responsive approach and an emphasis on providing evidence-based tools to improve pedagogical approaches.

Read the interim report at:  
[www.royalcommissionecec.sa.gov.au/publications/interim-report](http://www.royalcommissionecec.sa.gov.au/publications/interim-report)

### Northern Territory

#### IEU members set for highest pay in Territory

The collective action of IEU members at The Essington School (Darwin) will see employees receive a 10 per cent pay increase over three years, making them the highest-paid teachers in the NT.

While at the time of publication the collective proposed agreement was still to be balloted, NTIEU Organiser Jengis Osman said in-principle agreement for following wage increases was secured:

- October 2022: 4%
- February 2023: 3%
- February 2024: 3%

"Members' determination and tenacity throughout the negotiations have paid off, with the employer agreeing to a cumulative 10 per cent wage increase over the next three years of the agreement," he said.

"The collective strength shown by Essington Chapter members throughout this round of collective bargaining is what has led to them becoming the highest paid teachers in the NT.

"Their wages will be on average 3.5 per cent higher than teachers in the NT public sector for October 2023 and February 2024.

Other key wins for Essington Chapter members during this round of collective bargaining negotiations include:

- increased superannuation whilst in receipt of government paid maternity leave
- increased secondary carer leave (two to three weeks).
- sun-safe benefits for outdoor staff.

### Queensland

#### Celebrating our school officers

IEU chapters in Queensland and the Northern Territory will celebrate School Officer Day 2023 on Wednesday 14 June 2023.

Each year on School Officer Day, we take the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the skills and strengths of our school officers, including support and services staff, and the difference they make to our school communities.

Schools simply would not function without school support staff. From laboratory technicians, classroom assistants, grounds staff and

administrative staff to speech pathologists, library staff and IT specialists, support staff are dedicated professionals.

Our union understands the specific challenges facing support staff - particularly regarding classification, contract arrangements, wages and recognition.

A recent study conducted by the Grattan Institute into work pressures in schools drew conclusions that connected the "critical role of the wider workforce in schools" and their potential to ease workload pressures for teachers.

Part of our union's plan to address teachers' unsustainable workloads is that collective agreements have provisions for school officers to take on a broader range of responsibilities and access better professional development opportunities.

For more information on School Officer Day 2023, visit: [www.ieuqnt.org.au/school-officer-day](http://www.ieuqnt.org.au/school-officer-day).

## NSW

### Support staff pay rises on the way in Catholic systemic schools

After a year of negotiations concerning pay rises for support staff, the IEU is close to matching increases received by support staff in government schools in 2019 for support staff in Catholic systemic schools.

The pay rises are targeted at classroom and learning support and administrative staff, as they were the groups that benefitted from the 2019 court case conducted by the public sector union representing government school support staff, the Public Service Association (PSA).

Pay increases will generally range between five per cent and 10 per cent, but a few classifications will receive significantly more than this.

Congratulations also go to NSW/ACT Branch Professional Engagement Officer Veronica Yewdall, recently elected Federal Assistant Secretary and NSW/ACT Branch Deputy Secretary Carol Matthews, who has been elected as Federal President, IEUA.

## ACT

### Amendments update Education Act

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch has been invited to a consultation session with the ACT Education Directorate on amendments to the *Education Act 2004*.

Amendments to the Act will ensure that the ACT has legislation that reflects the principles of its education system: providing excellence and equity in education to all ACT children. The aim is to ensure that updates relating to enrolments, attendance and participation will keep the ACT up to date with the requirements of a modern educational environment, and to ensure that parents/carers and school staff have greater clarity around their obligations.

The proposed amendments to the Act that will apply to enrolment and attendance non-government schools:

- Review the definition of 'student'
- Clarify the meaning of 'the right to choose a suitable educational environment'
- Clarify what is considered a 'reasonable excuse' in different sections of the Act
- Clarify the application of information and compliance notices for NSW residents enrolled in ACT schools
- Clarify attendance requirements for education providers other than a school

- Enable flexible attendance requirements
- Review procedures to encourage attendance at schools
- Require confirmation of a student's next education enrolment destination
- Review the application of exemption certificates

## Tasmania

### Wage increases coming

Under the terms of the IEU-negotiated enterprise agreement covering staff in Tasmanian Catholic schools, wage increases recently negotiated by AEU Tasmania for government school teachers are expected to flow on to all staff in Tasmanian Catholic schools.

This means that staff in Catholic schools should soon see significant pay increases, with further increases locked in for 2024 and 2025. Features of the government school deal include:

- a salary increase of 3.5% in 2023, 3% in 2024 and 3% in 2025
- salaries for teachers at Level 5 and above and principals will increase by \$1000, while teachers at Level 4 and below and education support specialists will receive a \$1500 increase to their base, and
- there will also be a series of additional one-off payments for staff at the lower end of the pay scale - teachers at Level 4 and below and education support specialists -\$1000 in 2023 and \$500 in each of 2024 and 2025.

The IEU is currently in discussions with Catholic employers in Tasmania around how these payments will be implemented in Catholic schools.

## Victoria

### Farewelling Deb

Retiring IEU Victoria Tasmania General Secretary Deb James was farewelled at a special function on 12 May, with staff and luminaries from the IEU and the union movement saying thanks to the much-admired leader for her 33 years of service.

In Deb's time, the union all but doubled its membership. She won countless battles on behalf of members, helped usher in vital anti-discrimination measures and oversaw the first major changes on workload in the current agreement in Victorian Catholic schools.

"It's sad to say goodbye after such a long time on the job and one that I've loved so much but it's the right time," Deb said.

Deb said she was confident that under its new leaders, General Secretary David Brear, and Deputy Secretary Kylie Busk, the IEUVT "will continue to thrive."

ACTU President Michele O Neil said Deb is, "a great unionist, sister, feminist, a fighter, a comic, an ally, a comrade".

Former IEUA Secretary Christine Cooper said Deb's leadership had been a particular inspiration to women.

"In a world of male leaders - where women are constantly pushed to have a masculine style in leading - and we are at war with our own 'imposter' self-talk - it was refreshing to not only be encouraged to be ourselves - but to be shown a leader who was able to do that.

"This made a difference to my way of thinking about myself - and I know it changed our members' lives as well."

For more on the career of Deb James, see the *In Focus* feature on page 6.



# In Focus: Deb James

## The reluctant leader

**When a luminary leaves a prominent role after a long tenure, the tributes are often serious matters, full of important words like respect and dignity, Will Brodie writes. That's certainly the case for Deb James, the much-loved General Secretary of the IEU Victoria Tasmania, and President of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, who is retiring after 33 years in state and federal union leadership roles.**

But another word pops up most frequently in testimonials about Deb. Fun.

Michele O'Neil, ACTU President describes Deb as "formidable, passionate, and determined fighter for IEU members" but also as a "comic".

Susan Hoppgood, President of Education International, says Deb's "good humour and ability to bring people together" were crucial to her success.

Former IEUA Secretary Christine Cooper says Deb has the "unique ability to help others enjoy life".

"No matter how serious things get, she will always find a way to help us take a breath and laugh at the situation – or at ourselves."

"Laughter is vital. Deb has taught us that we need to not only celebrate our wins, but we must find ways to refresh and harness our energies for the next fight.

"'Fun' in the end is a seriously motivating energy which brings about hope – and the ability to find hope is the most significant contribution that Deb gave to us."

Deb has loved her jobs and excelled at them. But there was no grand plan for what turned out to be a grand career.

"I was a girl from a working-class family. My dad was a milkman, my mum worked in factories and at times was

a cleaner... I went to St Monica's in the Melbourne suburb of Epping. You became a teacher or a nurse... that's what girls did if they were in Catholic secondary schools in the 1970s."

Deb's Deputy Secretary of 16 years, Loretta Cotter, dubs Deb's background the 'Catholic conveyor belt'.

It was a unique school excursion organised by her politics teacher Terry Monagle that planted a seed for Deb about unions and activism.

"He took a carload of Year 12 girls into a meeting one night in the Trades Hall building in Carlton. We sat up in the council chambers in the observer gallery and I was absolutely blown away by the vibe of the place, the significance of what they were doing, the business that they were conducting... that experience really had an impact on me..."

However, that seed lay dormant



for a long time. Like so many high achievers of her generation from her background, Deb became the first member of her family to tackle tertiary education, starting a three-year Diploma of Education course at Mercy Teachers' College in 1976.

When she started teaching in 1979 at St Bernard's Coburg, Deb taught 44 grade fives, her principal was a nun and there was no union.

The first award covering her sector – and the first union – didn't emerge until "about 1985".

By 1986/7 Deb was a Rep (delegate), and she soon progressed to the executive of what became known as the Victorian Catholic Primary Schools Staff Association. There were different associations for Catholic primary and secondary schools then, and another for staff in independent schools.

Another 'watershed' moment came in 1990 when she addressed thousands of colleagues at the first-ever strike of the Victorian Catholic primary and secondary unions, an

amazing experience that she now sees as a "trigger moment" for leaving teaching.

In 1990, she became a field officer (Organiser), for the VCPSSA and by 1992 she was working in the fabled Trades Hall building that had so entranced her as a 16-year-old.

She'd "absolutely loved" teaching but felt the same about the new gig.

She visited three Catholic primary schools a day, five days a week.

Deb would progress from field officer to Assistant IEU Federal Secretary in two years, despite not seeking higher stations.

"I wasn't out there pushing people out of the way... there was a bit of 'right place right time', about how I got jobs."

Deb insists she received "taps on the shoulder" from higher-ups.

"People see something in you that maybe you don't see in yourself and encourage you . . . I've certainly benefitted from that."

Deb made the "huge jump" to IEUA Assistant Secretary, and it was a whirlwind. Two weeks learning advocacy at Clyde Cameron College in Canberra, then into the "deep end" in Sydney, appearing before the Arbitration Commission.

Reliant on fax machines and dazzled by the 'brick phones' of Queensland colleagues, Deb travelled all over Australia, bargaining, serving logs of claims on hundreds of employers, dealing with disputes, and expanding the coverage of the union to all staff who worked in non-government schools.

Among the features of her IEUA job were "overwhelming" trips to East Timor to help support locals in their fight for independence. Deb helped deliver medical supplies prior to the 1999 ballot, and teachers and school supplies – and later she served on the board of the East Timor Friendship Schools Project with East Timor's First Lady Kirsty Sword Gusmao.

### **Intellectually challenging work**

In 1994, the three Victorian non-government school staff associations merged to form the Victorian Independent Education Union (VIEU). The IEUA had moved to Melbourne, Deb's new office was only a door away from the new entity and she'd begun mixing with its staff.

In 2000, after another tap on the shoulder, Deb applied for the vacant role as Victorian Deputy Secretary.

Deb said the federal work was "interesting and intellectually challenging", but the VIEU job appealed because "in the branches, that's where the members are, it's the coal face and the work is hands on".

She became part of a highly

successful hands-on leadership "team of two" with General Secretary Tony Keenan.

Only six years old, VIEU had faced "financially immensely challenging times" after a landmark win on pay parity with government school staff in 1997, a "key moment in the history of the union".

Catholic employers retaliated to that triumph by stopping payroll deductions for union fees.

"In those days the vast majority of employees were on payroll deductions and the union was heavily reliant on that income. It took years to get people back paying again."

Despite this setback, the young union – whose staff could all fit around a small table – grew and prospered.

Deb attributes that growth to "being out there at the grass roots, talking to people", recruitment efforts surrounding enterprise bargaining campaigns, and Tony's wise and sharing leadership.

The next position that crept up on Deb was VIEU General Secretary at the end of 2005 when Tony Keenan departed.

"It was a shock. I had no aspirations to be the boss or the person in charge. That has never been me despite the fact that I'm a bossy boots and have strong views on things.

"But if you're going to be the deputy of anything you have to be prepared to be the leader. You're the person who's been at the table. You do it because you have to do it."

### **All female leadership team**

Deb formed, with Loretta Cotter, one of the union movement's first all-female elected leadership teams, presiding over "stable, steady, and cohesive" consolidation.

They orchestrated landmark dual campaigning actions with the Australian Education Union and the merger with Tasmanian Catholic and independent unions in 2010/2011. The rebadged Independent Education Union Victorian Tasmania (IEUVT) has never stopped growing.

The IEUVT fought against divisive performance pay proposals; demanded improvements to Victoria's discrimination laws, won in 2021; promoted equal pay and conditions for education support staff in Tasmania; and backed vaccinations during the pandemic.

Deb says these are issues the union must make a stand on, and social justice campaigns were most strongly supported by members. The Tasmanian merger was done because it was "the right thing to do".

Deb also became the first woman

President of the IEUA and the first IEU member to become President of Trades Hall Council.

Deb still "can't believe" it all.

"I feel so privileged and so lucky to have had the opportunities that I've had. My working life wasn't about making lots of money, it wasn't about making profits for other people, it wasn't about ripping people off.

"It was in work that served other people where it's not about you it's about them."

Pushed, Deb concedes that she probably always was a natural leader, but she was a "troublemaker leader".

"In high school I was the one who organised the alcohol for a school retreat that got eight of us expelled....

"I'd have a go, I'd have a crack back, but I was quite friendly about it, and I got along well with the teachers.

"I'd stand up for friends, but I didn't run around picking fights."

Throughout Deb's career, she stood up for members, and fought like hell.

It was fun.

### Changes in education

Deb says the changes in teaching during her career has been "monumental".

"It's a complete shift; there weren't individual learning programs, wellbeing programs... education is much more complicated, and teachers are expected to do so much more in the same amount of time."

Deb hopes an Agreement in Victorian Catholic education will be an important starting point in the crusade against workload intensification.

"Employers have known this is a problem, but they don't really want to make a meaningful change to fix things and it really contributes to teacher burnout."

She says making better use of Education Support Staff, and paying them better, is a key to better workload outcomes.

### IEU work

For the IEU, there is no replacement for grass roots personal engagement but "the mode of communications and means of engagement have changed".

"Industrially, school-by-school stuff - bargaining in individual independent schools is challenging, and you need a lot of people to do it. Reportable conduct issues in the last eight years have exacerbated the workload."

She says IEUVT is financially secure and is in "great hands" with its new leadership.

"You need new blood, fresh people, fresh ideas. Renewal is a good thing to give people space to do their stuff and let them run things their way. I think the union is well respected as



a key stakeholder by employers and government and it's a genuine voice for the profession."

### The union movement

"There's a shift in what a union member looks like. It's not just a male building worker in a hi-viz vest and a hardhat. Those workers are still at the core of unionism, but the majority of union workers are women in health and education and in the public service.

"I think there's a challenge to further engage young people. And we need to debunk old myths about union officials. They're not all cardigan-wearing old guys!

"The future of the union movement is extremely positive.

"Just look at the leaders - Sally McManus and Michele O'Neil are phenomenal!"

# Our new IEUA Federal Secretary



**IEU members can rest assured our union will continue to thrive under the leadership of new Federal Secretary Brad Hayes, a seasoned unionist and self-described organiser at heart.**

Emily Campbell spoke to Brad about his hopes for the union movement and some of the issues facing staff in the non-government education sector.

## Path to leadership

IEUA Assistant Federal Secretary, Brad has almost 30 years' experience working with the IEU, starting as an Organising Trainee at the Queensland and Northern Territory IEU (IEU-QNT) branch in 1997.

More recently, Brad has been an elected Assistant Secretary of the IEU-QNT branch.

"The Organising Works Traineeship program was a groundbreaking initiative of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and affiliated unions including the IEU," Brad said.

"It sought to attract young activists and the next generation of organisers to the union movement.

"The program combined formal training with on-the-job-organising, and exposed trainees like me not only to my host union, IEU-QNT, but we also had access to a variety of union experiences across sectors and industries," he said.

## Organising North Queensland

Brad worked as an Organiser throughout regional and remote North Queensland, covering many schools and members throughout the years, which he counts among his career highlights.

"To grow with them and help those members find their union voice by acting together for the first time was an amazing experience.

"It's a smaller scale version of that buzz you get at a member event or rally when hundreds of IEU members come together and realise the power and joy of their collective voice."

Now, a federal office role means frequent travelling to work alongside the various IEU branches throughout Australia.

"In this sense, it's like organising in schools and the same

fundamentals apply: develop relationships and engage with members to build skills, activism and collective connections," Brad said.

"As with all unions, we know without a strong base of active and engaged members, we can't deliver the changes needed in our schools and early childhood education centres."

## Unity across branches

Brad said one of the major strengths of our federal union is the level of unity and shared commitment between different IEU branches.

"Our state and territory branches have been extremely generous in sharing strategies and providing honest assessments of success and failures," he said.

"Such collaboration is an underestimated strength of our union."

He acknowledged that the union movement had endured major challenges recently but is optimistic about the future.

"Despite the efforts of those who would like to see us disappear, we are not going anywhere.

"Unions like the IEU will continue to grow and adapt to a changing work and professional environment.

"You can sense a real mood for change across our worksites and the broader community.

"At the local, state branch and national level, it's member strength combined with high-quality union officers that delivers results for members.

"From humble beginnings in a relatively limited non-government sector, we are now one of Australia's largest unions and we've been able to deliver collective agreement coverage and union density levels exceeding the national average for the private sector," he said.

## Industrial and professional issues

Acutely aware of the professional issues members face in the non-government education sector, Brad said a combination of local action, sector-level negotiations and government interventions are part of the plan to tackle these problems.

"Education unions worldwide are grappling with the same challenges we are - a workload crisis in schools and a shortage of teachers and support staff.

"These issues contribute to a range of other problems including teacher burnout, out-of-subject teaching allocations and pressure to increase class sizes.

"The growth of technology in schools is a rapidly emerging issue, particularly with generative artificial intelligence (AI) has implications for workload and job security of members.

"These are complex issues which need addressing urgently."

Brad said recent Federal Government reforms to industrial laws and planned repairs to our education system and the teaching profession are a positive start, but more needs to be done to ensure no workers are left behind.

"We must get wages moving to keep up with rising living costs and we have to find a better way for schools to operate that reduces unnecessary workload and the burden imposed on staff," he said.

"As always, it will be union action that delivers the practical changes needed in our workplaces.

"Nationally, the IEU negotiates over 800 separate collective agreements that have delivered wages and conditions light years ahead of the minimum award.

"Our challenge is now to extend this bargaining success story into the final group of schools: early childhood education and post-secondary centres, that have been denied fair access to bargaining," Brad said.

# COMBATING THE GENDER BIASES IN AI

**The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) in schools and workplaces has implications for workload, job security, academic integrity and skills training. But what about its impact on gender equity, asks Emily Campbell.**

Dr Rebecca Marrone is an educational psychologist from the University of South Australia, specialising in the effects of AI on teaching and learning – including the gender biases implicit in AI and the need to view such technology through a feminist lens.

## **Inherent gender bias**

Dr Marrone focused in her PhD on how to increase women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and make the field more equitable.

"I've seen similar issues with the STEM sector reflected in the field of AI," she said.

Dr Marrone said given women only account for 10 per cent of the AI development workforce, it is unsurprising gender biases are inherent in the content produced by AI.

"When you consider AI is resourced by historical knowledge that already exists on the worldwide web, is it any wonder the technology reproduces a gender bias?" Dr Marrone said.

"The fact that AI systems can reflect historical prejudice and unconscious bias is a problem acknowledged by developers of the technology.

"However, with male voices dominating the history of AI development, there is a danger AI is destined to reproduce all the societal biases the women's movement has fought so hard to overturn."

Across the various touchpoints where AI is now used, Dr Marrone said there are severe ramifications for women if AI continues to be dominated by male perspectives.

"This is especially true for this generation of girls who will grow up in education systems and workplaces where AI is a partner in the process," she said.

Dr Marrone described an experience

where using Chat-GPT, ungendered questions produced responses that attributed masculine pronouns to doctors and feminine pronouns to kindergarten teachers.

"It's a small example but gender bias is insidious and replicates all the stereotypes about women's career options that we want to eliminate," she said.

"Increasing the number of women working in STEM and AI can help to combat gender biases in AI by bringing diverse perspectives and experiences to the table, advocating for ethical considerations, promoting representation and providing role models for girls and young women.

"Not only do we need women's involvement to help filter out these biases, but also to lead conversations about how the technologies can deliver better, fairer outcomes across society in areas such as health, education and wellbeing."

## **PD opportunities for staff**

Dr Marrone said it was important for schools and education staff to have a healthy curiosity towards AI and a basic grasp of its capabilities if they're to teach students about it.

"AI is here to stay and being afraid or ignoring it is not going to be helpful," she said.

"Developing educational tools to teach students to question and challenge AI is an important step in promoting critical thinking and ethical decision-making in the age of AI.

"There are ways we as teachers and students can talk and learn about AI and equip young people for the future.

"It's about raising awareness, so we don't blindly trust these applications and systems, so we make sure they work for us and with us.

"In the same way we have regular literacy, learning to read and write, AI literacy is learning to understand how these algorithms work – not necessarily create them ourselves, but to be critical consumers.

"Being aware of the bias or biases in the data sets is a good first step to developing a base level of people's AI

literacy."

In terms of professional development (PD) for teachers who want to develop a foundational understanding of AI and its potential biases, plenty of options are available.

"I would suggest that teachers look for PD opportunities relevant to their subject area and teaching context, ones that provide them with hands-on experience and the opportunity to collaborate with other educators," Dr Marrone said.

"Many online courses are available to provide teachers with an introduction to AI and its applications in education.

"For example, here at UniSA we are creating a course for teachers to upskill their AI and data literacy.

"Events like conferences, workshops and online webinars allow teachers to learn from experts in the field, network with other educators, and discover new tools and resources.

"The *GRAILE - Empowering Learners for the Age of AI, AI for K-12* initiative provides teachers with a toolkit of AI-related resources they can use in classrooms.

"Industry partnerships with AI leaders are another beneficial way for teachers to access training and resources about AI and suggested the *AI4ALL* program which is tailored to help incorporate AI into the curriculum," she said.

## **Age-appropriate lessons**

There is no right or wrong age for students to start learning about AI and gender biases, with Dr Marrone stating that it will vary depending on the curriculum and students' developmental stage.

"However, given AI is becoming increasingly prevalent, I'd encourage young students to be introduced to these concepts in an age-appropriate manner.

"In the early years, students can be introduced to basic concepts, such as how machines and computers are programmed to make decisions and how those decisions are influenced by the data the machines are trained on.

"Young children can also be asked why certain jobs or activities are often

associated with specific genders and encouraged to think about why this is the case.

"In primary and middle school, students can begin to explore more complex topics, such as how AI algorithms can perpetuate gender stereotypes and the importance of ensuring the data used to train these algorithms is diverse and representative.

"In high school, students can delve deeper into the ethical implications of AI and gender biases.

"For example, upper secondary students can be taught about the potential consequences of relying on AI algorithms to make decisions that can impact people's lives, such as in hiring or college admissions processes.

"They can also be encouraged to think about the role of bias in historical and contemporary societal issues and how AI can perpetuate or mitigate these biases.

"In general, it's important to teach about AI and gender biases in a way that is age-appropriate, engaging, and interactive, and that encourages students to think critically about the impact of these concepts on themselves and society," she said.

#### **Classroom ideas**

Dr Marrone outlined some examples of ways to explicitly teach students critical

thinking skills using AI in class.

"Teachers can provide AI-generated text for students to read and analyse to identify any biases or inaccuracies in the text," she said.

"Compare the AI-generated results with human-generated results and ask the students to analyse the differences or similarities and consider both approaches' strengths and weaknesses.

"An engaging activity is to have students create their own AI algorithms to solve a problem or answer a question.

"Ask them to consider any biases that might be present in their algorithm and to evaluate the accuracy of their results.

"Evaluate the data sets used to train AI algorithms and consider any biases that might be present, then ask the students to evaluate how those biases might impact the algorithm's accuracy.

"Another idea is for students to research and discuss the ethical implications of using AI in various contexts, focusing on the potential risks and benefits," she said.

#### **Sparking girls' interest**

Dr Marrone said girls and young women could take action to influence the future of AI through "train the algorithm" applications.

"Providing girls with access to publicly available 'train the algorithm' applications, such as Google's

Teachable Machine, means they can actively help shape the development and deployment of AI.

"It would be great if some of those public learning applications focused on training algorithms to eliminate biases that exist in the technology.

"This can help them start learning about AI and get hands-on experience with training algorithms.

"Highlighting the potential benefits of AI, such as improving decision-making, automating tasks, and solving complex problems, allows girls to see the value of AI and sparks an interest in training algorithms," she said.

As with other STEM subjects, creating a supportive learning environment for girls is important to encourage students to pursue an interest in AI.

"Encourage girls to work together in groups to train algorithms, so they can practice collaborating and learning from each other," Dr Marrone said.

"Teachers and support staff can facilitate this by encouraging girls to share their ideas and experiences, ask questions, and avoid gender-based stereotypes.

"Providing girls with access to attainable role models working in the field of AI and STEM is essential, because 'you can't be what you can't see'.

"There's a large body of research that shows when we provide strong female

"we need women's involvement to help filter out these biases... to lead conversations about how the technologies can deliver better, fairer outcomes across society in areas such as health, education and wellbeing."





role models to young girls they start to mimic and model the behaviours and can start to think maybe a job in STEM is something they can achieve.

"Inviting female scientists, engineers, and technology professionals to share their experiences with students can help girls see what they can achieve and what a career in STEM might look like.

"Offering hands-on learning opportunities for girls such as coding workshops, robotics clubs and science experiments, can help girls see practical application of STEM and build confidence.

"Promoting STEM and AI as a tool for social good and highlighting how it can be used to help solve real-world problems and make the world a better place," she said.

#### **Role of schools**

Schools and education staff are critical in preparing students academically and socially to live in a rapidly changing world.

Dr Marrone said in addition to teaching academic skills and AI literacy, schools must equip students with foundational 'non-Googleable' human skills so they can thrive.

"Contemporary education should encourage students to develop a wide range of skills and capabilities: critical thinking, cultural competence, creativity, teamwork, emotional intelligence and communication skills

will always remain important," she said.

"Educating students about gender equality is part of this.

"As students enter the workforce or post-secondary study, they will encounter a diverse range of people with different backgrounds and perspectives.

**"Promoting STEM and AI as a tool for social good and highlighting how it can be used to help solve real-world problems and make the world a better place"**

"By promoting fairness and equal opportunities, teachers can help level the playing field, reduce discrimination and promote a more harmonious and

equitable society," she said.

Of course, there are further equity considerations as AI models will inevitably shift from being freely accessible to costing money.

"If AI tools move to a subscription-based model, it could make them less accessible to students who can't afford to pay," Dr Marrone said.

"As AI tools become more commercialised, there is a risk they may be developed and marketed primarily for mainstream audiences.

"This could potentially exclude or marginalise women and other underrepresented groups who may have different needs or perspectives.

"While the commercialisation of AI tools could potentially lead to increased innovation and development, it could also lead to a focus on short-term profits rather than longer-term social impact.

"It will be important for developers and stakeholders to consider these issues and work to ensure that AI tools are developed and marketed in ways that promote gender equality and social justice.

"Schools should work to address educational equity and access issues by investing in infrastructure and resources to ensure all students have access to AI education."

# ADAY IN THE LIFE

In this series we talk to IEU members about their diverse roles in education.

## Tracey Rapley

### Aboriginal Education Worker



**Tracey starts her busy day at St Johns College Dubbo, NSW by jumping on the computer and trying to get herself ready for the day's onslaught. After she's worked out what her day looks like, students start turning up at her door.**

"Our kids could be needing breakfast, needing some help with assessments and most importantly just a safe space and ear. You never know who's going to walk through the door. Our school community is just over 1000 students which includes 155 Aboriginal students, that's why no two days are ever the same," Tracey said

Tracey started as Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) at St Johns College at the beginning of 2022. Before that, she worked across two different local Catholic primary schools.

She said the two primary schools were a different kettle of fish, with much smaller numbers and different needs for students and families.

"At Dubbo, some days I might have a student sitting on the doorstep before I even get there. I must be versatile and think on the run."

Tracey runs cultural programs, so once the bell has gone she does prep for that work. Sometimes this can involve liaising with external providers. She might also meet with parents, Year Leaders and the Executive team during this time.

"You've got Aboriginal families who experienced the Stolen Generation and they don't want to come into the school, school is a bad place for them.

"So my role is to help bridge that gap and to make school a safe space, not only for the kids, but also for the parents and families.

"I'm lucky, we have a beautiful space in the centre of the school that used to be a chapel, but we've converted that into our Cultural Centre. Our school prioritises Aboriginal culture for our students and supports me in the work that I do, making a difference for each student.

"During break times, the kids come in to have a talk. Some of them will come in and make a sandwich. We've got a fridge in there with food. Some will come in to work on an assessment, or they can just come in for the safe space and a yarn.

"I wanted this space to be open to everybody, for everyone to feel included, not just our Aboriginal kids. Some of the other kids that aren't quite confident out in a busy playground with 1000 kids come in and hang out. I've been teaching some of the girls to weave at lunchtimes."

In the afternoon after the bell, Tracey tries to log everything that's happened that day. It's a catch-up time with teachers and leaders if they need any help.

"I help out where I can with some of the kids that have behaviour issues, sometimes coming from trauma, so relationships and trust are incredibly important. I always try and have that background connection and knowledge of what's going on in the kids' lives outside of school to help them as well.

"The biggest part of this job is the fact that our teachers are so busy programming and marking and running from class to class doing their jobs that I am able to assist them with building relationships with our kids. In my role, I don't have those constraints, so I get to know the kids on a more personal level.

"Sometimes families can feel intimidated by the teachers and the school setting so I ring them and have a bit of a yarn. It makes it easier for them and helps build healthy relationships for everyone.

"I try to explain and assure them that education for our kids and for our culture is the most powerful thing and it's what's going to make a difference."

# Fostering a positive mental health culture in schools

**Mental health advocacy organisation R U OK? has released free resources mapped to the Australian Curriculum for primary and secondary schools. These resources could serve as a valuable tool for both students and educators, Katie Fotheringham writes.**

As an organisation, R U OK? encourages people to invest more time in their personal relationships and build informal support networks comprising friends, family and colleagues, while having conversations surrounding mental health if they identify signs of distress or difficulty.

While R U OK? prompts us to start these important conversations, without adequate tools to support people facing mental health challenges, we may be ill equipped to provide meaningful help.

R U OK? CEO Katherine Newton said the new resources were designed to empower students to become better friends and equip them with the skills needed to provide valuable support to one another.

"For students, learning how to support their peers and show interest in how a friend is travelling, through whatever life is throwing at them, is an important life lesson," Katherine said.

"We have designed these resources to empower schools and increase students' capacity to look after their peers by having meaningful R U OK? conversations," she said.

## **Practical resources for classrooms**

The resources include lesson plans, videos and classroom activities suitable for students across all year levels that can

be used to address the Personal, Social and Community content in the Health strands from the Australian Curriculum.

R U OK? educator resources can also be integrated into pastoral care and wellbeing lessons via The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.

The resources develop a range of general capabilities, including aspects from personal and social, critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding and literacy.

Resources can be accessed online at [www.ruok.org.au/education](http://www.ruok.org.au/education)

## **Promoting educator wellbeing**

While fostering a positive mental health culture among students is important, it is also necessary to consider what can be done to promote wellbeing among education workers.



Research has shown workers in the education sector continue to face high rates of psychological strain, with teachers more likely to experience anxiety and depression than the average Australian.

A recent report from the Black Dog Institute found that a staggering 46 per cent of Australian teachers are considering leaving the profession within the next 12 months - a huge increase from 14 per cent in 2021.

### Wellbeing Reps in schools

Bec Webster, a HPE and Science teacher at St Thomas More College in Brisbane, is the Wellbeing Representative in her school's Chapter.

"Within my Chapter, I work very closely with our Chapter Rep to support our staff," Bec said.

"Sometimes, our staff just want to be heard, and I'm happy to offer my time for that.

"But sometimes, people aren't sure what to do and use me as a sounding board before moving to action."

Bec said taking on the role of Wellbeing Representative has allowed her to make a positive contribution while being more actively involved with her Chapter.

"My ultimate goal is that all our staff have the ability to speak up when they are either struggling or if they have an idea that could benefit our whole staff contingent," she said.

### Supporting students and staff

Bec said more support should be available to both students and staff to support their wellbeing.

"Students need to learn wellbeing at an early age so they can create good habits.

"Having processes in place to support wellbeing ensures staff are actually able to look after themselves and their families," she said.

Bec said her school had successfully implemented some of the new R U OK? resources within their pastoral care classes to support student wellbeing.

R U OK? has also compiled resources related to educator wellbeing, including a staffroom conversation guide designed to empower educators to create a supportive workplace culture.

Staff resources can be found at [www.ruok.org.au/education](http://www.ruok.org.au/education)

*Photo credit:  
Photos courtesy of John Veage/R U OK?*

### What is a Wellbeing Representative?

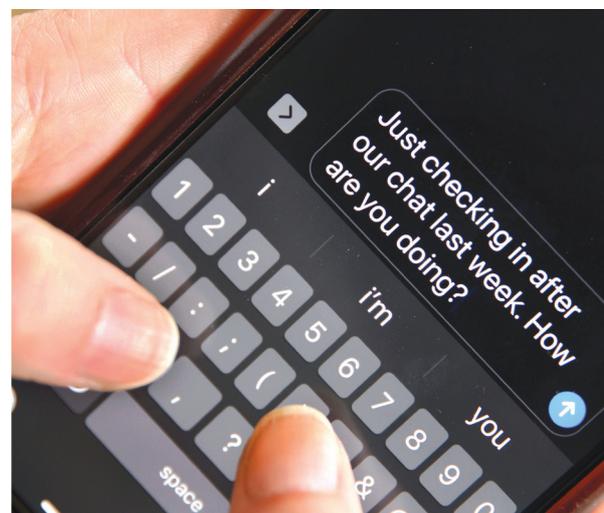
For students, learning how to support their peers and show interest in how a friend is travelling, through whatever life is throwing at them, is an important life lesson.

Within the IEU-QNT Branch, Wellbeing Representatives are an important component of Chapter Leadership Structures.

The Wellbeing Representative has the responsibility of working with the Chapter on matters of social justice and staff welfare.

The role involves being a point of contact for staff who need information related to burnout, bullying or harassment as well as general wellbeing - and training is provided to ensure they are equipped to deal with these issues.

If you are interested in electing a Wellbeing Representative for your IEU Chapter please contact your IEU-QNT Organiser directly via your MyIEU member portal at [www.myieueu.org.au](http://www.myieueu.org.au)



# Review of university teaching courses

# IEUA submission

**The IEUA says the current review of university teaching courses focuses unproductively upon the deficiencies of initial teacher education (ITE) rather than understanding it as just one part of a “complex, dynamic education system”, Will Brodie writes.**

The IEUA’s April submission to the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP) states that education in the teaching profession is a “continuum” and there is a need for “ongoing support for teachers at every level of their career”.

The submission was in response to TEEP’s Discussion Paper on how teaching is taught at universities, released in March, which intended to focus on:

- strengthening initial teacher education programs
- drawing a stronger link between performance and funding of initial teacher education
- improving practical teaching experience, and
- enhancing postgraduate teacher education for mid-career entrants.

TEEP will deliver a final report to the Federal Government in June. Federal Education Minister Jason Clare set it up after discussions at the Teacher Workforce Shortage Roundtable in August 2022. That gathering was digesting the Quality Review of Initial Teacher Education, published in February 2022.

The IEUA submission says TEEP placed insufficient focus on how ITE interacts with schools and the wider education system and fails to recognise the “ongoing and significant professional and industrial issues” being experienced by schools and teachers.

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes said the discussion paper references important issues, but “these don’t exist in isolation from other factors contributing to current teacher shortages across the country”.

“Sending new teachers into classrooms to then immediately be overwhelmed by unsustainable workloads is decimating our next generation of teachers. Throughout the Panel’s period of consultation, the IEU has been highlighting the additional support measures needed by student teachers during their studies, practicum placements and initial teaching appointment.

“Quality teaching mentors are central to quality teacher education outcomes. School employers must do more

to ensure such support is available in all school settings, and that meaningful workload reductions are provided to experienced teachers to support their mentor role.

“The Panel’s review must avoid quick fixes and knee jerk reactions that would send unprepared teachers into classrooms. Teacher education programs must be rigorous, comprehensive, practical and world’s best practice. Rushing teachers into classrooms before they are ready will only exacerbate teacher burnout.”

The IEUA called for the following appropriately funded reforms, with the provision of:

- formal, structured, and well-resourced practical experience placements to all preservice teachers.
- well-structured and well-resourced mentoring and induction programs delivered by qualified and experienced teachers.
- appropriately trained remunerated school based experienced teacher supervisors and mentors who have been provided with appropriate time-release
- appropriate and ongoing support and release time for graduate teachers as they commence their career to enable them to transition to higher levels of practice
- resources and strategies which address the excessive workload for teachers in schools.

Professor Viv Ellis, Dean, Faculty of Education, Monash University supports the desire to improve the quality of teacher education but says retention of teachers is the most critical issue facing Australian education.

“To address that challenge, a longer-term strategy is needed that addresses working conditions for teachers, career structures and professional development, appropriate rather than punitive degrees of accountability, and salaries.

“School systems and school leaders must be confident that they are recruiting new teachers who will succeed within their systems and schools and provide effective teaching for children and young people. The notion of ‘classroom readiness’, however, is problematic if the systems and schools expect the quality of teaching from newly qualified teachers that they observe from their experienced classroom teaching staff.

“In Australia, for the most part, ITE educators’ research is in



support

advice

their specialist field, is high quality, and directly relevant to the student teachers they are preparing. Australian educational research – much of which comes from those involved in ITE – is internationally renowned. These research-active teacher educators bring their research findings to their classrooms as part of evidence-based research-led teaching.”

Professor Beryl Exley from Griffith University says the TEEP discussion paper’s four key areas are considered “in isolation from one another and without due regard for how they interrelate”. She agrees with the IEUA that the review misses “an appreciation of how initial teacher education degrees are one part of a teacher’s professional learning journey”.

“All the elements of reform are placed at risk when the sum of the parts doesn’t equal a whole.

“We need to have realistic expectations about what initial study can provide to graduate teachers. It can teach fundamental theories and provide professional experience, but teachers will need to keep adapting their skills and expanding their knowledge once they are in the classroom.

“What works in one context with one set of participants may be less effective in another context because of another set of underlying factors.

“This is why tailored induction programs and ongoing mentorship every time an early career teacher starts at a new school is crucial.

“Unfortunately, workplace induction programs are usually only offered to teachers in full-time permanent jobs, and rarely to the army of graduate teachers who change schools on a regular basis because they are working as temporary or contract staff.”

One of the key recommendations of the IEUA is to properly resource practicums, where students get practical experience in teaching.

A quality practicum component of ITE is crucial in the development of preservice teachers’ professional skills and therefore their confidence in response to different educational contexts.

#### **Release time for mentors**

Unfortunately, the workload involved in mentoring a preservice teacher far exceeds the time and resources currently allocated. The IEUA submission calls for mentors to be granted greater time release for supervising and assisting ITE students to ensure they can provide “reflective discussions” and the most useful feedback.

The issues with practicums are an example of how policymakers are missing the point on ITE.

“Schools are already burdened by excessive teacher workloads and teachers are not remunerated nor supported sufficiently to mentor and supervise ITE students,” the IEU says.

“Significant improvement in the coordination and quality of practicum experiences will not be resolved without the provision of time, funding and resources.

“At present, while universities receive a nominal amount of federal funding to resource the practicum component of ITE program, schools receive very little meaningful support and the workload impacts – and other needs of the school and its staff – are not taken into account when teaching practicums are arranged.

“Central to all school system and higher education agreements must be the guarantee that appropriately trained and remunerated teaching staff are provided with the necessary time release and funding to deliver the support ITE students require.”

The IEUA is also concerned about the fixation on publicly reporting teaching course data.

“There is rarely a situation in education where publicly available data has not been misrepresented or misinterpreted.

“The IEUA supports an increase to funding for mentoring structures in schools rather than a system of ‘reward funding’ to ‘high performing ITE programs’.

“Such a system would create ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ within a system and would fail to consider the needs of remote and regional placements.

“Funding would be better allocated to schools for the continued development of graduate teachers and meaningful high impact professional development of existing teachers.”

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**“Sending new teachers into classrooms to then immediately be overwhelmed by unsustainable workloads is decimating our next generation of teachers.”**

assistance

guidance

# SORTING

## FACT from FICTION

**It's hard enough for adults to sort fact from fiction in the media these days. Little wonder there is increasing concern about the capacity of students to filter misinformation, Will Brodie writes.**

IEU Rep Emma Forte, who teaches at St Leonard's College, an independent school in south-east Melbourne, said students are taught to identify bias and fake news in mainstream media, but social media presents a bigger challenge.

"I worry that because students consume social media in such large and frequent quantities, teachers can't keep up with the untruths and personalities that perpetuate such untruths and hate.

"We don't always know where to fit this lesson into our curriculum - is it a job for the English faculty? Is it a pastoral care issue? Should it be addressed school-wide? Is there space for it in a parent seminar? No doubt, it's important to address, but where does it fit in, and who holds that responsibility?"

*Guardian UK* writer and teacher Lola Okolosie said "toxic influencers" such as Andrew Tate are reaching children "more easily than ever". Due to the internet's reach, the same hate and lies can beset Brighton Australia, and Brighton UK.

Okolosie urges parents to log in to the sites their kids consume to "catch a glimpse of what other 'conversations' take place on such platforms".

She also called on parents to help teachers prepare children.

"Teachers can't be the only guards against such a huge problem - to expect so is to pile an impossible responsibility on to an already overworked profession."

Emma concurs.

"We teach our students important values, like respect, inclusivity, and diversity, and use social action initiatives to build up our wider community networks, beliefs about justice, and encourage acts of philanthropy, but there is a small percentage of students who switch off, don't take these values seriously or don't see the importance in building cohesion between different societal groups, particularly marginalised or minority groups."

### **Education against extremism**

United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris said education is crucial in combatting hate speech, "especially as a prevention tool".

"Evidence shows that developing media and information literacy skills makes (learners) less prone to exclusionary and violent extremist ideas."

The non-profit Teaching Tolerance is a program of the US Southern Poverty Law Center. Its mission is to reduce bias and promote equity in schools.

Its *Speak Up At School* guide lays out a checklist for dealing with hate speech incidents in the classroom:

**1 INTERRUPT:** Do not show anger, make recriminations or lecture - just a calm, straightforward 'Stop, it is not ok to talk like that'.

**2 QUESTION:** Ask simple, exploratory questions in response to bigoted remarks, eg, 'Why would you say a hurtful thing like that?'. Unpack the prejudices and add context and information to dispel them.

**3 CALL IT OUT:** Denounce the words not the person - 'I'm offended by your words because . . .'

**4 COUNTER AND CORRECT:** Know the facts and counter hearsay, bias and rumours with reliable statistics, quotes, research, reports, and facts. Develop and promote a counter narrative.

**5 EMPATHISE:** Provide other perspectives and encourage empathy. 'Can you imagine how that comment feels for X'.

**6 ECHO:** Amplify the anti-bias messages of others by endorsing and adding to what they are saying so that they feel supported.

**7 EDUCATE:** Promote critical thinking skills and share ways to identify and respond to manipulative techniques and propaganda.

**8 REPORT:** Encourage targets and witnesses to report hate speech so that the problem is not invisible. Report the incident to someone in authority.

The UN said any measures undertaken in the classroom "must be reflected in all aspects of school life, including policies, extracurricular activities, sports, and social and cultural events".

Also critical is the "active engagement" of teachers, administration, and parents, while social and emotional learning (SEL)



can provide practical tools for teachers. They can use case studies and real-life scenarios to discuss controversial situations and engage different points of view. SEL also helps learners “manage stress and negative emotions, acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, and resolve conflicts”.

In Finland, misinformation education is integrated throughout education as a matter of national defence - they share a border with Russia, which targets them with fake news.

“Multi-platform information literacy and strong critical thinking have become a core, cross-subject component of a national curriculum that was introduced in 2016,” *The Guardian* reported.

Kari Kivinen, head teacher at a college in Helsinki, said in maths lessons, his pupils learn how easily statistics can lie. In art, they see how an image’s meaning can be manipulated. In history, they analyse propaganda campaigns, while Finnish language teachers work with them on the “many ways in which words can be used to confuse, mislead and deceive”.

He said his students “stumble across” news via WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat.

“Or more precisely, an algorithm selects it, just for them. They must be able to approach it critically. Not cynically - we don’t want them to think everyone lies - but critically.”

Australian schools also confront misinformation, but it’s not central to curricula. At St Leonard’s, students in Year 6 English learn to identify fake news and bias in the news and Year 11 Media and Politics classes examine the spread of fake news online. Such themes are also explored in history classes, where students are taught to question the “origin, purpose, and authority of sources and when they are made and distributed”.

“Across disciplines and year levels, students are taught critical thinking and reasoning to help them identify bias, sort fact from fiction, and understand when truth is not supported by credible evidence,” Emma said.

“Through the teaching of skills, and explicit use of fake news and other

media forms, students are better equipped to locate news that is truthful and informative and turn away from news items and news sources that lack credibility and authority on a matter or are misleading and spread misinformation.”

Finland might be the gold standard for tackling misinformation and hate speech. But Deakin University’s Lucinda McKnight demands we go much further.

**“Evidence shows that developing media and information literacy skills makes (learners) less prone to exclusionary and violent extremist ideas.”**

**Vital for democracy**

“The ability to critically consume and strategically create social media is vital to the health of democracies. Yet writing for social media posts and powerful platforms such as Twitter, TikTok and Facebook is not central to how we teach English,” she wrote for *The Conversation*.

She said the narrow approach to teaching writing must change “so students are practising the forms of writing and communication that are meaningful in today’s world”.

“Students need to be able to create memes, write rolling news blogs and produce digital news podcasts, all for networked audiences. They need to determine aims, invent concepts, manipulate images, combine different media, compose compelling text, and respect copyright law. This is impactful and purposeful writing to achieve influence in the world.

“Social media use potentially both threatens and supports democracy. Yet media education remains devalued in the English curriculum and classroom, largely in favour of reproducing print literature forms and essays.

“It is time for English to join the 21st century and embrace all the diverse and digital means of communication that are part of our lives today. Our freedom and futures depend on it.”

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# URGENT ACTION

needed to address  
principals' workloads

**Every year, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) surveys principal wellbeing, and it's often sobering reading. But the latest Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey (2022) is shocking. It says principals are grappling with "the highest rates of burnout, sleeping troubles, stress, and depression in a decade", Will Brodie writes.**

It reveals that one in two school leaders are at risk of serious mental health concerns including burnout and stress. Even more alarmingly, it reports that school principals are 11 times more likely to be subjected to physical violence than the average Australian, and nearly half have reported being assaulted by parents or students.

IEU-QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke called for "urgent interventions" from government and employers to address this crisis.

"The number of principals looking to retire has tripled in the last three years for the same reasons as our teachers – workload and a lack of time to focus on their core duties as a school leader.

"This is compounded by the national shortage of teachers unwilling to work under the current workload regime.

"We don't have a teacher shortage – we have a shortage of teachers willing to work under oppressive workloads.

"Like teachers, our school leaders are forced to do too much work unrelated to their core duties, severely impacting their health and wellbeing."

Mr Burke said immediate action by school employers and

government was needed to address workload in schools.

"Meaningful reform must be put in place to tackle the unnecessary paperwork, red tape and obsession with data which are sucking the life out of our profession."

In Queensland, school employers are now legally responsible for complying with the Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice, which came into effect from 1 April this year.

"The new Code will also provide practical, enforceable minimum standards a school must follow to comply with its duties to ensure psychological health and safety of its employees," Burke said.

Similar regulations are appearing in other states. They will mean the mental health of workers must be considered more seriously by management.

The survey reveals why that change is essential.

## **Red flag alerts**

It revealed that 'red flag' alerts jumped by 18.7 percentage points last year – a 64.26 per cent increase.

Red flag alerts mean school leaders are at risk of "self-harm, occupational health problems or serious impact on their quality of life".

Principals work an average of 56 hours a week and their job satisfaction and trust in management is at the lowest levels ever recorded by the survey.

IEU Victoria Tasmania Principal's Officer Noel Dillon said many principals are targeted by parents in online forums and

have no right of reply.

"Parents are threatening legal action against principals for any action against their child. Principals are frustrated that their hands are tied and they're unable to deal with inappropriate behaviours without threat from parents or their legal teams."

"Abusive, attacking and often threatening" emails are sent to principals at all hours.

And inappropriate and aggressive student behaviour has increased since pandemic lockdowns stopped.

As Dan McMahon, president of the Queensland Catholic Secondary Principals' Association told the *Catholic Leader*, "There are more angry people in society".

"This may have been exacerbated by experiences of COVID-19. It is not uncommon for parents to 'vent' at school personnel."

In the 2022 survey, parents were the highest ranked source of bullying at 19 per cent. Conflicts and quarrels were reported by 60 per cent of participants, mostly with parents (36 per cent).

Gossip and slander was reported by 50 per cent of participants, with parents the main source (31 per cent).

### Enough is enough

ACU Investigator and former principal Dr Paul Kidson said, "Enough is enough. Our research shows abuse and intimidation towards principals and the associated health risks suffered by school leaders continues to grow and it must stop".

"Such a significant shift in red flag warnings in a short space of time suggests the situation is more serious than first thought. For the past 12 years we have looked at trends and this year they are stark – the scale and the rate has intensified, and we are seeing a severe escalation in stress levels."

In NSW, school violence is such a concern Emeritus Professor Donna Cross was appointed the state's first Chief Behaviour Advisor in March. Assaults in the state's schools had jumped by 50 per cent since 2013 and the escalation of bad behaviour in schools led to the review of controversial policy introduced in 2022 which restricted the length and number of suspensions schools could issue – which was criticised for undermining teacher authority.

In April, a federal inquiry began hearings to examine increasing disruption in Australian school classrooms. It was informed in part by an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development study from 2018 that revealed Australia ranked 69 out of 76 worldwide for unruly classrooms.

### Tipping point

Educational psychologist and co-lead investigator of the ACU survey Professor Herb Marsh said principals are "weighed down by the compounding crunch of unsustainable workloads, chronic teacher shortages and concern about mental health issues among staff and students".

"The wellbeing of our school leaders is at a tipping point and increasing numbers of principals may not be able to do their jobs. If this happens, their absence will seriously

limit the achievement of national educational priorities and policies.

"There is an urgency in our call for action as the time to redress these concerns diminishes. We may see a mass exodus from the profession, and the implication for Australian education would be devastating."

The Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) investigated why educators were leaving their jobs and in April concluded: "The teaching profession is in crisis".

AARE's survey found that "the majority of those who are leaving the profession are experienced classroom teachers and leaders in their school. Forty per cent of those surveyed were in school leadership positions at the time of leaving". This exacerbates pressures upon principals.

AARE report participants said work environment, dealing with poor student behaviour, and excessive workloads contributed to their decision to leave the profession.

Despite the bleak picture offered by its research, AARE said "there is an opportunity for all stakeholders to address issues of flexibility, school leadership, progression and pathways, including a commensurate salary..."

Dillon said principals must be allowed to take actions that deter inappropriate student behaviour.

"This includes immediate suspension and expulsion without the threat of legal action against the principal or the school."

He called for parent awareness programs to inform them of the actions that can be taken against inappropriate behaviour.

And Dillon said education authorities must fully support the principals and put in place "process and practices that support principal action against dangerous student and parent behaviour".

The authors of the ACU principal survey also believe there are solutions. They praised federal and state governments for responding to teacher shortages with a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and asked for a comparable strategy for school leaders.

"We now call on governments to specifically address the health and wellbeing of Australian school principals. We cannot achieve anything

meaningful in education if our school leaders are not better supported to do their work, which is so critical to keeping teachers, students, and school communities happy, safe, and engaged."

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**"Meaningful reform must be put in place to tackle the unnecessary paperwork, red tape and obsession with data which are sucking the life out of our profession."**

# Vote YES for a Voice

## Later this year, Australians will be asked a very important question: do you support an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament enshrined in the constitution?

The upcoming referendum is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to recognise First Nations Peoples and continue the nation's journey towards meaningful reconciliation.

A Voice to Parliament would enable First Nations People to have input on government policies and projects that impact their lives – making a real and tangible difference.

An IPSOS poll conducted in January 2023 found 80 per cent of First Nations people support a Voice to Parliament.

The referendum is an opportunity for all Australians to stand shoulder to shoulder with First Nations Peoples and say 'Yes' to constitutional recognition and practical change through a Voice to Parliament.

## What will the Voice look like?

The Voice will be an independent, representative advisory body for First Nations Peoples that will provide a permanent means to advise the Australian Parliament and government on the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on matters that affect them.

The First Nations Referendum Working Group agreed to a set of principles that describe how the Voice will work.

The Voice is a body that will:

- provide independent advice to Parliament and government
- be chosen by First Nations Peoples based on the wishes of local communities
- be representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- be empowering, community-led, inclusive, respectful, culturally informed and gender-balanced, and include young people
- be accountable and transparent, and
- work alongside existing organisations and traditional structures.

The Voice will not have a program delivery function, or a veto power.

## What would a First Nations Voice to Parliament achieve?

A Voice to Parliament is about providing self-determination to First Nations Peoples.

Rather than symbolic gestures, a Voice would be a practical advisory

body that provides feedback and advice to government about laws and policies affecting First Nations people.

If a Voice to Parliament was introduced, First Nations Peoples would be included in government law-making processes and enabled to provide practical advice on how laws and policies can best improve their lives.

Currently, there is no systemic process for First Nations Peoples to provide input on government policy-making.

This means laws and policies are often made for First Nations Peoples rather than with them.

If First Nations Peoples have a Voice, progress can finally be made on closing the gap after decades of missed goals and limited change.

## Why are unions supporting the Voice to Parliament?

The union movement has a proud history of fighting for social justice and inclusion, not just in workplaces but in society more broadly, including through First Nations recognition and reconciliation.

Just like unions have campaigned for restitution of stolen wages and for the removal of laws that have forced many First Nations Peoples to work for free or below the legal minimum wage, the upcoming referendum is an opportunity to make change.

Union members are aware of the devastating consequences workers often face when they are not listened to by employers or when they do not have a say in matters directly affecting them.

Unionists also understand the difference they can make through collective action and know that activism does not stop at the door to their workplaces; the issues facing workers are indivisible from the issues facing communities.

Racial justice and First Nations justice is indivisible from economic justice, and not just because some of our members identify as First Nations Peoples.

The success of the union movement depends on the unity of the working class.

While First Nations Peoples are denied a meaningful say over the issues impacting them, the voice of the working class is diminished.

Fundamentally, that is why the union movement is supporting a Voice to Parliament; it will make a practical difference and start to deliver long overdue justice to First Nations Peoples.

## How does a referendum work?

A referendum is the only way to change the Australian Constitution and can only be held after a Bill passes through Parliament outlining proposed changes to the Constitution.

All eligible Australians are then asked to vote on the proposed constitutional change.

If voters agree with the change, they write 'Yes' in a square on the ballot paper.

If they disagree, they write 'no'.

A change to the constitution by referendum must be approved by a "double majority".

This means that a national majority of voters in the states and territories (ie, more than half of all voters) and a majority of voters in a majority of states (ie, at least four out of six states) must be in favour of the change.

## Is there enough information about the Voice?

Contrary to some claims, a wealth of information about the proposed Voice to Parliament is available.

The Voice was first proposed in the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The generous and gracious statement was developed after an elaborate consultation process with First Nations Peoples across the country.

In the five years since the Uluru Statement, a Senate Joint Select Committee has considered the proposal, returning a 264-page report in November 2018.

Subsequently, the Indigenous Co-Design Process Final Report was presented to the Federal Government in July 2021.

The 271-page report outlines options for how a Voice could operate.

Ultimately, as with any constitutional change approved by referendum, it is the responsibility of the Federal Government to implement the change effectively and in keeping with the will of the Australian people.

## United for Yes

IEU members around Australia can support the campaign for a Yes vote at the upcoming referendum. Following are some ways members can help.

## Pledge to vote Yes

Sign up and pledge to vote Yes so you can be among the first to know about campaign news, actions, training and events.



**Briohny Jones - Teacher at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School Waiben, Thursday Island and IEU-QNT Chapter Representative.**

Briohny is a Quandamooka person from the Nughie tribe of Moorgumpin (Moreton Island) and the Noonuccal tribe of Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) in Queensland. An active IEU-QNT Chapter Representative, Briohny leads union activities such as Labour Day, Chapter meetings and workplace campaigns.

She has developed a strong Chapter at her school, with 90 per cent IEU membership, and holds the trust and respect of all members.

Briohny is working for appropriate recognition of the cultural knowledge, skills and awareness of First Nations employees in Catholic schools.

In 2022, Briohny was awarded the IEU-QNT Thersa Nunn First Nations Member Award for her dedication to unionism.

Here's what Briohny has to say about the importance of a YES vote:

"The Voice to Parliament has the potential to be a significant step towards empowering First Nations Peoples in my community and across Australia.

"By giving us a voice in decision-making processes and acknowledging our unique status and connection to the land, the Voice to Parliament could help build a more inclusive, just, and equitable society.

"By working together, our union and the Voice to Parliament can contribute to the broader reconciliation process, supporting the healing and understanding of us, as First Nations people, to build a truly inclusive and equitable Australia.

"Supporting a yes vote at the referendum for constitutional reform is important. In doing so, we acknowledge the unique status of our First Nations Peoples and our connection to the land and provide a pathway for healing and understanding.

"Supporting a yes vote is a way for IEU members to align with their values around social justice, reconciliation, representation, and improved outcomes for all Australians."

**Enrol to vote**

Check your voter enrolment status. All eligible voters are required to vote in the referendum. And remember, 16- and 17-year-olds can enrol now so they are ready to vote after turning 18.

**Start conversations**

Initiate positive conversations with friends, family and colleagues about the importance of a Yes vote for a Voice

to Parliament as the next step towards reconciliation.

Speaking guides and conversation frameworks are available online through the official Yes23 website.

You can read more about the Voice, purchase supporter merchandise and get involved with the campaign for a Yes vote at [www.yes23.com.au](http://www.yes23.com.au)



# Federal budget begins long-term repair of broken education system

**The 2023-2024 Federal Budget announced on 9 May is a positive start to beginning the long-term repair of a broken education system in Australia after a decade of neglect by the previous coalition government.**

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes said the new budget rightly restores education at the centre of our nation's policy focus.

"Our 75,000 members often hear about the importance of their work in schools, and it's universally accepted there are major problems in education, including widespread staff shortages," Brad said.

"Yet those with the power to act - employers and governments - fail to follow their platitudes with tangible change.

"IEU members welcome the commitments of the current federal Labor government which is prepared not just to listen to the problems but to act on their concerns.

"The previous coalition government's neglect of schools and disregard for education workers will take time to repair, but the federal Labor government has taken important steps to restore early childhood education and schools as a national priority," he said.

## Key aspects of new budget

The Federal Government announced 5000 new government teacher scholarships will be funded in a bid to address teacher shortages and attract new staff to the profession.

"This is a good start, in conjunction with additional budget funding to support the Teacher Workforce Action Plan," Brad said.

"We desperately need more teachers, and further government and employer action will be crucial to tackle teacher burnout as part of a long-term plan to stem the exodus of experienced teachers leaving the profession."

In addition, \$72 million has been allocated to support the skills and training of early childhood education professionals, a step that Brad said recognises the critical importance of the sector.

"Limited professional development (PD) opportunities and mentor support is a common complaint of IEU members working in small and often remote early childhood education centres," Brad said.

"The Government's additional focus on regional and First Nations early childhood education services is also long overdue."

Targeted funding to close the gap in First Nations student attendance rates and educational outcomes in central Australia - along with more support for distance learning

and boarding options for remote indigenous students - is another feature of the education budget.

"This has the potential to make a real difference for the educational outcomes of First Nations students living in remote locations," Brad said.

\$32 million in funding will be allocated for over 1300 schools to upgrade their infrastructure and equipment.

"As a result, thousands of students in state and non-government schools across Australia will benefit from new facilities, including air conditioning, safer outdoor learning areas, new technology and ventilation for cleaner air," Brad said.

## Wage growth and secure jobs

In a cost-of-living crisis, the budget will provide some additional relief to vulnerable Australians who are struggling to make ends meet, although more is needed to lift people out of poverty.

"The union movement welcomes the Government's efforts to help vulnerable Australians by extending the single parent payment, increasing JobSeeker and rent assistance, providing energy rebates, cheaper childcare, cheaper medical medications and a historic investment in Medicare," Brad said.

"It's also great to see the Government's efforts to ensure big businesses that profit from selling Australia's resources and multinationals pay their fair share of tax.

"Delivering secure jobs, eliminating the scourge of wage theft and closing loopholes in industrial relations legislation employers exploit to suppress wages, are all urgent tasks ahead if we're to lift workers' wages," he said.

## Strong education workforce remains priority

Brad said although much is still to be done, the Federal Government's budget announcements are a step in the right direction for education.

"The Government is to be commended for these early efforts; work must now continue on the next phase of priority reforms, including review of the National School Reform Agreement later this year," he said.

"It is imperative that high-quality education and restoring a strong teacher and support staff workforce remain our national priority.

"Greater certainty and transparency in funding, reducing teacher workloads and targeted support for students suffering disadvantage are essential to securing an equitable and high-quality education system for our future.

"Many challenges remain, but our students and school staff deserve our nation's complete support," Brad said.

# Vaping ban a welcome move

**In early May the Federal Government announced a ban on the importation of nicotine and non-nicotine products used for recreational purposes. The products will still be allowed for pharmacies.**

The habit of vaping has skyrocketed among students in recent years. Students (and even parents) often believe they are indulging in a habit that is relatively safe, but studies have shown vaping is dangerous.

The take-up of vaping by young people is increasing. Research shows that one in five young people have vaped and nearly 80 per cent of them say it is easy to get a vape illegally at a shop or online.

In a recent survey, 64 per cent of teachers reported being aware of the sale of vapes at school. (Source: NSW Department of Health website).

A study by Curtin University researchers revealed potentially toxic substances in e-liquids or vape juice.

The study tested the chemicals and toxicity of 52 flavoured vape e-liquids available for sale over the counter in Australia and found that 100 per cent of the products were inaccurately labelled and contained chemicals with unknown effects on respiratory health.

Almost a third of the products also contained chemicals that are likely to be toxic if inhaled repeatedly, while 21 per cent contained nicotine, despite the substance being banned in the country.

The chemicals found in these e-liquids were known to cause respiratory disorders, including severe irritation when inhaled, and contribute to the development of lung cancer.

"With the unregulated, untested, and unknown nature of the vape industry, we knew the research into the chemicals and toxicity of e-liquids would uncover strong findings, but we never expected such alarming results," Lung Foundation Australia CEO Mark Brooke said.

IEU QNT Branch Secretary Terry Burke said the action was urgently needed to tackle the scourge of vaping.

"Vaping and the use of e-cigarette products by school children is an issue being raised increasingly by our members," Burke said.

"While the long-term issues of vaping remain to be seen, the research shows children who vape are three times

more likely to take up smoking, which is highly concerning.

"Vapes were introduced as a therapeutic tool for adults transitioning off cigarettes in a bid to quit smoking.

"Instead, vapes have been made easily available for recreational use by children, sold cheaply over the counter at corner shops and marketed with flavours, colours and packaging designed to appeal to youth.

"Our members are concerned at the number of young people engaging in the habit, who are at risk of addiction and adverse health outcomes.

"School staff are struggling to combat the issue and report they feel ill-equipped to educate students and the wider community about the long-term dangers of vaping," he said.

"The Federal Government's reforms, through stronger legislation, enforcement, education and support will hopefully curtail the uptake of vaping, which has exploded in popularity during the last five years.

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch member Bruce Paine said vaping was the new menace impacting students and teachers.

"Many schools are encountering similar issues: the sweet smell of raspberry, bubblegum or vanilla wafting from toilets and shrubbery," Paine said.

"Students asking to 'duck out' to the toilet during lessons, groups of students huddling suspiciously and students in empty classrooms at lunch and recess," he said.

"These are the signs that vaping is alive and well in your school community - girls and boys are equally interested in 'grabbing a vape'. I believe vaping is bigger than cigarette smoking during the 1980s and 90s.

"Many parents don't vape, so students are using other sources - a black market develops in the school, money changes hands, people who are not members of the school community lurk around outside after 3.30pm,



'drops' are arranged, a network is developed, the supply chain put in place.

"Detecting these thumb-sized vapes is impossible. It's a game that students are winning. Students in Year 5 are using vapes and the menace is present in every year group in high schools.

"It is taking everybody's valuable time away from teaching, supporting and learning," Paine said.

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# Managing psychosocial hazards at work

**In the ACT, the Work Health and Safety Commissioner Jacqueline Agius is looking forward to a time when psychosocial hazards are given equal weight to physical hazards, Sue Osborne writes.**

The Work Health and Safety Commissioner ACT and the Labour Hire Licence Commissioner recently presented to an IEUA NSW/ACT Branch planning meeting on Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work.

The responsibility for schools to provide a psychologically safe workplace for employees may expand following publication of Safe Work Australia's new model code of practice Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work, Holding Redlich lawyers Rachel Drew and Aiyana O'Meara said.

"Employers nationwide increasingly are expected to provide a psychologically safe workplace, and recent developments signal a future in which Australian employers - including school employers - could face criminal prosecution for failing to adequately protect employees' mental health," they said

"The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently released guidelines on mental health at work, providing global public health guidance on interventions to promote positive mental health and prevent mental health conditions.

"In Australia, the responsibility for employers may be taken further following publication of Safe Work Australia's Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work (Model Code).

"All states and territories except Victoria have implemented 'model' work health and safety laws aimed at harmonising different jurisdictions.

"For the laws to be legally binding however, the Commonwealth, states, and territories must implement them as their own federal and state laws."

In 2021 WorkSafe ACT launched its inaugural 'Strategy for Managing Work-related Psychosocial Hazards 2021-23'.

Psychosocial hazards are not the same as mental health or wellbeing, but they can lead to mental health injuries if they are not controlled properly in the workplace. Wellbeing programs do not control hazards, they deal with the consequences of the hazards. Psychosocial hazards can include:

- overwork or underwork
- exposure to traumatic events
- role conflict or lack of role clarity
- low job control
- poor workplace relationships
- poor support from supervisors
- workplace violence
- bullying
- inadequate reward and recognition
- hazardous physical work environments
- remote or isolated working
- poor procedural justice and
- poor organisational change consultation.

Agius has an affinity for teachers, as her journey to her current role began after a traumatic workplace violence experience while working as a teacher.

"I firmly believe that incident led me to where I am today, WHS Commissioner in the ACT. Before becoming the Commissioner, Agius was a lawyer and then Senior Industrial Officer for the Australian Education Union in the ACT.

"I am committed to this role after listening to teachers and support staff talking about the risks they were being exposed to. I soon realised that despite the WHS laws in existence, they were still not safe in their schools.

"Health and safety risks in schools were not being addressed. The attitude of 'it's just part of the job' was too common. You cannot look after your students if you are not safe and your employer has an obligation to protect you as well as the students.

"Psychosocial hazards are created by management practice and the way your work is organised. High workload, a chaotic workplace, lack of control, lack of support or consultation all add up."

While psychosocial hazards are harder to recognise and define in the workplace, they are just as crucial. The more they are ignored, the more likely an escalation to incidents of bullying or sexual harassment.

In the ACT data shows psychosocial injuries cause people to have longer breaks from the workforce than physical injuries. Anxiety, depression and PTSD take a long time to heal, if they heal at all. Many people never return to work due to psychosocial injuries.

"Broken bones mend, sometimes minds never heal," Agius said.

Identifying these risks in the workplace relies upon strong consultation by employers with all employees. Everyone must be able to have a say in a safe forum.

## New psychosocial regulations

Recommendations made following a national review of Australia's Health and Safety laws are leading to new legislation in each state dealing specifically with hazards to psychological health at work.

In January this year Tasmania introduced a new Code of Practice for managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace. The code sets out the legal duties for workplaces to prevent psychosocial hazards from causing injury and to effectively manage any injury which does occur.

In Victoria new regulations expected to be introduced later this year will place a legal obligation on employers to control psychosocial hazards in the workplace and take steps to prevent psychological injuries from occurring.

Employers will be required to document their plans for preventing psychological injury and to report incidents or complaints related to aggression, violence, bullying, and sexual harassment to WorkSafe twice a year.

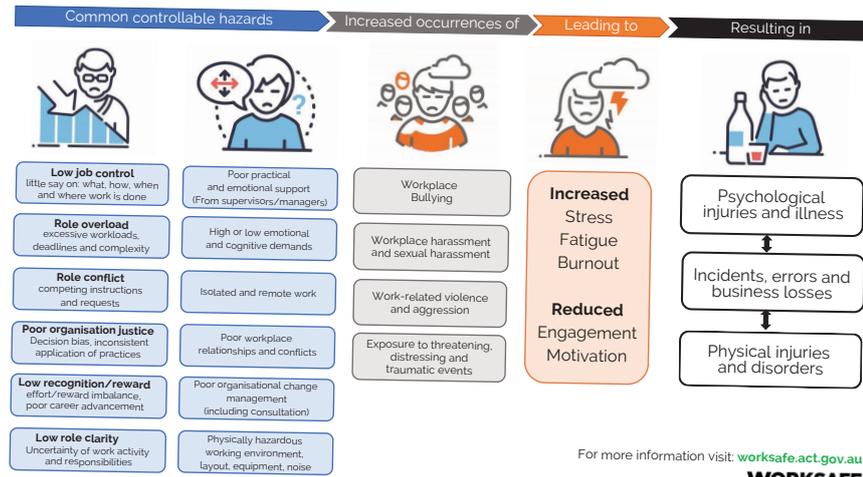
The new regulations aim to ensure employers are proactive in identifying and addressing potential psychological hazards in the workplace and take steps to ensure a safe and healthy work environment for their employees.

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# Exposure to common psychosocial hazards impacting workplaces and their workers



For more information visit: [worksafe.act.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au)



## SEXUAL HARASSMENT SOUNDS LIKE:

Sexual harassment is never acceptable.

Sexual harassment isn't always what you might expect. It might be unwelcome – touching – suggestive comments or jokes, unwanted advances, including into personal space or unwelcome personal questions and comments – in person or online. It doesn't matter who the person is or how small, hidden or innocent the behaviour may appear, sexual harassment should be reported every time it occurs.

If someone sexually assaults you at work, you should call the Police immediately on 000. You should report all sexual harassment to your manager, human resources team or WHS representative. When these internal processes fail, you can report your concerns to WorkSafe ACT and our psychosocial team will look into it. You can even report it anonymously.

ALL WORKERS ALL WORKPLACES WORKSAFE.ACT.GOV.AU WORKSAFEACT

## Case study

### The following case study is from Safework NSW, Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work

A new governmental policy is required to be implemented with little time for consultation. The school provides for students with complex needs. The changes mean that teachers will need to add to their current workload. This will increase tasks such as face-to-face teaching and its preparation and planning, data collection and analysis, ongoing assessment, staff meetings, and communications with parents and community. These requirements make it difficult to continue to manage daily incidents and interactions among increasingly complex student cohorts, professional learning and development and compliance activities.

#### Psychosocial hazards and risks

**Role overload:** The change has added to the demand on workers. Workers are concerned that to meet deadlines, tasks such as professional learning, reporting and lesson planning are priorities, and therefore will need to be completed outside standard work hours.

Workers are also concerned the changes may require learning new skills at a time when they are having trouble with the existing role overload.

**Poor organisational change consultation, poor support and low job control:** Poor change consultation has contributed to the perception that there has been limited consideration of existing workload and poor support to manage the increase in workload from new requirements.

Workers have limited say in the decisions about their workload, how the work is done and the changes to their work.

There are no clear guidelines to support re-prioritisation of tasks to meet deadlines within the strict timetables of schools.

#### Psychosocial controls

**Role overload:** The organisation consults with teachers to:

- review current tasks and new demands to prioritise
- monitor and review the work hours undertaken by teachers and capacity to incorporate new workload associated with this policy
- employ more permanent teachers to take responsibility for new policy/procedural requirements
- provide system support centrally available for schools to access
- ensure that there are enough resources allocated to manage these risks and undertake effective consultation, coordination and cooperation processes.

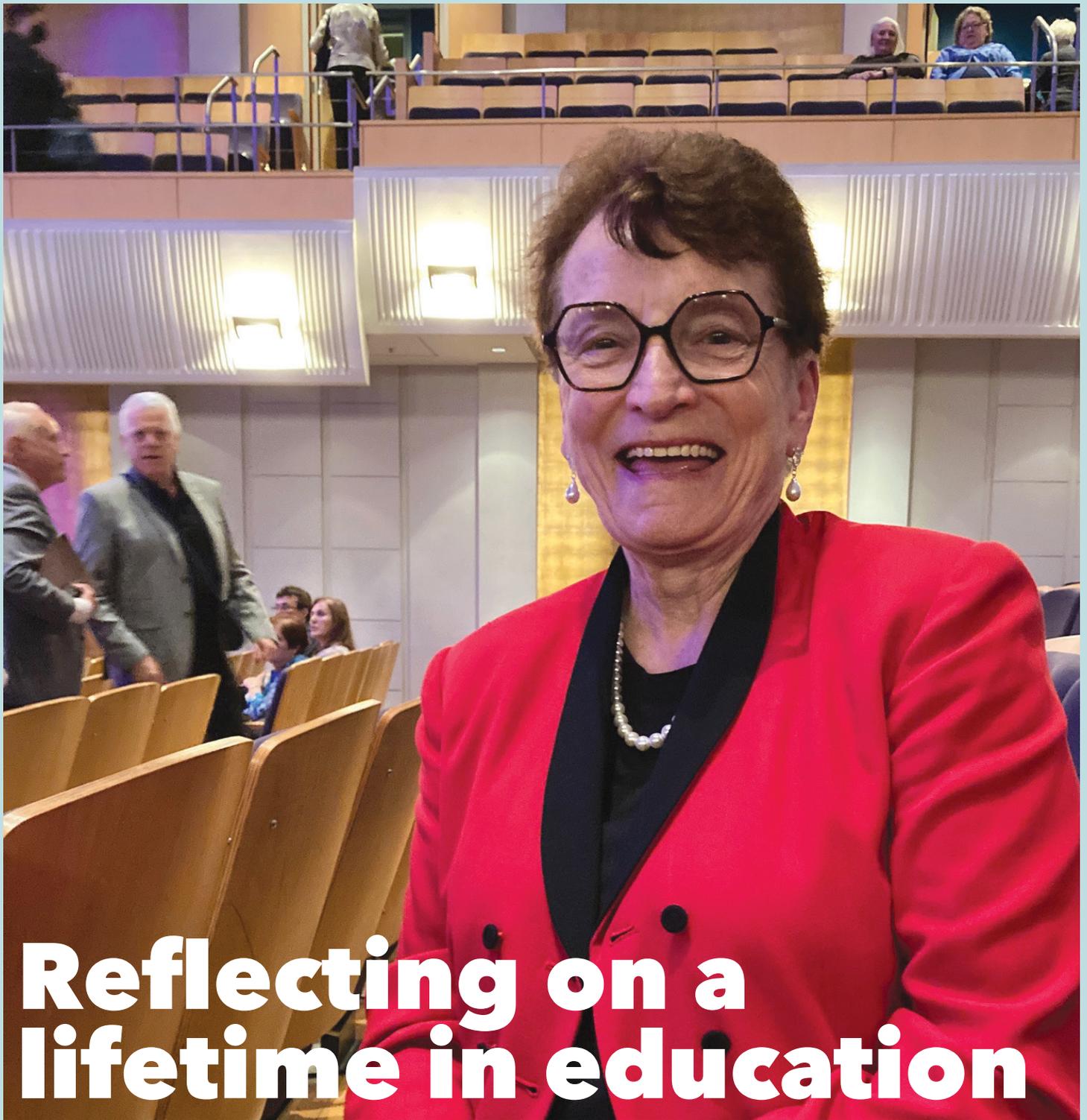
To address poor organisational change, poor support and low job control, the organisation will:

- consult with workers about the proposed changes
- undertake analysis to inform the re-prioritisation of tasks
- communicate to affected workers how this will change their work and how they might now re-prioritise tasks
- provide support and required professional learning to undertake additional tasks within core working hours.

#### Review and improve

The organisation will:

- review WHS procedures and processes to ensure that psychosocial hazards and risks, including role overload and low job control, are reported and recorded through the systematic approach to managing psychosocial hazards
- implement cyclical and frequent reviews, both at system and school level, of current task demands of workers
- monitor progress and impact on affected workers and provide responsive support based on consultation
- review timetables to ensure that accommodations are made to reduce remote and isolated work caused by the increase in work demands.



# Reflecting on a lifetime in education

**This year IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Organiser Jackie Groom celebrates 60 years in education and 40 years of IEU membership. As well as being a busy organiser, she's convener of the Branch's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee. Here she reminisces with Sue Osborne.**

"In 1963, I went to the Catholic Teachers College in North Sydney, which in those days was the training college for the Josephite nuns. I would have been 19. They had just started taking in lay people.

"My mum was a teacher at a Catholic school, so I thought, 'let's give it a go', and the rest is history.

"My first position was teaching 30 Year 3 boys at St Therese's Primary School, Lakemba.

"In those days you had to prepare them for confession once a month, and so they had to know the prayers and 10 Commandments - 'Did you steal anything? Were you nasty to your brother'?

"About halfway through the year, the principal said 'the Father wants to see you. Your boys are in big trouble'.

"Two boys had confessed to committing adultery. I had to explain to the whole class which of the 10 Commandments only applied to adults.

"Then after the class finished, I asked the two kids, 'why did you say that'?

"They said 'we got fed up with pinching biscuits and hitting our sister', so we thought we'd try something new. That one was higher up the list'.

"I was the only lay teacher at the school, so the priest watched me closely.

"The priest was in charge of the school and paid your wages. I had to walk up to the presbytery every Friday, knock on the door and ask for my wages.

"More than once the housekeeper came to the door and said, 'I can't disturb Father. He's having a sleep. He's got Novena tonight. Come back on Monday'.

"The principal ending up making sure he gave my wages to her when he said Mass at the convent on Thursdays.

"I did three years at Lakemba. Then I got moved to Central Bankstown. I had a mixed Year 4 class.

"I got married. My husband was a teacher with the department, and he was posted to a school at Rocky Hall, which is halfway between Eden and Bombala on the Ben Boyd stock route.

"There were 16 kids in the school, from kindy to distance education for high school kids.

"In the mornings I used to take the little ones on the verandah to listen to kindergarten of the air, even though I wasn't registered to teach with the department.

"We were 60kms from Bega. But it was a nice community. They expected you to do everything. If the kids came off their bikes on the weekend, they'd say, 'go up to the school and they'll fix it'.

"Then there was a terrible drought and my husband got very ill. The sheep were dying in the river upstream, they were pumping the water out of the river downstream to fill the school's water tanks.

"They moved him to the Central Coast. I went back to Monsignor Slowey, Director of Catholic Education at the time, to keep my commitment to work out my bond. He said, 'I have just the job for you. I'm opening a new school, St Joseph's Catholic School at East Gosford, and we're starting with Year 7'.

"I said, 'but I'm primary trained', and he said, 'that's okay, just keep a chapter ahead of them in the book and you'll be fine'. I ended up teaching English, History, Art and Religion.

"I did my uni courses by correspondence so I could be at least a decent teacher.

"I stayed there for four years. We had a second child and we decided we should move to the country to bring the kids up.

"Dall [her husband] got a job at St Columba's High School, Harden and I got a job at Sacred Heart Central School, Cootamundra. We were there nine years.

"We moved to Armidale, where I finished my degree, and then Wyong. A vacancy came up at St Joseph's East Gosford and I was there for 12 years and then I became an IEU Organiser in 1993.

"My mum used to get paid £1 a day teaching in a Catholic school. But if there was a public holiday or a Saint's Day, she didn't get paid, she didn't get paid for school holidays and there was no sick leave.

"I saw how difficult it was for her and at uni I heard there was a meeting for lay teachers in non-government schools

"A Mr Watson, an economics teacher at Waverley College was organising it.

"That was the start of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association in 1963.



**Jackie (second from left) receives her 40-year IEU membership gift from IEU Secretary Mark Northam (left), with Organisers Liam Griffiths, Veronica Yewdall and member Kathy D'Souza**

"At Cootamundra I found out people were getting different wages in the same job. I got in touch with John Nicholson. He was General Secretary of the Independent Teachers Association.

"I rang him and he flew down to Cootamundra and we had the first ever chapter meeting at Sacred Heart Central School

**"My mum used to get paid £1 a day teaching in a Catholic school. But if there was a public holiday or a Saint's Day, she didn't get paid, she didn't get paid for school holidays and there was no sick leave."**

"The first meeting of the South East Sub Branch was in my dining room in 1970 at Beechwood. Twelve people came.

"We decided what we wanted to do and how we wanted to be paid despite the fact that the schools in the Canberra Goulburn Archdiocese were managed by the Catholic Education Office in Canberra and Father Flood was the Director.

"Kevin Watson, a De La Salle brother was the Principal at the time, so we would go to him and negotiate workloads and other duties

"There were four lay staff at the time and he was always very supportive and it was a great place to work.

"The number of 'religious' were dwindling and they were stuck for teachers because nobody wanted to teach with the Catholics, because we were getting less money than our state school counterparts. There was no award, no agreement.

"It might have been in the late '80s before the first one came in. We gradually got parity of salary with the state teachers.

"John Nicholson was a lawyer and he operated from his office in Chatswood. The union didn't have an office.

"I was an unofficial Rep at Cootamundra but when I went back to St Joseph's, I was endorsed as the Chapter Rep. I became the Secretary of the Central Coast Sub Branch then was elected to Council and Executive. As a member of the Executive I was elected to Federal Council and in 1993 I became an Organiser.

"I'm convener of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee and with their assistance and the support of the IEU Executive, we are currently working to complete the NSW/ACT Branch of the IEUA Reconciliation Action Plan

"I enjoy my role as an Organiser. Being part of the union is the only way teachers and support staff are going to achieve fair and just pay and conditions. Has the employer ever offered better salaries and conditions voluntarily? 'No'.

"I've made some good friends among members through being an Organiser and visiting the schools.

"I love the social interaction with members and colleagues at sub branch meetings and IEU Council, assisting members with issues and keeping up with the changes in new enterprise agreements and it keeps the mind active.

"As long as the body holds out, I'll keep organising. I love it and it's what I joined the union to do."

# Isn't 'citizen science' an oxymoron?

**Science is the realm of trained experts, not amateurs. And aren't schoolchildren both too young and inexperienced to contribute seriously to genuine scientific research? No, and no, writes Will Brodie.**

The organisers of the BioBlitz, which calls on schoolchildren to help gather information about Australia's biodiversity, says citizen science is good for research and students.

The BioBlitz takes place in schools during National Biodiversity Month which culminates in National Threatened Species Day on 22 September.

BioBlitz co-convenor Judy Friedlander from the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, said citizen science "ticks so many boxes for education".

"Citizen science involves indoor and outdoor education, generates skills in a vast range of areas including maths, science, geography, information and communication technology - and importantly, contributes to important biodiversity research which empowers the younger generation who are making a difference to environmental outcomes," Judy said.

Judy said only 30 per cent of Australian species are formally identified.

"Citizen science observations are now generally regarded as being as accurate as a professional's, and our scientific authorities are crying out for more citizen science data. It's a no-brainer that makes our country brainier!"

## Student BioBlitz

Last year, 60 schools across Australia participated in the BioBlitz, with students taking images of plant and animal species in their school grounds and recording information such as the time, date, and location of the photo. Designated teachers then uploaded the photos and data to iNaturalist, a global biodiversity citizen science platform.

IEU Victorian Tasmania Organiser Jack Bock, a science teacher until December 2022, said citizen science can engage students who don't consider themselves interested in science, imparting important lessons about scientific method and data collection.

He said it's becoming "common practice" for big projects to enlist the help of citizens, and especially students. He cites eBird, the world's largest birding community, which gathers, archives and shares information about birds from enthusiasts all over the globe, contributing 100 million sightings per year.

The best citizen science programs enable "reflection and review" of observations and becoming "stepping stones" to further studies. They help to make experts of amateurs.

"Students who are active in such activities in Years 7 to 10 are much more likely to engage with science in later years," Jack said.

BioBlitz co-organiser and PhD candidate Thomas Mesaglio said with species and ecosystems facing so many threats - think climate change, land clearing, invasive species - "it's

more crucial than ever that we get kids engaged in citizen science so that they can learn and become enthused about the natural world".

"School kids across the country are the next generation of botanists, taxonomists, and conservationists, so helping them find that passion for biodiversity, and science more broadly early on is a really important launching pad."

He said citizen science is great for "building on the theory learnt in the classroom, and then getting to implement that knowledge in practice", because many of its initiatives require participants to get outside and actively engage with the natural world, whether it's by snapping photographs of plants and bugs, recording frog calls, or collecting water samples.

Larissa Braz Sousa, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Sydney, said citizen science initiatives in schools allow students to "gain field experience, direct project scope, and contribute to broader research objectives while achieving educational goals".

"Such initiatives can foster nature observation, science inquiry, environmental stewardship and problem-solving skills while connecting with their local communities."

## Hands on approach

Larissa said the "hands-on" approach of citizen science helps develop critical thinking skills, and reaches different types of learners, which can improve learning outcomes.

"When aligned with the Australian curriculum, citizen science can aid teaching through a project-based approach with meaningful applications to the entire community."

Larissa led the citizen science project 'Mozzie Monitors' where people learned about the most common mosquito species in their backyards and changed how they managed them in their houses. One of the participants observed a new species.

Larissa is currently engaging schools in NSW to monitor mosquitoes for public health for the Learning By Doing project, a collaboration between researchers from the University of Sydney and Taronga Conservation Society Australia.

Learning by Doing enables students to experience "what it is like to be a real scientist". They conduct observations, record measurements, and communicate their findings.

"Students will develop skills in scientific literacy, critical thinking and social and environmental awareness which will assist them throughout their school education and beyond."

School students in SA, WA, and Queensland are helping the University of Adelaide complete a census of insect populations, one of the projects which led *Cosmos* magazine to ask if 2022 was 'the year of Citizen Science'.

Judy Friedlander hopes 2022 was the start of something bigger.

"We attracted 60 schools to the first National School B&B BioBlitz last year. We want to attract 600 this year! Just think



of how all that data could help us fill in the gaps in our knowledge of our wonderful Australian species!”

She said many teachers and schools are pleasantly surprised how easy it is to engage with citizen science.

“BioBlitzes and citizen science are a new realm to many teachers who overestimate the time, assets and resources needed to implement these practices at schools.”

Key information can be communicated in 45-minute Zoom workshops, and to get involved, schools need only a lunch hour for observations – with students using a smart device which has reasonable photographic capabilities – and some time for the teacher to upload to the citizen science platforms.

### Helping threatened species

She said once people understand how they can help threatened species by contributing to biodiversity research, “the light goes on and it becomes this extraordinary quest”.

“It’s such a great combination of technology, education and outdoor experiences.”

Judy said there is a “deep malaise” besetting many people who read “all these terrible stories of species going extinct and being threatened”.

Citizen science can help alleviate that despair – because it can really help ailing species.

“We need to know where our insects, birds, mammals, plants are; why some are thriving in certain areas; how we can encourage them in other areas.”

Overtuning the usual perception, she said cities are actually “biodiversity hotspots”.

“But we need knowledge and data. Encouraging citizen science is a key recommendation of Australia’s Strategy for Nature 2019-2030, the State of Environment report and Chief Scientist’s communications and papers.

“Each State Department of Education also needs to make it a priority.”

And a study has demonstrated that observations made by young people to iNaturalist are “research grade” – and therefore potentially useful to biodiversity research and monitoring.

Last year, 14-year-old Luke Downey, of Canberra, found a rare beetle, *Castiarina testacea*, last seen in the ACT in 1955. His observation was recorded in the Canberra Nature Map, an online repository of rare plants and animals.

Such stories inspire other kids to record and upload images to biodiversity databases.

Skills students exercise in citizen science projects:

- creating maps
- researching environmental issues
- discussing climate and weather and how they impact living things
- identifying and investigating scientific questions
- taking part in sampling and data collections
- identifying species
- making predictions, and
- discussing probabilities.

### Resources

Atlas of Living Australia’s classroom activities:  
[www.ala.org.au/classroom-exercises](http://www.ala.org.au/classroom-exercises)

Questagame: [www.questagame.com](http://www.questagame.com)

Projects at the Australian Citizen Science Association website: [www.tinyurl.com/yn2pcund](http://www.tinyurl.com/yn2pcund)

To register your school for this year’s BioBlitz and Zoom training go to: [www.tinyurl.com/2deftjv9](http://www.tinyurl.com/2deftjv9)

# Profession under stress: **Data proves the point**

**The Australian Teacher Workforce Data for 2021-22, released by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Ltd (AITSL) in March, has some significant findings. It reinforces what unions have been saying for some time - the profession is in trouble and needs serious help.**

Intentions to stay in the teaching profession have declined from 2020 to 2022, with more teachers intending to leave prior to retirement, fewer intending to stay until retirement and those who are leaving intending to remain for shorter periods of time before leaving.

'Workload and coping' and 'recognition and reward' were both consistently and increasingly cited as the two most common categories of reasons for leaving.

Classroom factors was the reason for leaving with the largest increase between 2020 and 2022, with 60% of teachers citing this reason by 2022.

The proportion of the teacher workforce saying they intend to leave prior to retirement was greater (35%) than the proportion who planned to remain until retirement (31%).

In 2022, those in the workforce intending to leave before retirement planned to remain for a shorter time than in 2020. More than 1-in-10 of those saying they intended to leave were planning to leave within one year (14%), five percentage points higher than in 2020.

Two-in-five of those saying they intended to leave intended to leave in four years or less (36%), 13 percentage points higher than in 2020 (23%).

## **Reasons for leaving**

For those intending to leave the teacher workforce, the most cited reasons remained 'workload and coping' (89%) and 'reward and recognition' (71%).

Classroom-related factors were more often cited as a reason for intending to leave in 2022 compared to 2020, increasing across all positions in schools.

## **Reasons for staying**

For both teachers and leaders who did not intend to leave the profession before retirement in 2022, the three most provided reasons were the personal fulfillment associated with

teaching and the culture of the school:

- 70% indicated that they enjoyed face-to-face teaching
- 64% indicated they felt it was a personally rewarding profession, and
- 50% cited the school culture.

Classroom teachers in schools rarely indicated that they stayed because they were well paid relative to their skills and experience (16%), and only one-in-ten remained because they did not believe their skills were transferable to other professions (11%).

School culture was a more critical factor for senior leaders (58%) than for classroom teachers (43%) and middle leaders (49%).

## **Reasons to return to teaching**

For teachers not employed in education, six per cent were actively looking to return, almost half (47%) might consider returning under the right circumstances and almost half (47%) would not consider returning to the profession.

This translates to 0.5% (around 2500 nationally) of registered teachers who are not in the workforce and are actively looking to return, and four per cent (around 20,000) who are not in the workforce and might consider returning.

The most important areas of influence on teachers' decisions to return to the profession were workload and pay.

Half not employed indicated that a reduction in workload would influence their decision. Almost one-third (29%) indicated that a higher salary would influence their decision.

## **Working conditions**

Compared to the trends across 2018-2020, in 2022 classroom teachers were less likely to be employed on short, fixed-term contracts of one year or less, and were more likely to be employed full-time.

Working hours in 2022 remained high, with full-time classroom teachers working 40 per cent more hours than they were paid to work. However, there was an improvement of around 1.5 hours less per week in unpaid overtime in 2022 for both teachers and leaders.

The preliminary data in 2021 and 2022, suggests there is a notable increase in the relative proportion of

classroom teachers spending over 10 hours per week on student supervision compared to 2018, 2019 and 2020.

## **Contracted and working hours**

Nationally, there has been an increase in the proportion of classroom teachers who are employed full-time, increasing 14 percentage points from 60 per cent in 2020 to 74 per cent in 2022.

There was a small decrease in the proportion of classroom teachers on short, fixed-term contracts of one year or less, decreasing from 19 per cent of classroom teachers in 2020 to 15 per cent in 2022.

Full-time classroom teachers were still working more hours than contracted during the term at an average of 53.1 hours per week, equivalent to around 15 hours per week above contracted hours.

Nationally, across all full-time staff in schools, there was a slight reduction in unpaid overtime of around 1.5 hours per week on average compared to 2020.

## **Face-to-face teaching**

The proportion of classroom teachers supervising students for 10 hours or more increased from 8% in 2018 to 30% in 2020.

## **Early career teacher induction**

The proportion of early career teachers who underwent a formal induction process decreased from 2020 to 2022, as did the range of induction opportunities.

Almost two-thirds (59 per cent) of early career teachers had received a formal induction, a six percentage point decrease from 2020 (65 per cent).

The range of individual activities was reduced and focussed more on orientation, mentoring and observation, and less on networking and targeted professional learning.

## **Casuals**

From 2020 to 2022, the increasing pressure on the teacher workforce resulted in increased mobilisation of casual and relief teachers (CRT), with CRTs working longer hours.

The experiences of the casual/relief teaching pool were like the permanent/contracted workforce - CRTs were increasingly intending to leave and cite workload and coping, reward and recognition and classroom factors.

### Task time allocation - classroom teachers

The proportion of classroom teachers supervising students for 10 hours or more increased from 8% in 2018 to 31% in 2021 - with a slight drop to 30% last year.

### Professional learning

From 2020 to 2022, the number of hours of professional learning increased, recovering from the low seen during COVID-19.

In 2020: 26% of the teacher workforce undertook 40 hours or more of professional learning. In 2022, 44% of the workforce on average achieved over 40 hours of professional learning.

In 2018 and 2019, 38% undertook 40 hours or more of professional learning.

Senior leaders were most likely to have completed 40 hours or more of professional learning (71%) compared to other positions (middle leaders: 53%, classroom teachers: 40%).

### Out-of-field teaching

Out-of-field teaching is measured as the number of teachers who were not 'in-field' for at least one subject that they taught. Teaching in-field is defined as a teacher teaching a subject that they had studied, both content and pedagogy, during their secondary initial teacher education (ITE).

The data suggests that rates of out-of-field teaching remained high among classroom teachers of secondary learners in 2020, with at least one-in-four classroom teachers who taught subjects in a key learning areas (KLA) out-of-field.

One-in-four secondary classroom teachers (24%) were teaching at least one subject in a KLA out-of-field. Two-in-five classroom teachers of science were teaching a core science subject out-of-field, with 41% in physics being out-of-field, 38% in chemistry, and 41% in biology. Teachers of technology were most likely to be out-of-field (44%).

### Regional and remote

The AITSL data provides, for the first time, an analysis of the trends in the teacher workforce in regional and remote areas compared to trends in the workforce in metropolitan areas. This is based on linked trend data from 2018-2020.

From 2018-2020 teachers in regional and remote areas were increasingly employed as permanent ongoing employees with a corresponding decrease in the number employed on very short-term contracts.

Comparing the regional and remote workforce in 2020 to the 2020 metropolitan workforce, the regional and remote workforce, overall, is as

experienced as the metropolitan workforce; it tends to include more leaders with fewer years' experience, but this gap is decreasing.

From 2018 to 2020 the workforce in regional and remote areas evidenced:

- a drop of 6 percentage points in the proportion of teachers on fixed-term contracts of less than one year (2018: 18%; 2020: 12%.
- an increase in the proportion on ongoing permanent contracts (+10 percentage points; 2018: 63%; 2020: 72%), bringing the regional and remote workforce on par with the metropolitan workforce for ongoing permanency (metropolitan 2020: 73%).

## "The proportion of classroom teachers supervising students for 10 hours or more increased from 8% in 2018 to 31% in 2021."

In 2020, the experience levels of the regional and remote teacher workforce overall were similar to those found in metropolitan areas:

- Early career (teaching for less than five years): 12% regional and remote; 11% metropolitan.
- 10-19 years' experience: 27% regional and remote; 25% metropolitan.
- 30 years or more experience: 29% regional and remote; 33% metropolitan.

In 2020, regional and remote areas continued to have a higher proportion of leaders who were just starting as leaders, and fewer with over 10 years' experience, compared to metropolitan areas.

However, the difference in the proportion of leaders with over 10 years' experience between regional and remote areas and metropolitan areas decreased by four percentage points from 2018 to 2020:

- One to two years of leadership experience: In 2020, 19% regional and remote; 17% metropolitan.

- Three to five years of leadership experience: In 2020, 27% regional and remote; 24% metropolitan.
- Over 10 years' experience: In 2020, 32% regional and remote; 39% metropolitan; In 2018 29% regional and remote; metropolitan, 40%.

### Career intentions in the regional and remote workforce

As seen in the metropolitan workforce, the proportion intending to leave the profession in the regional and remote workforce decreased from 2018-2020 during the COVID-19 period. However, this trend was reversed for the whole workforce in 2022 (see above), and this will likely be the case for regional and remote workers (data to be released late 2023).

Reasons for leaving are the same across the metropolitan and the regional and remote workforce, and centre on workload and coping, and the level of remuneration and reward.

### Intentions to leave or remain in the profession

From 2018 to 2020, the proportions of the workforce intending to leave the profession prior to retirement decreased similarly in regional and remote areas (-6 percentage points, 2018: 28%; 2020: 22%), to metropolitan areas (-5 percentage points, 2018: 25%; 2020: 21%).

The proportion of the teacher workforce in regional and remote areas intending to stay in the profession until retirement increased slightly more (+9 percentage points, 2018: 36%; 2020: 45%) than in metropolitan areas (+6 percentage points, 2018: 40%; 2020: 46%).

### Reasons for leaving the profession

Teachers in regional and remote areas saying they intend to leave cite the same reasons as those in metropolitan areas, 'workload and coping' (85%), and 'recognition and reward' (64%).

In 2020, the regional and remote teacher workforce completed professional learning on par with the metropolitan teacher workforce (regional and remote: 68%; metropolitan: 67% completed 20 hours or more professional learning).

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# What does a good task look like when measuring creativity?

**The topic of developing student creativity through the lens of assessment has received increasing attention (Beghetto, 2019), writes Weiping Xu, PhD candidate at the University of Sydney's Centre for Educational Measurement and Assessment.**

While there are numerous psychometric tests created for measuring different aspects of creativity (Bapna, Sharma, Kaushik, Kumar, 2017), their detachment from disciplinary education makes it difficult for teachers to use them for classroom assessment (Harris, Bruin, 2018).

Given the lack of applicable measures of creativity in the classroom, it would seem important that teachers should be able to design their own assessment tasks. This will provide their students with opportunities to demonstrate their creative ideas, while enabling them to better understand their students' development in creativity at the same time.

To demonstrate the process of designing an appropriate task for measuring creativity, this article develops an assessment task in the science discipline as an example, based on the general principles for task design.

## What are the general principles for task design?

Brookhart (2010) proposed three general principles for designing an assessment task:

1. define clearly what you want to assess
2. design appropriate tasks or test items that allow students to demonstrate their capability on what (creativity) is being assessed
3. decide what will be collected as evidence to support the decision about how much creativity is being demonstrated in the task response.

The first principle asks for a clear description of the assessment objective. When measuring a generic capability like creativity, the definition used in schooling should be integrated with the specific learning context to further clarify what it is teachers intend to assess in a unit of study. This helps to identify the types of performances or tasks that students will be able to do to demonstrate creativity.

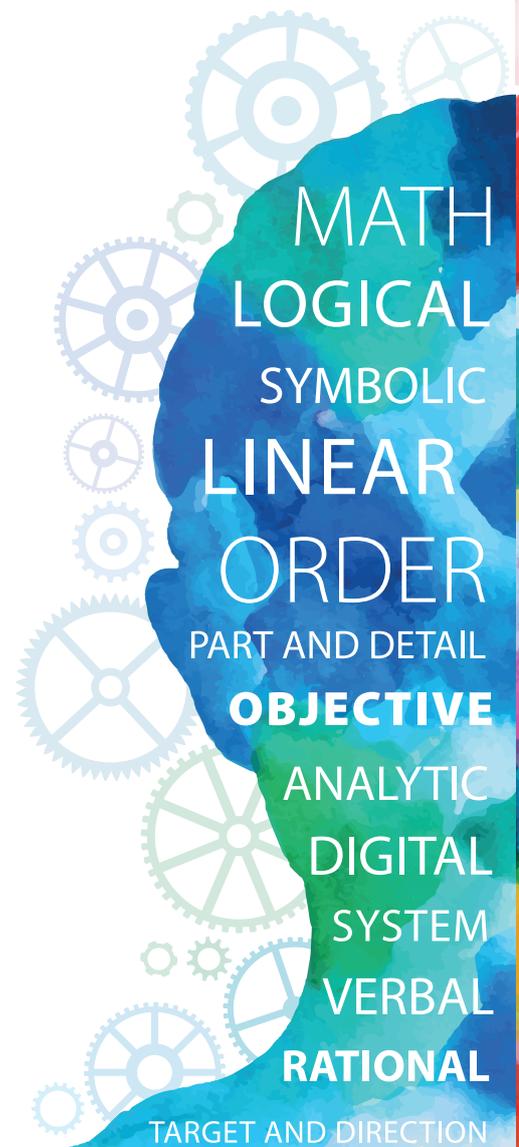
The second principle relates to validity. It requires that the assessment truly measure what it claims to measure. According to the revised *Bloom's Learning Taxonomy*, using different assessment tasks for the same learning outcome may reflect different cognitive complexity (Anderson, Krathwohl, 2001). The distinction between the level of difficulty and level of thinking (cognition) is particularly important when designing tasks for measuring higher-order thinking (Brookhart, 2010).

The third principle calls for clear descriptions of students' likely responses to assessment tasks. These responses provide evidence of the measured capability in the specific learning context. In response to assessment tasks, creative

products can be presented in a variety of forms, such as complex presentations and images, investigations and performance, digital and computer-generated output, or in the form of virtual reality (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016). Teachers should select and define levels and types of evidence that are achievable for students, appropriate to the learning content and consistent with the assessment objective.

## How can an assessment task of creativity be designed in science?

This section presents the process of developing an assessment task in the science discipline as an example of how the above principles inform the design of tasks that can be used for measuring creativity.



### 1. Define clearly what you want to assess in creativity

Creativity has been defined differently in the literature depending on the focus of the observation. School teachers should consider these definitions and establish a definition that is appropriate and applicable to their school. The learning outcome of creative thinking described in ACARA is used to define creativity in this article.

That is, creativity is defined as the capability to generate and apply new ideas in specific contexts, see existing situations in a new way, identify alternative explanations, and see or make new links that generate a positive outcome (ACARA, 2016).

This generic definition does not yet clearly describe what is to be assessed in a task, nor does it take account of the specific learning context. It should be further refined by focusing upon which elements are intended to be assessed in the definition of creativity, and what learning content is appropriate to be embedded in the assessment. In this assessment example, the intention is to focus on 'generating and applying new ideas in specific contexts' in creativity.

The learning content is to "explain the location and causes of volcanoes using the theory of plate tectonics" from the Earth and Environmental Science Stage 6 Syllabus. Therefore, the objective of measuring creativity in this example is specified as generating and applying new ideas in the use of plate tectonic theory to explain the location and causes of volcanoes.

### 2. Design an assessment task for the assessment objective

According to the assessment objective, the task we drafted was "Build a model of a volcano to display its structure and energy". However, the task had not yet been finalised as it still needed to be validated. That is, teachers needed some evidence that when the students responded to the

task, those answering at the highest cognitive level were demonstrating creativity. Putting yourself in the position of a student attempting to answer the task and thinking 'How would I (the student) have to think to answer this task at the highest level of performance?' can help you validate whether the task is consistent with the assessment objective.

Students nowadays have access to answers on a wide variety of AI platforms. They could search for the answers on Google and follow the steps to replicate a model of a volcano. If it is the case that the task does not serve the intended purpose of measuring creativity, then additional prompts or constraints must be added to clarify the purpose of the assessment goals in the task.

With this consideration, creative features were added to the task as expectations were linked to the task responses. The original task was modified to make sure that it really did provide evidence of creativity. The new task now asks the students to briefly describe the development process of their work. The task was modified to "Build a novel and appropriate model of a volcano to display its structure and energy, and briefly describe how the model was developed".

### 3. Decide what will be collected as evidence of creativity

A volcano model requested by the above task can be presented in various forms. It could be a hand drawing or a physical model. In this example, the form of drawing a volcano model may not be appropriate to measure creativity because an image of a volcano model could be easily accessed by referring to a textbook. In this example, the students were asked to present a physical model of a volcano was required as evidence of creativity.

Overall, there are several practical considerations applied to define and design an assessment task when measuring creativity in the classroom. Differences in the definition of creativity and its elements selected for assessment, specific learning contents, and the duration of the assessment will impact on the design and use of different assessment tasks.

While this example of a task may not be used directly in practice, it exemplifies the steps in designing a task in an understandable way and hopefully it will encourage teachers to be creative in designing their own tasks that when answered by the students will provide evidence of students' creativity in their class. Once it can be done in everyday teaching, teachers will gain more knowledge about student creativity, which can then be used to scaffold instruction with a view to improving the learning of creativity in the classroom.

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