Education

JOURNAL OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES TEACHERS FEDERATION

ISSUE 16 2025

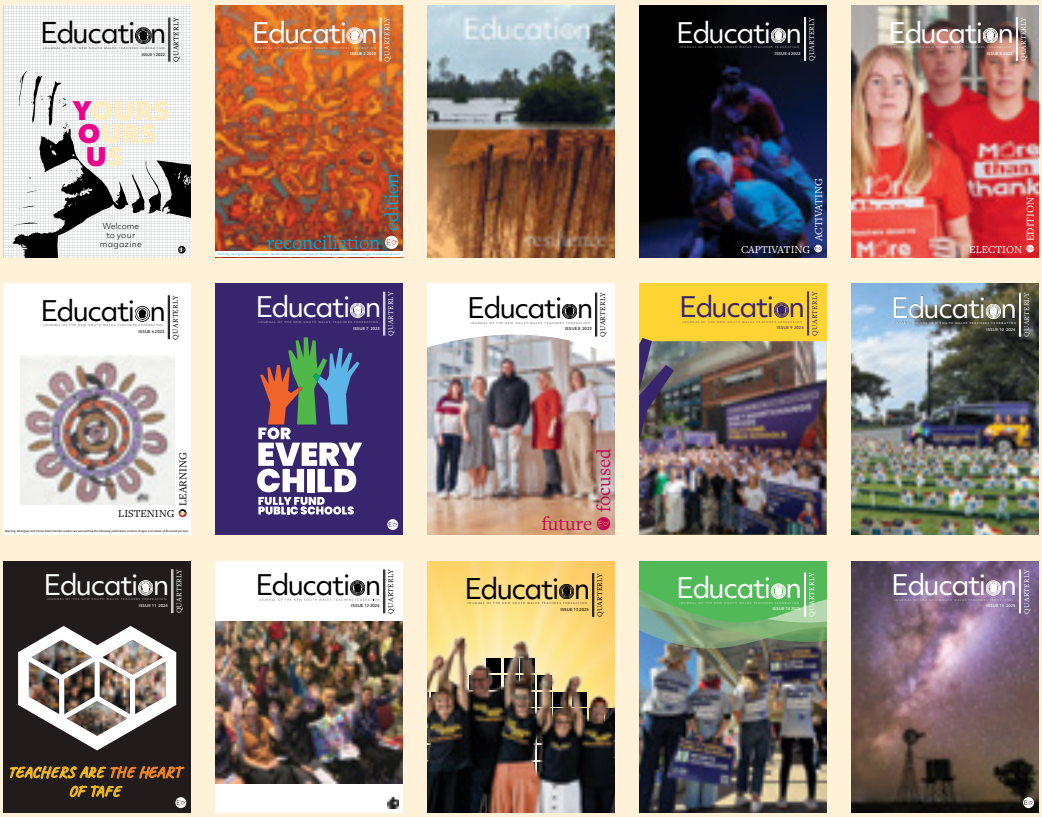
QUARTERLY

NEED TO UPDATE YOUR DETAILS?

Education Quarterly is delivered to financial members of the NSW Teachers Federation.

If you are not receiving your copy or have changed workplace, address or work arrangements please click **here** to update your details in the Member Portal.

Not a member? **Join now!**



aware super

Helping NSWTF Members plan for retirement

Whether retirement is 2 or 20 years away, Aware Super can help you maximise your savings and get retirement ready.

Our digital Retirement Guide has plenty of tips, advice and real member stories, plus a helpful checklist to guide you every step of the way.

With super advice and super returns Aware Super is super helpful.

aware.com.au/retirementguide

General Advice only. Consider the PDS and TMD at aware.com.au/pds before deciding. Issued by Aware Super Pty Ltd (ABN 11 118 202 672, AFSL 293340), trustee of Aware Super (ABN 53 226 460 365). Members can get advice about their Aware Super accounts at no extra cost, or comprehensive advice on their broader needs for a fee. Advice provided by Aware Financial Services Australia Limited (ABN 86 003 742 756, AFSL 238430) wholly owned by Aware Super. AS166 07/24

CONTENTS

FOCUS

08 CONNECTING IN THE COUNTRY
John O'Connor from Moree Secondary College says country life is just what young teachers need

10 HELPING TEACHERS GET STARTED
How Federation's courses and conferences can set new teachers up for fulfilling careers

12 RAISING UP YOUNG VOICES
Author Winnie Dunn tells young activist teachers about the importance of real representation in the classroom

14 PEACE IS UNION BUSINESS
Federation's long and proud history of standing up for peace and justice

16 OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE
Disability advocate Daniel McDonald's insights at Federation's Rethinking Ability conference

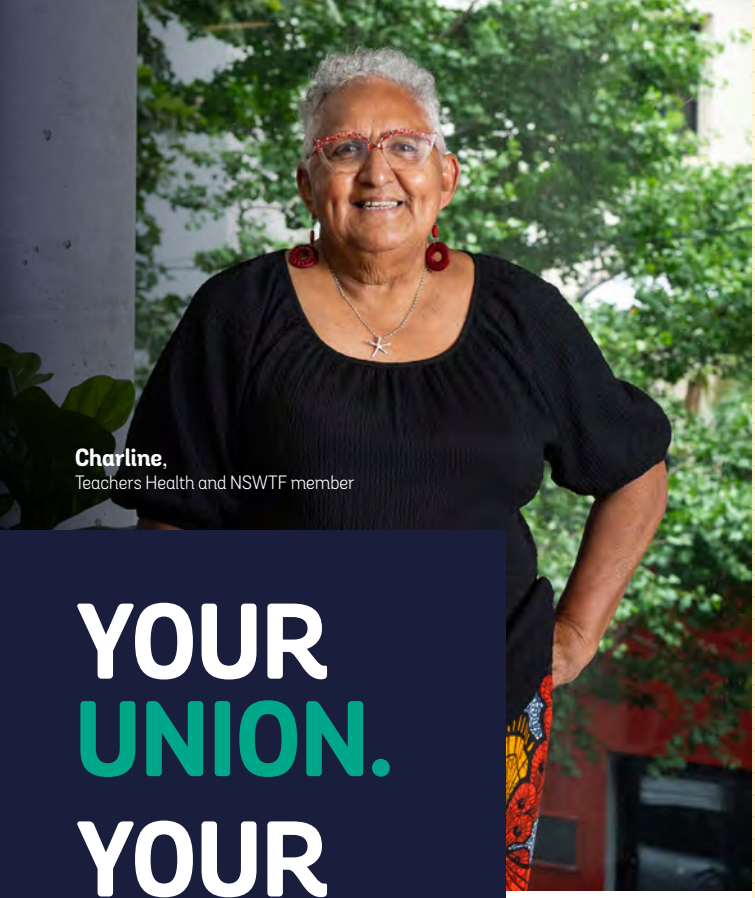
18 LIFTOUT POSTER
The progress so far in the fight for disability rights

20 KEEPING TIME
How to make work meetings work for you

REGULARS

05 PRESIDENT WRITES
06 NEWS
22 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
23 TAFE TALK
24 MULTICULTURAL MATTERS
24 EARLY CAREER INSIGHTS
25 WOMEN IN EDUCATION
26 YARNING IN PROGRESS
27 PROTECTING YOURSELF ON THE JOB
27 A CASUAL WORD
28 CPL RESOURCES
30 LIBRARY
32 SAY CHEESE!
34 LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

LIFTOUT



YOUR UNION. YOUR HEALTH FUND.

Just like your union, we exist to look after you.

So, while NSWTF backs your career, we support your health and wellbeing with massage, physio, mental health support and more.*

To learn more scan the QR code or call 1300 900 301

TEACHERS HEALTH
We're for teachers

A Members Health Fund

teachershealth.com.au

*Eligibility criteria and conditions apply.

Teachers Federation Health Ltd ABN 86 097 030 414 trading as Teachers Health.
A Registered Private Health Insurer. THF-NSWTF-10/25

E&

TEACHERS FEDERATION HOUSE
23-33 Mary Street
Surry Hills 2010
POST Locked Bag 3010
Darlinghurst 1300
PHONE (02) 9217 2100
FAX (02) 9217 2470
TOLL FREE 1300 654 369
EMAIL mail@nswtf.org.au
WEBSITE nswtf.org.au

PRESIDENTIAL OFFICERS
The following were elected for 2024-2025:

PRESIDENT
Henry Rajendra
DEPUTY PRESIDENT
Amber Flohm
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
Natasha Watt

EDITOR Julie McMullen
DEPUTY EDITOR Kerri Carr
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Grace Hughes
COPY EDITOR Alex McKinnon
MEDIA AND CONTENT CREATOR Jess de Carvalho
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Brontë Burgess and Courtney Hardwick
CRM DIGITAL ASSISTANT Pablo Nacer

Education acknowledges the use of iStock and freelance imagery to supplement the provision of regular photography.

All business communications should be addressed to:
The Branch Secretary, NSW Teachers Federation
23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills 2010

PHONE (02) 9217 2100, 1300 654 369
FAX (02) 9217 2470
HOMEPAGE nswtf.org.au
ISSN 0013-1156

Opinions in published articles are not necessarily those of the editor or of Federation. Advertisements do not indicate Federation support or endorsement.

Authorised by Maxine Sharkey, General Secretary, NSW Teachers Federation, 23-33 Mary St, Surry Hills 2010.
Printed in Australia by IVE

COVER: This edition's cover takes inspiration from 'Music teaches students how to learn', our feature on the power of music education to inspire students to greater academic and creative heights. Turn to page 28 to find out more.

@NSWTeachersFederation @TeachersFed
@teachersfed nswtf.org.au

PRESIDENT WRITES

Henry Rajendra

TWO HOURS TO CHANGE TEACHING

Every teacher knows this reality: it's 3.30pm, students have left and you face a mountain of work that can't be done in the time available. Reports, parent emails, data entry, compliance requirements. And somewhere in there, the actual work of teaching: the planning and reflection that makes great education possible.

This is not sustainable.

Federation is preparing a campaign to secure two additional hours of release time per week for all teachers. This was recommended by the Gallop Inquiry years ago and it remains unfinished business. The response to our recent member survey has confirmed how urgent this fight has become.

You told us about the impossible juggle between teaching excellence and administrative burden. About the toll on wellbeing and families. About workload that cannot continue. Your voices have given us the evidence base we need. Now comes the hard work of winning what teachers deserve.

Teaching complexity has exploded while our time hasn't increased. We differentiate learning for diverse classrooms, implement trauma-informed practices, manage complex wellbeing needs and navigate endless compliance — all while maintaining excellent teaching.

Local Schools, Local Decisions worsened this by shifting administrative burdens onto schools. While the Minns Government has committed to winding back this failed policy, the legacy remains. Teachers still drown in work that keeps them from teaching.

Two hours of additional release time won't solve every problem, but it will give us what we desperately need: teacher-determined time to do our jobs properly. Time to plan engaging lessons. Time to provide meaningful feedback to students. Time to collaborate with colleagues. Time to actually meet the needs of the young people in our care.

This is also about retention. We're losing teachers because workload is unsustainable. Early career teachers leave before they flourish. Experienced teachers burn out. To attract the next generation, we must show that teaching in NSW is sustainable and properly supported. Additional release time makes that promise real.

The pathway runs through expanding staffing entitlements. The bilateral agreement provides a legislated path to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard. This funding — combined with converting flexible funding into permanent staffing entitlements — is our opportunity to secure the permanent teachers necessary for two hours additional release time.

This requires system-wide guarantees, not school-by-school decisions. Every teacher in every school deserves this time. It must be regulated from the centre and provided as a system guarantee, not left to schools to figure out from flexible funding buckets.

But this won't happen automatically. It requires a united, strategic campaign and every member being ready to stand together.

Your survey responses will inform every stage of this campaign. They'll strengthen our negotiations, shape our advocacy and demonstrate this is a mainstream necessity backed by evidence.

We'll develop campaign materials, hold member forums and build alliances with parents and communities who understand that teacher wellbeing impacts student learning. When teachers have time to plan and collaborate, students benefit. This is about teacher working conditions and education quality.

The Gallop Inquiry recommended this years ago. The workload crisis has intensified. The complexity has increased. The retention challenge has deepened.

It's time to finish this business. It's time to win the conditions that let teachers teach and students learn.

The campaign for two hours of additional release time is a fight for the future of teaching in NSW. And it's a campaign we can win.

Have you been underpaid too?

TAFE members have won more than $300,000 of backpay in the past four months, thanks to Federation's work to resolve issues concerning significant underpayments under previous TAFE NSW management.

TAFE Organiser Melissa O'Meara said the victory highlighted the importance of Federation membership to "effectively enforce, protect and improve our working conditions and entitlements" through collective strength.

"We spend so much time working through these cases and so many people think that because they work in the public sector, their pay can't be wrong.

"Well, I can tell you that wage theft — unintentional or not — is rife!"

RELATED DUTIES AND SALARY PROGRESSION

These underpayments were primarily the result of previous TAFE NSW management's failures to fulfil entitlements for related duties and salary progression.

Despite strong opposition from TAFE management at the time, Federation members won the case for payment of related duties for TAFE teachers two decades ago, when the NSW Industrial Relations Commission recognised the inequities in pay and conditions between part-time and casual teachers compared to those who were permanent.

Since then, the TAFE enterprise agreement has been very clear about the entitlement of part-time and casual teachers to payment for related duties.

NOT DISCRETIONARY

It is not at the discretion of heads of skills teams, head teachers (band 3) or section head teachers to deny payment of related duties or any other entitlement.

If TAFE members believe they have been underpaid, they should contact **1300 654 369** or email **postschools@nswtf.org.au**.

THE FUTURE

We look forward to continuing our work with the current TAFE management to foster a flourishing and supportive TAFE system.

Henry Rajendra, Natasha Watt and Michael de Wall have been elected as Presidential Officers for 2026–2027.

STUDENTS SYSTEMICALLY DENIED ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

"It is indefensible that students who have been formally assessed and deemed eligible for support classes are left without placement due to a lack of available positions," Federation Vice President Amy Harland told Federation Council in September.

"If we had 20 kinder students turn up on Monday, we'd create a new class — so why isn't it the same for support classes?" she asked, emphasising the right of every student to access education that meets their needs.

"This failure places an unfair burden on schools and staff, who are then expected to think outside the square and create makeshift solutions, often without the resources, training or structural support required.

"This is not innovation, it's systemic neglect."

"We must be clear about the importance of appropriate class compositions," Amy added. "Students diagnosed with intellectual disabilities or autism have distinct learning profiles and support needs that differ significantly from those with emotional disturbance or behaviour disorders. Placing these students together in the same support class under the term 'multi-categorical' is not only pedagogically inappropriate, it is detrimental to the well-being and development of students."

Amy explained how the Government's failure to provide adequate support class placements is detrimental to the wellbeing and development of students.

"Not only are these students deprived of equitable access to education, but teachers in mainstream settings are left to manage complex needs… without the resources, training or structural support required," she stressed.

"Our members deserve a system that backs their expertise, not leaves them to patch the gaps. Our students deserve a system where they are known, valued and cared for not just in words, but in actions."

Amy highlighted the importance of members organising to address the support class placement shortages, pointing to the recent success of members at Wauchope Public School.

"They had the data and the access requests that warranted an additional support class. However, the Department didn't want to establish one, so they worked with the Organiser. They were about to walk out when the Department caved and established another class," Amy said.

"It's actions like this we need… it's what our students really need."

Federation encourages members to work with their Federation Organiser to consider a program of political, community and industrial action in the case of resource denial for students with disability.

ASSISTED SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROGRAM

Federation will raise the poor administration of the Assisted School Transport Program, which enables students with disability in support classes in mainstream and schools for specific purposes to attend school, with the Department of Education.

Schools are reporting students being removed from the program without consultation, leaving students unable to attend school.

Members also report that the Program's eligibility criteria can be stringent and unattainable, requiring families and carers to submit excessive documentation and jump through bureaucratic hoops to ensure their children can access the service.

Should schools continue to have issues with the Assisted School Transport Program, they are encouraged to call workplace Federation meetings in collaboration with their Organiser.

MOMENTOUS WIN ON WORKERS COMPENSATION DELIVERED

On 13 November, the NSW Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 passed the Upper House with union leaders from Unions NSW, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and the NSW Teachers Federation in the public gallery to witness the historic moment.

Significantly, there will now be *no increase* to the current thresholds for the Whole of Person Impairment (WPI) for primary psychological injuries, thus defeating the government's proposals from Treasury and securing the support and mental health services for our members who are injured at work.

Proposals sought to lift the WPI from 15 per cent to 31 per cent. Other proposed amendments to the legislation, which aimed to greatly restrict access to the Workers Compensation Scheme, were also defeated. These included matters around bullying, racial and sexual harassment, reasonable management action, excessive work demands and vicarious trauma.

Federation has vigorously pursued these areas throughout the campaign, appearing at inquiries, organising rallies, lobbying politicians and earning significant media engagement and exposure.

The impact on our members, disproportionately affecting women, would have seen a significant decline in current entitlements and protections and were extremely unjust.

Other positive amendments to the legislation included changes to underinsurance, medical, legal and other forms of fraud (which undermine and impact the scheme) and the creation of a new ministerial advisory group comprising of injured workers and a representative of Unions NSW to advise the relevant minister on matters concerning injured workers.

Our members are to be congratulated for the roles they played and their commitment and fight in this campaign.

These outcomes were only possible because of the campaigning of the NSW union movement to oppose the worst parts of the Government's proposed legislation — evidence of the collective strength and power of workers united.

Union leaders outside NSW Parliament following the historic moment

VITAL IMPROVEMENT FOR LEARNING CONDITIONS IN SMALL SCHOOLS

In response to the union's campaign, a breakthrough has been achieved for teaching principals thanks to hundreds of members calling for an increase in the permanent principal release entitlement.

The Department of Education has announced that teaching principal relief funding will be converted to permanent staffing entitlement in all infants and primary schools with fewer than 160 enrolments and a teaching principal from term 1, 2026. The new teaching principal release entitlement will be between 0.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) and 0.4 FTE based on school size. More permanent teachers will be employed (rather than teachers being employed for individual release days with flexible funding) and the $10 million investment Federation was able to secure in 2018, which nearly doubled the release time available to teaching principals, will be protected. Additionally, seven isolated one-teacher schools (<26 enrolments) will be provided a full-time teacher entitlement in addition to the teaching principal. This will be enabled by the bundling of fractional teacher entitlements (teaching principal release, release from face-to-face, part-time teacher, teacher-librarian and Quality Teaching, Successful Students) plus an injection of additional funds.

The win is a significant step and builds the collective momentum we need to dismantle Local Schools, Local Decisions, and expand staffing entitlements across the board.

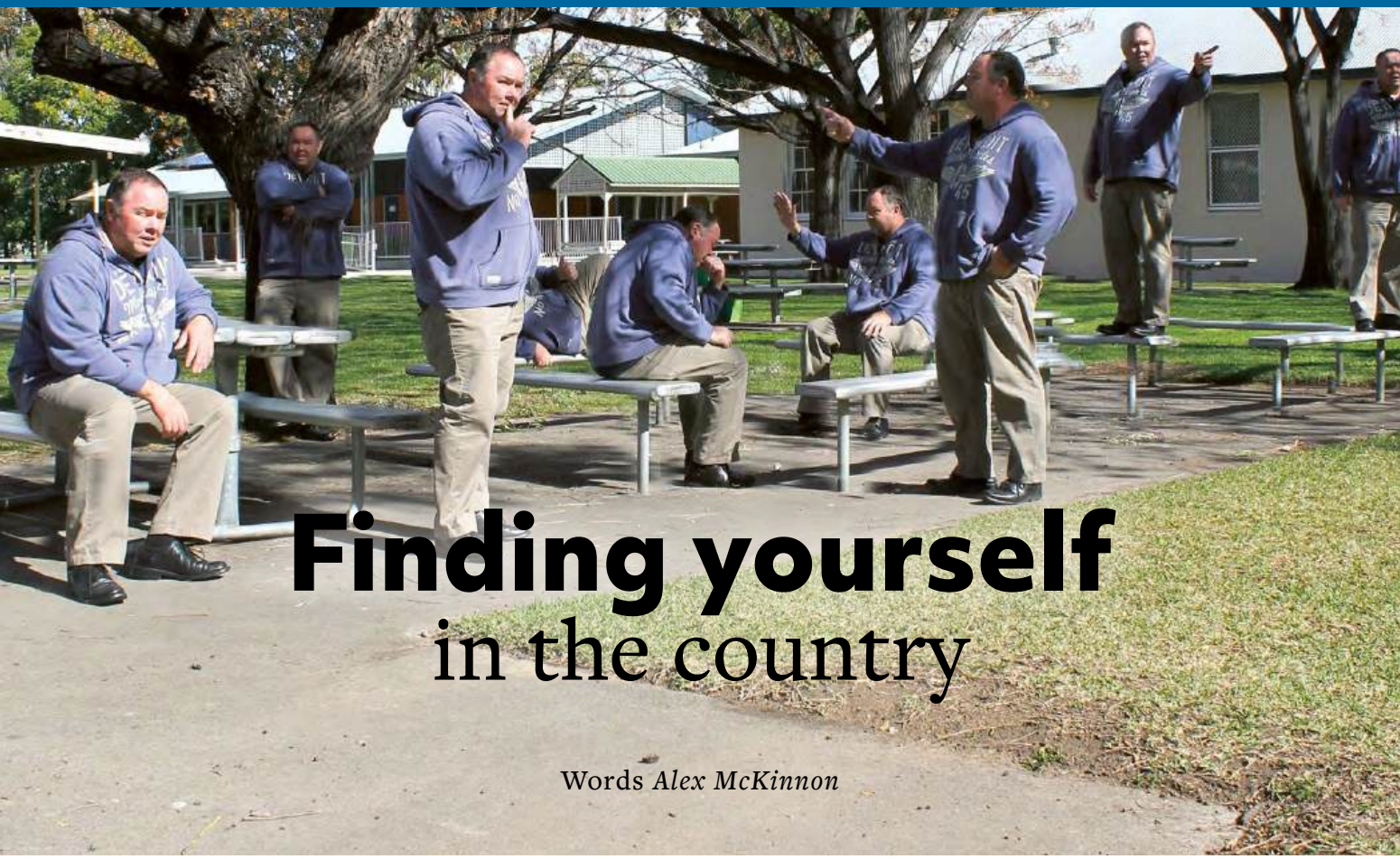
Federation's campaign was triggered by a motion written by teachers in small schools, passed by Hawkesbury Teachers Association and debated at state Council, which called for "an immediate increase in guaranteed release time of all teaching principals". Back in 2018, while the enhancement to teaching principal release time was celebrated, it was also understood that it was allocated as a 'bucket of money' — in line with Local Schools, Local Decision methodology — and was never protected. Though this funding was maintained, it has not increased commensurate with the cost of employing a teacher and has remained precarious.

When the campaign was launched in August 2024, members were urged to contact the Minns Government to demand:

- a base staffing entitlement of two full-time teachers as a minimum
- a minimum 50 per cent reduction in face-to-face teaching for teaching principals, regardless of the school's enrolments to meet the ever-increasing demands of a teaching principal.

They responded in force, and Premier Chris Minns and Education Minister Prue Car received hundreds of emails from small schools, urging the NSW Government to implement the necessary reforms to recognise the unique context of small schools.

As evidenced by the announcement, collective action and the grassroots democracy that informed it have been effective and achieved a historic improvement. Whilst this is a significant improvement and departure from the flawed LSLD policy, the campaign continues to strive to achieve Federation's small schools staffing policy in full.



Finding yourself in the country

Words *Alex McKinnon*

John O'Connor is Moree through and through. With family roots in the town stretching back to 1909, John got his first teaching job at Moree Secondary College in the early 1990s and never looked back.

John, a member of the Federation Workplace Committee at Moree Secondary College, is evangelical about getting more young teachers out to regional and rural schools — not just to teach for a year or two, but to stay long-term and build a life.

"If you're young and you've lived in Sydney all your life, coming out can be a little bit of a culture shock. But these are lovely places to teach and work," he said. "There are so many advantages to working in a regional town, especially for young teachers starting out. Sydney can be really isolating, but five minutes after you turn up in Moree, you've got five million friends.

"And you can still buy a good house in Moree. My dog's got more room to run around than people do in Sydney!"

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES' SUCCESSES AND SETBACKS

A learning and support teacher, John works with students with disability who often face profound disadvantage.

In 2013, Moree Secondary was selected as one of 16 schools to trial the Connected Communities Strategy. Introduced by the NSW government in 2013 following consultation with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Connected Communities aimed to "provide differentiated, holistic learning underpinned by local Aboriginal culture" in regional, rural and remote schools with large numbers of Aboriginal students.

One of the main goals of Connected Communities was to introduce wraparound support services like health, welfare, early childhood education and vocational education and training (VET) into identified schools. Connected Communities schools would employ Aboriginal-identified community engagement officers and additional relief teachers, set up Local School Reference Groups to strengthen connections between the schools and local Elders and community members, and focus on teaching Aboriginal language and culture.

Originally rolled out to 16 schools, Connected Communities now operates in 33 schools across the state. Despite the expansion, a lack of funding and resourcing has seen many of these schools struggle to deliver the outcomes Connected Communities was set up to reach.

"The brochure said we'd have a trained physiotherapist, a trained speech therapist, police on the campus, a nurse, Aboriginal liaison officers, you name it. And they'd all get together under one roof so everyone was on the same page about what students needed. In all those years, it never happened," John said. "We got some extra staff and School Learning Support Officers, which did help, but now it looks like that might get taken away too."

WHERE TO NEXT?

A Departmental evaluation in 2024 found that while Connected Communities had successfully embedded Aboriginal language

and culture in schools and increased family and community engagement with school communities, chronic staff shortages, high turnover and poor access to support services hampered the strategy's more ambitious goals.

That evaluation recommended that the NSW Government develop "a long-term continuation plan" to give Connected Communities schools stability and a say in how the strategy would unfold in the future. However, the Department's planned changes to the program could leave schools like Moree Secondary without the staff they need to adequately support their students.

"We're six or seven staff short already," John said. "If the Department doesn't give us more staff, we can't do what Connected Communities was set up to do. We want to know why the Department is refusing to bolster these schools."

Federation has consistently pushed successive state governments to provide more support for teaching staff in Connected Communities schools.

In 2021, teachers at Moree Secondary College walked off the job in frustration at the Department's failure to provide additional permanent staffing positions or allied health services promised under the strategy.

"The Department has a real opportunity here to put in place policy reforms that have the potential to break poverty cycles and change people's lives, but rhetoric needs to be matched with action," Federation President Henry Rajendra told the Gallop Inquiry in 2020.

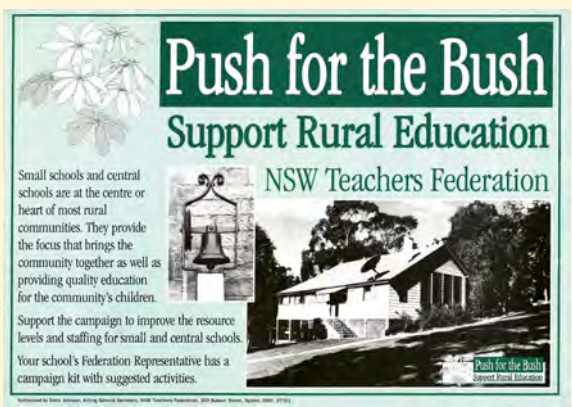
"Failing to implement reform in this area is putting a generation of disadvantaged students at further risk."

"Federation's done a great job supporting Connected Communities," John said.

"All our programs are all up-to-date, the students are really engaged with them. We've been doing this for years.

"If we got more permanent staff in those schools, it would allow us to do a lot more."

Top: Federation stalwart John O'Connor
Above, right: Moree Secondary College



Federation has a long history of advocating for members in rural settings, including through campaigns such as the 1997 Push for the Bush effort.

How we support
early career teachers

Federation is here to provide support and training to create a better future for the profession. If you are an early career teacher, consider these Trade Union Training events for 2026. For our experienced members mentoring the next generation of teachers, let them know what we have to offer and share your experiences of these opportunities with them. Here's what some of our Trade Union Training participants said.

BEGINNING TEACHER COURSES AND CONFERENCES

Covers working conditions and entitlements, accreditation, planning, programming and differentiation, classroom management and Aboriginal Education. Held in Surry Hills and various regional centres

"I went to educate myself about Federation but I also found the session on supporting beginning teachers to navigate the curriculum very helpful. I enjoyed connecting with members working in other school contexts and over the years I've encouraged others to attend."

Sophie Rossiter
Scotts Head Public School

"I got a lot more out of it than I bargained for. It helped me understand how the new Award applied to me and I was able to share my knowledge with others at the school. I learnt so much about working conditions that the Department doesn't tell you."

Trang Dao
Moree Secondary College

NEW ACTIVISTS CONFERENCE

Covers system and statewide issues that impact teaching and learning, teaches skills to build activism and lets participants connect with colleagues in a variety of settings

"I went to the New Activists Conference to build my network and came away with more confidence to talk about the union. The conference content was inspirational and with my increased knowledge I've been able to answer more questions from members."

Uvarajan Ganesbaran
Guyra Central School

"I went to the New Activists Conference because I was really interested in reinvigorating activism among members in the Macleay Valley, to help them find their voices … and was looking for some strategies. The happy outcome from attending was that I was invigorated — it lit a fire in me! The guest speakers were inspiring and practical sessions on how to be active gave me achievable strategies to take with me. The social element was lovely, getting together in the evening to celebrate our fellow teachers and activists."

Lara Wasilewski
Kempsey High School

"As a newer teacher I found it was a great place to network with other people with similar opinions. An opportunity that came from networking at the event was fantastic and rewarding. I met someone from the Department and NESA that led to me creating Aboriginal content for Stages 1–3 of the Creative Arts Syllabus — something I'd wanted to do all my career. It's a place to come and meet like-minded teachers, share experiences in a safe place and learn what's going on in different schools in NSW."

Tahlia McGuinness
Denison College of Secondary Education — Bathurst Campus

If you're interested in any of these opportunities, check out our website or speak to your Fed Rep or member of the workplace committee.

Challenging the narrative

Guest speaker Winnie Dunn addresses the New Activist Conference

As educators and activists, we have the power to amplify the storytellers shaping our future. That was the inspiring message writer and Sweatshop Literacy Movement general manager Winnie Dunn had for attendees of Federation's New Activist Conference on 1 November.

Winnie is the author of *Dirt Poor Islanders*, Australia's first novel about the Tongan-Australian community by a writer of Tongan heritage. "It's autobiographical fiction and it asks Australia to meet Pasifika people on our terms," Winnie said.

"It challenges the narrative that we are invisible unless we're in footy jerseys or court reports. It insists that our intersections and our language, including our slang, is in itself literature."

Winnie said her life's work is to empower First Nations artists and artists of colour through reading, writing and critical thinking.

"I'm deeply inspired by African-American intersectional feminist and scholar, bell hooks, who argued: 'We cannot talk about freedom and justice in any culture unless we are talking about mass-based literacy movements because degrees of literacy determine how we see what we see'," Winnie said.

THE NARROW VIEW OF REALITY

Growing up in the Mount Druitt area as an aspiring artist, Winnie thought Mount Druitt was the place literature went to die.

"I didn't see myself at all. I didn't see my identity as a mixed-race Tongan woman from Mount Druitt reflected in the stories I read, the films I watched or the music I listened to," she said.

"Even when I was in a public primary school, I didn't have access to books written by First Nations people or people of colour. Not a single one. Instead, our librarian kept a locked, special cabinet for the students he deemed 'smart', filled with British and American titles like *Harry Potter* and *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.

"That was my first lesson in Australian education: stories like mine were not considered literature. Belonging was something you had to be chosen for."

REAL REPRESENTATION

She proposes an alternative: own-voices narratives ("works created by us, for us, in our own words, vernacular and rhythms") and for "schools, libraries and publishers to trust us enough to let us be the experts of our own stories, no matter how we read on the page or sound on stage".

"The term 'own voices' was coined to describe stories written by people from marginalised communities about those communities, not filtered through the gaze of a white saviour complex or a publisher's fear of controversy or a school's well-meaning but often misinformed concerns about the appropriateness of

"You hold the key to what all students can imagine for themselves"

certain novels," Winnie said. "Own-voice stories are essential because they are specific. And specificity is where literature lives. Specificity is what makes literature human."

"The Australian literary landscape was never built with cultural and linguistically diverse communities in mind — let alone for us," she added.

"Historically, publishing has upheld white, middle-class, and often elite narratives as the default. That's not just about gatekeeping — it's about imagination. If publishers, booksellers and media don't believe stories from Pasifika communities can sell, then we're not just excluded, we're erased. That's why *Dirt Poor Islanders* had to be written — not just to exist on a shelf, but to crack that shelf open."

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Winne said public schools matter because "they can be radically inclusive spaces, especially when teachers fight to make them so".

"You are shaping a generation who will know themselves through story," she told attendees.

"Public schools have the power to show every child they deserve to be seen, not just tolerated. There is no locked cabinet for a select few to open anymore. You hold the key to what all students can imagine for themselves.

"So when teachers today choose to display Sweatshop books and other own-voices titles proudly and openly on their shelves, you are actively dismantling that gatekeeping. You are telling Pasifika kids, Arab kids, Asian kids, Black kids, First Nations kids: your stories are not hidden away. They are part of Australian literature and part of our future in all their slang, grammatical incorrectness and confronting content," Winnie said.

"Don't be afraid of how we speak and write. Fully embrace our diversity, not just what's palatable for Harmony Day. Put our books in your libraries, in your classrooms, in the hands of the kids who've never seen themselves on a page. Let them know they are allowed to take up space on shelves, in stories, and in this country."

ACTIVISTS LEARN THE ROPES

The New Activist Conference is held annually for teachers in their first five years of teaching (or first 10 years if they hold a Federation representative position) who are interested in becoming more active within Federation. In addition to the guest speaker, participants heard from Acting President Amber Flohm, who gave a campaign update.

Members also attended three workshop sessions, which covered topics including supporting students with disability, workplace activism, Association activism, Fem-IN-ism, advocacy and allyship to create LGBTIQA+ inclusive schools and Aboriginal education.

The next New Activist Conference will be held on 24 November 2026

Check out the New Educators Conference gallery here

Federation's opposition to occupation and genocide

Since October 2023, Federation Officers and members have attended weekly rallies calling for an enduring ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

In a report to October Council, Senior Vice President Natasha Watt welcomed the news of a ceasefire in Gaza but reiterated Federation's demand for "the application of international law on the perpetrators of war crime and genocide" and commitment that the union movement will "maintain pressure on the Federal Government in pursuit of justice".

"97 per cent of schools [in Gaza] have been destroyed or damaged and 600,000 [children have been] without access to education for two years," Ms Watt wrote. "With 40,000 orphans, thousands surviving with injury and children being most vulnerable to the famine conditions, the crisis for children is unprecedented."

She stated union campaigns "must continue to place the problems of economic inequality and its ramifications at the feet of employers and governments".

"The war economy prioritises profit over people," she said.

'ALL WARS ARE FOUGHT AGAINST CHILDREN'

Federation's conviction, first expressed by former President Sam Lewis, is that "all wars are fought against children". It's this philosophy that has spurred Federation members to campaign for peace and justice in Palestine for decades.

In 2023, Federation called on the federal and NSW governments to condemn violence against all children in the context of Australia's ratification of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

In 2014, the union condemned Israel's attacks on children and schools in the Gaza Strip. Federation called on the Australian Education Union to coordinate a national response to the violence and injustice carried out against children and their right to education across the globe, with particular reference to the children of Palestine.

Back in 2010, Federation called on the Rudd government to immediately demand that the government of Israel end the illegal blockade and sanctions against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, ensure Gaza's borders were opened for unfettered humanitarian access of both people and goods and demand the Israeli Government comply with international laws.

'IT HAS NEVER BEEN AN ABSTRACT AFFAIR'

Over the years, the Peace, Environment and International Special Interest Group (SIG) has been vital to driving union action on this issue.

One of the newest members of the SIG, Liv Serougi, was elected as an Association Peace Contact this year. During Trade Union Training for the position earlier this year she was inspired by a speaker from Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA to work

with her colleagues in the Canterbury-Bankstown Teachers Association (CBTA) to organise a fundraising dinner and trivia night in September that raised more than $5000 for APHEDA's Gaza appeal.

Lenore Hankinson, who was the Officer attached to the SIG for some years, travelled to the occupied Palestinian Territory on an APHEDA study trip in 2010, where she witnessed the decimating effects of the Israeli occupation, conflict and blockade on the Palestinian economy and society. Federation subsequently supported the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions' Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, aimed at ensuring human rights are upheld, an end to the blockade, unfettered open borders for people and goods, an end to the demolition of Palestinian homes and a just resolution for Palestinian refugees.

SIG member Peter Weitzel recalls a "letter war" between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli members erupting in Federation's journal in 2001, after Federation Executive endorsed Education International's World Congress resolution calling for an end to violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

"Such was the pitch of the letter war, Federation convened a forum in December of that year where the views of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation leader Ali Kazak were heard alongside those of the Israel Consul General," Peter told *Education Quarterly*.

In 2001, the CBTA passed a resolution calling for a "total blockade both political and economic of Israel until it conforms to all United Nations (UN) resolutions, allows UN inspectors to check for nuclear and chemical weapons, stops its policies of ethnic cleansing and apartheid and hands over possible war criminals such as Ariel Sharon to the war crimes court".

The resolution, which was adopted with amendments by Federation, prompted a backlash in the conservative press and the NSW Liberal Party. Despite the pressure to withdraw the resolution, Federation stood firm.

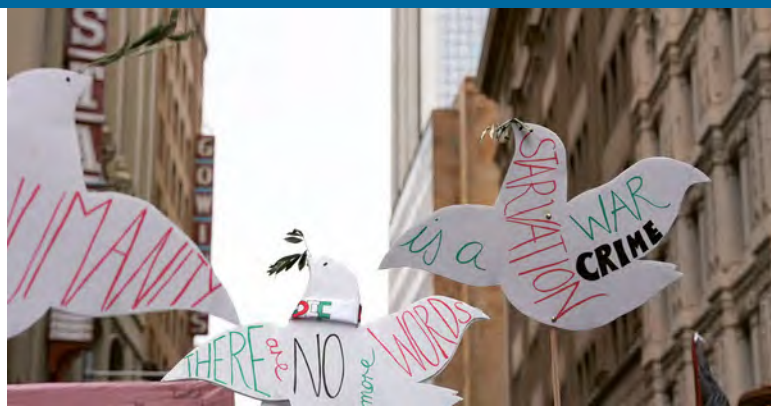
Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* at the time, longtime SIG member Jennifer Killen defended the right of "ordinary chalk-face members" to speak out on issues of international peace and justice.

"Neither we nor our students exist in a vacuum, insulated from world affairs. We have all had to deal with the effects this conflict has had on our students," Jennifer wrote.

"In the many years I have been part of the Peace, Environment and International Issues SIG, the issue of Palestine has been of enormous concern to teachers," Jennifer told *Education Quarterly*.

"For many of us, it has never been an abstract affair regarding children in a faraway country, but a real concern for the welfare of students in the classes we teach every day."

This video, shown to Council in August, illustrates Federation's commitment to show up for peace — every rally, every time



Federation members have been marching at Palestine rallies for two years

Our place at the table

Takeaways from our Rethinking Ability: Special Education Conference

Words *Alex McKinnon*

People with disability deserve to sit at the table — not a place off to the side.

That was the message teachers took home from Rethinking Ability, Federation's special education conference hosted by the Centre for Professional Learning (CPL) on 3 November.

Featuring Federation Officers and activists, disability advocates and special education experts, the conference gave attendees valuable insights into helping their students and advocating for disability rights in the workplace.

'I STARTED COMMUNICATING THROUGH MY ART'

Visual artist and disability advocate Daniel McDonald gave a stirring keynote address, recounting how his experiences as a Deaf person have informed his championing of people with disability in public life.

Daniel spoke of his childhood at a private school for the Deaf in the 1980s, enduring racist bullying and homophobia from students and ignorance from teachers who tried to force their Deaf and non-verbal students to speak.

Art became his means of self-expression and empowerment.

"When I was five, an Elder sat me down and showed me a dot painting. They showed me how to paint stories," Daniel said. "I started communicating through my art, and I found peace through that. I've been painting ever since."

'WE BELONG AT ONE TABLE'

A proud Gadigal and Wonnarua man, Daniel now works with Aboriginal children in schools and sits on disability advisory and inclusion panels for both the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and the City of Sydney. His Darlinghurst gallery, Deadly Hand Talk, displays his works inspired by the traditional dot painting techniques of the Western Desert.

Daniel was named as one of Sydney 2023 WorldPride's 45 Rainbow Champions for his contributions to the Australian LGBTQIA+ community and culture. In 2024, McDonald ran as a candidate for City of Sydney Council as part of the lord mayoral campaign of Yvonne Weldon, the City's first Aboriginal councillor in its 180-year history.

McDonald's intersecting experiences as a Deaf person, an Aboriginal man and member of the LGBTIQA+ community have informed his approach to advocacy.

"The government wants separate tables for people based on difference — one for Aboriginal people, one for LGBTIQA+

people, one for people with disability, but we belong at one table, not at different tables," Daniel told the audience.

"Most of us with a disability can relate to a time when we have tried to open our wings and fly into the sky, only for someone to catch us and put us in a cage — to stay for far too long, locked away and trapped in silence.

"I believe it is our job to champion everyone's rights, to seek happiness for all of Australia's disability communities. The dreams and hopes of many have been fulfilled, but we must make sure that we continue to hope and dream. Never let us fade away into silence."

It was a message that resonated with Nathan Morabito, a first-time Conference attendee who teaches at the Casuarina School, a school for specific purposes in Riverstone.

"I thought Daniel's keynote speech was really inspiring," Morabito said. "His message about how education shouldn't be exclusive is something I want to bring into my own classroom settings."

MORE LESSONS ON OFFER

Federation's Disability Officer John Skene said the keynote address set the tone for the rest of the day.

Strong turnout and interest in the day's sessions saw attendees come away with valuable lessons about differentiation, classroom management with diverse learners, meeting sensory needs, working with school learning support officers and neurodiversity in TAFE.

"It was a really positive day for teachers from across all settings — primary, secondary, TAFE and our schools for specific purposes colleagues," John said.

"It was great to bring them all together so they could network and have those professional discussions. Going off the vibe of the room, people had a lot of 'a-ha' moments."

John highlighted the growing range of CPL courses Federation offers year-round that focus on students with disability.

"The uptake of our CPL courses has been phenomenal," he said.

"Working closely with Margaret and the team, we've built a really strong suite of learning for our teachers. Unfortunately, the Department of Education does not offer much professional learning in the area of disability for teachers. As a result, Federation takes very seriously offering members relevant and applicable learning to help in the classroom."

For more information about CPL courses and conferences, phone (02) 9217 2125 or email **cpl@nswtf.org.au**.

The next Rethinking Ability: Special Education Conference will be held on 3 December 2026 — International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Guest speaker Daniel McDonald

RETHINKING ABILITY
Disability Allowance eligibility

JOHN SKENE Disability Officer

Federation has been receiving inquiries about whether teachers across different settings are eligible for Disability Allowance support payments. Members have been seeking information on the process to ensure it is being received, whether it can be backdated and whether mainstream teachers with assigned periods to support classes in high schools are entitled to the payment.

The Disability Allowance, as per the Crown Award, is payable to teachers of children with disabilities as follows:

2.62 "Teachers of Students with Disabilities" means school teachers appointed to schools for specific purposes, or support classes in primary or high schools established to provide education for students with disabilities and including appointments as itinerant support teacher, as follows:

2.62.1 students with: mild intellectual disabilities (IM); moderate intellectual disabilities (IO); severe intellectual disabilities (IS); behaviour disorders (BD); emotional disabilities (ED); hearing impairments (H); language disabilities (L); physical disabilities (P); severe reading (R); vision impairments (V); and

2.62.2 students in: an early childhood intervention program (EC); hospital schools; Royal Far West School; Stewart House (W); and community care programs (CT).

Members have shared correspondence with EDConnect to Federation that confirms teachers with regular, scheduled and/or assigned periods on support classes *are* eligible for the allowance payment from the Department.

For teachers to reinstate and/or have allowance paid (which can be backdated) the principal must send an online enquiry to EDConnect requesting the allowance be reinstated or confirming that the employee is eligible to be paid the allowance and provide the following information:

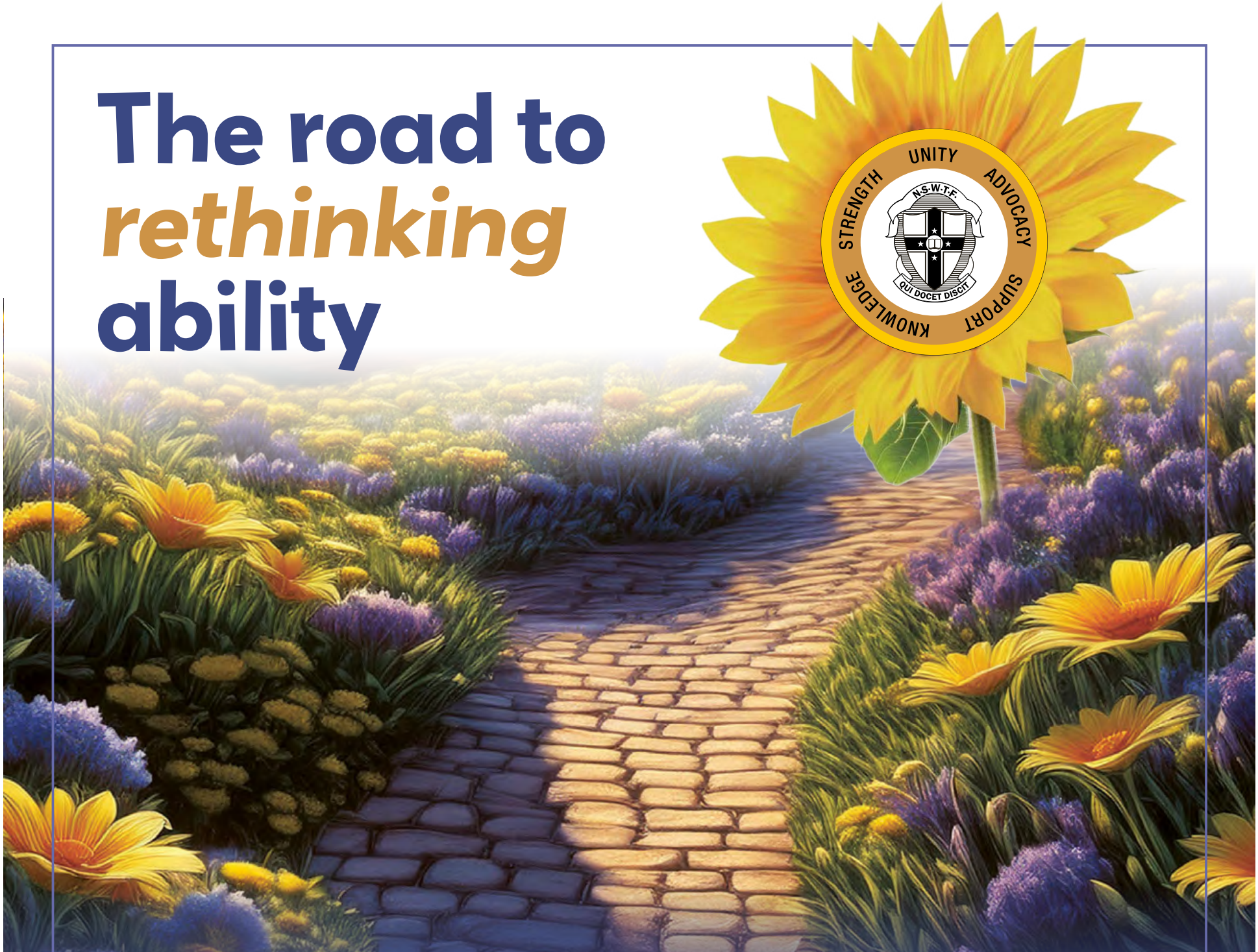
- employee name
- employee ID
- allowance requested
- start date
- end date (if ongoing, please indicate)
- percentage of allowance (FTE)
- if the allowance is payable alongside higher duties.

The allowance for casual days worked is added to the casual time sheets when they are submitted. If this has been missed, the school can submit these and have them approved and the allowance can be paid in arrears.

Members are encouraged to check their payslips on SAP. If you feel you're eligible for the allowance, take the time to sit with your principal, discuss the situation and submit the query.

If you need assistance from Federation, talk to your Federation Representative or Workplace Committee members in the first instance. You can also contact Professional Support on **1300 654 367** or via email at **professionalsupport@nswtf.org.au** or speak to your Organiser. Regional office details can be found via "Contact us" in the Quick links list on our website's homepage.

The road to *rethinking* ability



1923 First school for special purposes in NSW

1954 Annual Conference decision: "Education of Physically and Mentally Handicapped Children"

1950s-1960s Schools for children with physical, intellectual or emotional disabilities

mid 1970s Schools for students with severe disabilities

1974 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons

1980 Federation's first Special Education Policy

1983 Richmond Inquiry report recommends deinstitutionalisation

1986 Disability rights advocacy funded under the Disability Services Act

1987 NSW Department of Education policy statement: The Education of Students with Learning Difficulties from pre-school to year 12

1992 Disability Discrimination Act (federal)

2005 Australian Disability Standards for Education

2007 Australia becomes a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

2011 Review of Funding for Schooling report identifies disability as a factor of disadvantage for learning and calls for a students with disability loading

2012 NSW Department of Education's Every Student, Every School policy

2014 Federation updates Special Education Policy

2015 Federation holds Equity for Students with Disability summit

2018 Full implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and establishment of the NSW Department's 'Delivery Unit' with education and outcomes for students with disability as a priority area

2021 Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025

2023 NSW Department of Education's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

2025 Federation creates a full-time Disability Officer position

DOWNLOAD THE FULL POSTER IN THE MEMBER PORTAL

BE PART OF THE JOURNEY. Join our Special Education Teachers Special Interest Group and help make a difference.

Clock on to our tips for better meetings

Meetings that finish on time — or even earlier — are achievable, say Federation timekeepers.

And it is imperative that they do, given the Award now restricts regular before and after-school meetings (including all-school, stage, faculty or key learning area meetings and professional learning) to a maximum one hour per week.

Our timekeepers, who help Federation Council, Annual Conference and Association meetings run smoothly, assist the chairperson to keep track of participants and ensure the extensive agenda is covered before members need to leave.

Read on to learn how they have been able to ensure that before and after-school meetings finish on time at their workplaces, by employing the knowledge and skills they've learned as volunteer timekeepers at Council, Annual Conference and/or Association meetings.

FEDERATION KNOWLEDGE TRANSFERRED TO THE WORKPLACE

At the beginning of 2024, Federation Representative Jack Brooks — now a timekeeper at Council and Annual Conference — set out to tackle staff meetings as a major source of stress and exhaustion at his school.

"I began by surveying the school membership about different components of meetings — like governance, content and structure — and how they would like to see meetings be better," Jack said.

"Based on this data, my workplace committee and I worked together to create a proposed policy document to govern meetings at the school, including a basic set of standing orders.

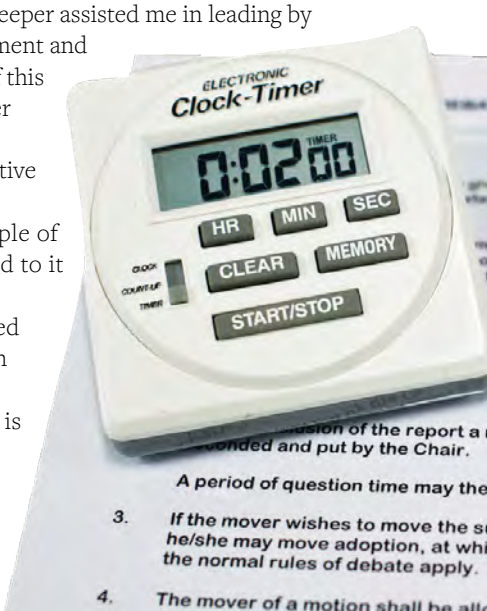
"As a regular attendee of Council and [then] aspiring timekeeper, the practice and understanding of standing orders and governance in a large forum was invaluable in creating a policy in my local context that ensured staff in my school could receive the information they required, have their voices heard on school business and have their time as professionals respected.

"Once we successfully coordinated an in-school campaign and had the policy adopted largely unchanged, my faculty and I led the inaugural meeting under the new agreement," Jack said.

"My training as a timekeeper assisted me in leading by example both at that moment and throughout the infancy of this structure, mentoring other staff on how to adhere to the rules and run an effective meeting."

Jack said it took a couple of terms for staff to get used to it but now it's the norm.

"The culture has evolved and staff have really taken ownership of it — the attitude towards meeting is now more positive."



> "My workplace committee and I worked together to create a proposed policy document to govern meetings at the school, including a basic set of standing orders"

Just 2–6 per cent of the staff Jack surveyed felt most or all of the information in meetings needed to be communicated face-to-face. Now, executive minutes are made available to staff via a link.

Meeting rules include:

- agenda to be published one business day prior to the meeting
- the process for how submissions will be prioritised
- speakers limited to one minute each in the general business section
- procedures for how time for an item or a speaker's time can be extended.

One-hour whole school meetings, held three times per term, run to the following agenda:

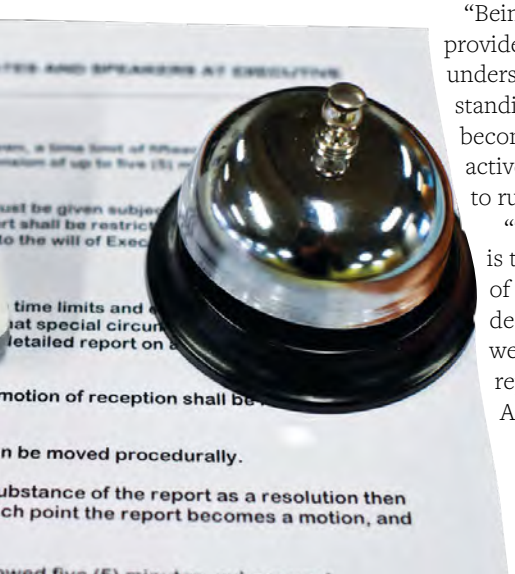
- Acknowledgement of Country: five minutes
- Principal's report: 10 minutes
- Executive/whole school reports and item (10 minute time limit per item, except in extraordinary circumstances): 30 minutes total
- General business (on notice, then without notice): 15 minutes.

Each faculty elects a chairperson, timekeeper and minute-taker representative and the responsibility for meeting governance rotates through the faculties each meeting.

TIMEKEEPERS CAN HELP TRANSFORM MEETINGS

"Having a timekeeper means the chair can focus on the points being raised and reduces the role overload of having just one person responsible for having meetings run smoothly," said Ashleigh Saunders, also a timekeeper at Council and Annual Conference.

"When I first started to attend Annual Conference I had no idea how anything worked. At the front was a pair of people who looked like they knew what was happening and they were having a good time.



"Being a timekeeper provides such a deep understanding of the standing orders and I have become so much more active in assisting debate to run smoothly.

"To be a timekeeper is to be part of a club of people who care deeply about the work we do as statewide representatives," Ashleigh said. "I have worked alongside people I ordinarily never would have interacted with and I have learnt so much about their experiences and enjoy their company and perspectives immensely."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Our timekeepers are guided by Federation's *Meeting Guide for Workplaces and Associations,* available in the Member Portal, which encourages time limits in meetings to "allow for fair sharing of the time available and help ensure the meeting will get through its urgent business".

Implementing timekeeping and standing orders ensures:

- people who are speaking are concise and more thoughtful and deliberate in their responses
- more diversity in contributions. By avoiding the same voices, meetings can create more meaningful consultation and feedback.

"Teachers respect their own and other workers' time, recognising that everyone has a 'right to disconnect' and to personal and private time outside of work," Federation's *Charter of Teachers' Work* states.

"Teachers can rightfully expect meaningful, fair and sustainable workloads, deliverable within core working hours during the day, based upon a realistic assessment of the time required to complete work-related activities."

The Department's Effective Meeting Management Toolkit also encourages disciplined and active meeting behaviour to effectively work through all items on an agenda and maintain focus. It recommends sticking to advertised starting and finishing times to respect others.

Timekeeping can help make meetings more productive and worthwhile

SAVING FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL?

Earn a bonus rate* when you deposit $100+ and make no withdrawals each month. Reach your goals faster with Momentum Saver.

- ✔ **Unlock** your bonus interest
- ✔ **No** tricks
- ✔ **No** monthly account fees

Scan the QR code to find out more

Teachers Mutual Bank

*Membership criteria, fees and T&Cs apply. See tmbank.com.au for T&Cs, TMD and further details. Rates quoted are subject to change. The interest rate(s) applicable are dependent on account balance. Bonus variable interest only applies when each month you make no withdrawals and deposit $100+ by 5pm Sydney time on the last day of the month.

Nominated transfer

MAUREEN-DAVIS CATTERALL
Professional Support Officer

Changes to the enrolments or curriculum requirements of a school can result in the need for a nominated transfer of a permanent teacher from their current school. The process can create uncertainty and anxiety for those involved. Improved understanding of the process is one way to help with this.

Before commencing this action, the principal *must* consider all options to manage the reduction or change in the school's staffing needs. The Nominated Transfer Procedure outlines who principals should avoid selecting for transfer. If there are no possible options to prevent the nominated transfer, they must then inform *all* permanent teaching staff, including by providing staff with a link to the Department's Nominated Transfer Procedure for Teachers and suggested timeframes.

Permanent teaching staff *must* be offered the opportunity to self-nominate. If there are no self-nominations, the principal must determine the teacher to be nominated based on the curriculum and operational needs of the school and should inform the nominated teacher (with a support person present, if requested) in a sensitive, confidential manner and location.

Appointment of a teacher with nominated transfer status is prioritised, matching them to a suitable vacancy within one hour travel time of the teacher's residential address and based on the teacher's approved teaching codes.

It is extremely important that teachers ensure that all personal details (i.e. home address, approved teaching codes) within the Department's personnel system, Employee Self Service, are accurate at all times. Changes made to home address or teaching codes following nomination are not accepted by the Department.

A nominated teacher is *appointed* to a new school, not *offered* a position. They retain permanency within the Department, as well as continuity of service and full transfer points for their current school. They will need to submit an application for nominated transfer through Employee Self Service. However, once submitted, the application is managed centrally by the Department. They may also be eligible to apply for another type of transfer or entitled to moving expenses.

If there are no vacant positions, the nominated teacher will remain in their current school in an above-establishment position until a suitable vacancy arises. Teachers in high schools would have a timetabled teaching load of at least 50 per cent of a teaching load (including team teaching), with the remaining 50 per cent allocated to implement special programs, release other teachers or provide in-built relief. If you've been nominated and believe the correct procedure hasn't been followed, you have the right to request a review of the process within five business days of being advised of the transfer by emailing **SchoolRecruitment@det.nsw.edu.au** with the subject line "Nominated transfer review request".

Seek advice by contacting Federation's Professional Support.

TAFE TALK

2025 National TAFE Day — the biggest ever!

KELLY MARKS Acting TAFE Lead Organiser

National TAFE Day is a chance to celebrate the achievements of TAFE and to highlight the role it plays in supporting, upskilling and providing opportunities for young people and communities, addressing disadvantage, changing lives and shaping Australia for the better.

This year it was held on 3 September and once again saw teachers, students, unionists and politicians come together to hold events at colleges across the country, as well as engage in advocacy, campaigning and political lobbying to showcase students' achievements and celebrate the Australian Education Union's annual National TAFE Photography Competition.

Federation sent a delegation of TAFE members and Organisers led by General Secretary Maxine Sharkey and President Henry Rajendra to Canberra to meet with key federal MPs, celebrate TAFE and attend the announcement by Federal Skills Minister Andrew Giles of the winner of this year's photography competition.

The competition is open to all currently enrolled TAFE students across Australia. The 2025 theme, 'The Heart of TAFE', encouraged entries that showcase student life and experiences as they study at TAFE and highlight the importance of a well-funded, properly resourced TAFE system to the Australian economy and the communities it serves.

In NSW we had 47 entries this year, the second highest number for any state — only Queensland had more entries. The three NSW judges awarded the following:

- Winning entry: 'Blue' by "River" Min Zhu, Meadowbank TAFE and Enmore Design Centre (main image)
- Second place: 'Reel Moments' by Rebecca Simon, Campbelltown TAFE (right)
- Honourable mention: 'Microbiology 101' by Elisha Bun, Granville TAFE (below, left)
- Second honourable mention: 'The Saw' by Ryder Moss, Casino TAFE (below, right)

As the NSW winner, River won $1000 and the opportunity to travel to Canberra to meet with Federation's delegation and to compete against the other state champions for the title of National TAFE Photography Competition winner.

While River was not the national winner, we are very proud of River's work, as was TAFE NSW managing director Chloe Read, who attended the announcement along with NSW Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education Minister Steve Whan.

Ms Read now has River's entry "Blue" displayed near her office.

This year, many campuses across NSW held events and celebrations to mark National TAFE Day for the first time ever.

National TAFE Day is now being warmly embraced by all. Federation member Peter Allen was visited by the managing director wearing a union Rebuild with TAFE t-shirt and was personally congratulated by his executive director for organising a National TAFE Day celebration in his newsletter to all employees in the faculty.

National TAFE Day 2026 will need to be even bigger if we are to continue to rebuild a system that was brought to its knees by the contestable funding model.

MULTICULTURAL MATTERS

Time for change!

MANDY WELLS Multicultural Officer/Organiser

2025 marks 50 years since the passing of the Racial Discrimination Act in Australia, which made it "unlawful to discriminate against a person because of his or her race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin, or immigrant status". Under the Act, racial hatred is defined as "being unlawful"; so too is to "discriminate in the provision of services". Yet racism in many forms remains prevalent and impacts upon us all.

Half a century on, we must face the uncomfortable truth that racism remains an ongoing challenge for this country. Our inability as a nation to have mature public discourse about it is what allows it to continue.

In the 2025 Kep Enderby Lecture, Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman identified embedded, structural racism as being one of the biggest barriers to an inclusive society. He said that "systems harm us when they lack cultural safety" and "growing up in a system of structural racism can make some people feel they have rights above others". He also identified workplaces as being "vital to addressing racism" and those with a voice having the "moral imperative" and "positive duty to eliminate racism and prevent future instances".

Anti-racism education is central to achieving sustainable change. Truth telling — including the history of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples being dispossessed of their lands and denied sovereignty, and the positive contributions of migrants to Australia's story — must feature in curriculum. So too the development of critical thinking skills, values and empathy. Increasing intercultural understanding, equipping students to identify fact from misinformation and shutting down hate strengthens inclusion and creates safe places where everyone feels they belong.

Holding everyone to account for their actions and addressing all instances of racism and discrimination must become the standard we set in schools and TAFE colleges. Rejecting the politics of division and scapegoating, fostering responsible discourse and tackling inequality must be our collective focus. Improving access to education, healthcare, employment and housing is what engenders fairness. Moving from words to action when fairness, equality and basic human rights are denied paves our way forward.

In Sivaraman's words, "after 50 years, it's time to relieve those targeted by racism of the burden of fighting against it". Those of us in a place of privilege have a responsibility to speak out against racism and push back against those who spread fear and hate. Responsible leadership, inclusive and equitable policies, and the dismantling of structural racism will build a better future for us all. Our nation will only truly be prosperous when equality of opportunity, safety and respect is afforded to each and every one of us.

- Read more about understanding racism, the value of human rights, the Racial Discrimination Act and the roadmap towards a National Anti-Racism Framework, plus teacher resources, at **humanrights.gov.au**.
- Observe International Human Rights Day on 10 December; find out more via **un.org/en.**

EARLY CAREER INSIGHTS

Beginning Teacher Support Funding

KATINKA KASTNER
Membership and Training Officer

In 2025 the Beginning Teacher Support Funding model was replaced with the Beginning Teacher Support Entitlement.

Under the entitlement, additional release time is provided through a staffing entitlement allocated to schools.

WHAT IS THE ENTITLEMENT?

Teachers	School entitlement
Eligible first year teachers	0.084 FTE entitlement for 12 months, which equates to two hours of additional release per week
Eligible ***permanent*** second year teachers	0.042 FTE entitlement for 12 months, which equates to one hour of additional release per week
Eligible part-time permanent teachers	Will be provided on a pro-rata basis according to the number of days worked by the teacher under their permanent appointment

Permanent teachers are eligible if they:

- are employed in their first permanent teaching appointment with the Department
- require mandatory accreditation
- have not yet achieved accreditation at Proficient Teacher level at the date they enter on duty (for first year entitlement)
- have not yet achieved accreditation at Proficient Teacher level prior to second year (for second year entitlement).

Temporary teachers are eligible if they:

- are employed in their first, consecutive four-term (calendar year), full-time temporary engagement
- are employed under temporary engagements and approved in SAP by 5pm on 1 March in the year of engagement
- require mandatory accreditation
- have not yet achieved accreditation at Proficient Teacher level when they start their temporary engagement.

Department policy states it is the principal's responsibility to "ensure eligible beginning teachers are made aware of the support". If you're not receiving your entitlement, speak with your principal first. It's a good idea to come prepared to meetings, so you could take the Beginning Teacher Support Entitlement policy, this article and a support person with you.

It is Federation's position that all teachers — including pre-service, beginning, casual, and part-time temporary teachers — should be provided with support.

The first few years of teaching are often the most challenging, so if you feel you require additional support, reach out to your supervisor to discuss this in the first instance.

Federation supports early career teachers through free Beginning Teacher Conferences and Courses held at various locations across NSW. We strongly encourage you to visit our website to find a course or conference near you.

For further information and advice, please contact your Federation Organiser or call Professional Support.

WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Commonwealth Parental Leave Pay

LEEANDA SMITH Women's Officer

If you're planning to take parental leave soon, you might be able to access Commonwealth parental leave pay on top of the employer paid parental leave you're entitled to through work, or during periods of unpaid parental leave.

In 2023 the Albanese Government passed legislation that will expand Commonwealth parental leave pay to 26 weeks by 2026. Since July 2025, eligible people can access 120 days or 24 weeks of Commonwealth parental leave pay (based on a five-day work week). If you're a single parent, you'll get all parental leave pay days. However, if you choose, you can give approval to share some of it with the other parent. From July 2025, that entitlement increased to 15 days.

If your child was born or adopted after 1 July 2025, the Australian Taxation Office will pay a superannuation contribution on top of the Commonwealth parental leave pay. According to Minister for Women Senator Katy Gallagher, "This will result in around $4000 extra in the retirement incomes of parents who take time off to care for their newborn."

To qualify for Commonwealth parental leave pay, the government will assess your income from the financial year before either your child's date of birth or adoption, or the date on which you lodge your claim — whichever is earlier. For the 2024–25 financial year, the taxable income threshold for Commonwealth parental leave pay is up to $180,007 for individuals or up to $373,094 for families. The rate of pay usually changes on 1 July each year, as it is paid at the federal minimum wage (currently $948.10 for a five-day week, or $189.62 a day before tax). It is not matched to your current wage and you should factor that into your plans.

Consider the best options for your circumstances to maximise the amount of time you can have and share care while on paid parental leave. Note that the Commonwealth parental leave pay does not extend the state paid and unpaid entitlements. If your partner is a teacher, read the Department of Education information carefully, especially about time limits, patterns of leave for the birth and non-birth parent plus payment options. If your partner is not a teacher, they need to check with their own employer as to what they are entitled to.

Consider the best options for your circumstances to maximise the amount of time you can have and share care while on paid parental leave

For multiple births, the Commonwealth parental leave pay is allocated for one child; however, you will be able to access additional support. If you have twins, triplets, quadruplets or more, you may get the Newborn Upfront Payment and Newborn Supplement. Depending on your circumstances and the number of babies, you may also be eligible for the Multiple Birth Allowance.

There are time limits on both Commonwealth and NSW paid parental leave that must be used within two years of birth. The average NSW school year is 203 school days. Not everyone is eligible for the NSW Government's additional two weeks of 'bonus' paid parental leave, so check your eligibility via the NSW Government website. These timeframes should be taken into consideration when planning your parental leave. It is highly recommended that casual and temporary teachers make inquiries with Services Australia about accessing Commonwealth parental leave pay.

For information on your entitlements contact Professional Support on **1300 654 367**. You can check your eligibility for Commonwealth parental leave pay at **servicesaustralia.gov.au.**

If you're a single parent, you'll get all parental leave pay days

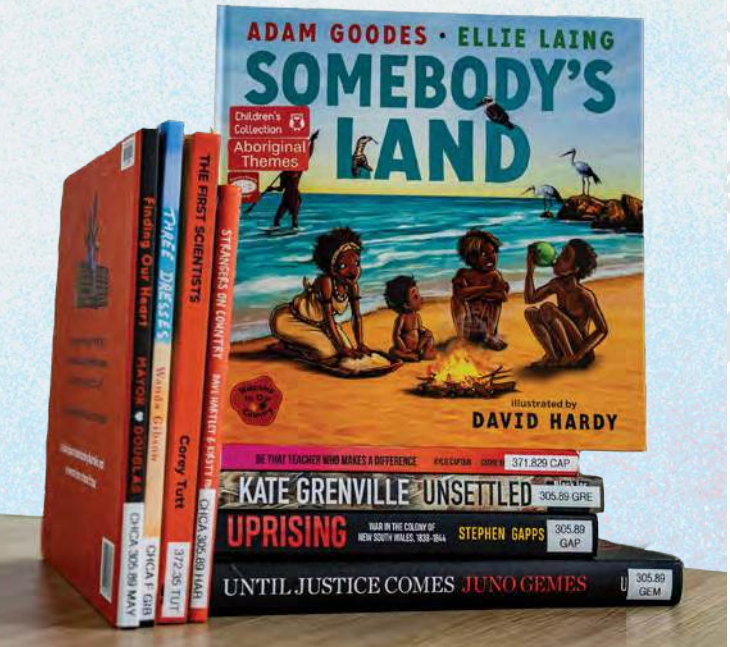
Books you can link to the NSW curriculum

Check out our curated collection on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our library catalogue

Members can borrow resources by visiting the library in person or reserving online via the catalogue. Telephone and email requests are also accepted. Free postal service for members who cannot visit in person.

(02) 9217 2113 or 1300 654 369

Level 1, 23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010



YARNING IN PROGRESS

Young leaders are our future

KARA OSBORNE

One of the most rewarding parts of my job as a teacher is being able to see the next generation come through.

One of those extraordinary young people is Maddison Ridgeway (right), a proud Worimi woman and the school captain of Cardiff High School in the Hunter. Maddison's academic and sporting achievements, her commitment to championing her culture, her outstanding creative talent and her leadership skills have established her as a role model for young people everywhere.

Maddison designed Yutiliko Malang Lakeside Teachers Association's banner (pictured, below) and her art adorns gifts the Association awards to life members. Incorporating traditional Worimi artwork, Maddison's designs also feature on Cardiff High School's coffee mugs, day books, a tile backdrop for the school bubblers and staff work shirt.

Maddison has already turned her talent into 'Worimi Chick', her own small business. She has designed artworks, uniforms and jerseys for the Worimi Conservation Lands, the Central Charlestown Rugby League Indigenous Round, the PCYC NSW Nations of Origin and Central Coast Metro Netball.

Besides her artistic accomplishments, Maddison's work promoting and celebrating her Worimi heritage is invaluable. Since 2020, she has served on her school's Junior Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), including stints as secretary and vice-president. In 2024, the AECG awarded her its major community award, recognising her work as a cultural ambassador. Her long record of captaining and coaching representative football and netball teams contributed to her being selected as a Female School to Work Youth Ambassador at the 2024 NRL Indigenous Youth Summit. As if that wasn't enough, her academic record is exemplary, winning multiple school awards across various disciplines in 2024 and 2025.

Maddison aspires to study physiotherapy next year at the University of Newcastle. With her academic record, her formidable work ethic, her artistic vision and her love for Country and culture to guide her, I can't wait to see what the future has in store for this remarkable young woman.

Kara Osborne is the President of Yutiliko Malang Lakeside Teachers Association

PROTECTING YOURSELF ON THE JOB

Work health and safety issue resolution in schools

DAMIAN PURINS Work Health and Safety Officer

All teachers have the right to a physically and psychologically safe workplace — this right is established in law by the NSW Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011.

All workers have a duty to report work health and safety hazards. The employer — the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking, or PCBU — has a duty to ensure a safe and healthy workplace by seeking to eliminate all actual and foreseeable hazards as far as is reasonably practicable.

Understanding and utilising the Department of Education's WHS Issue Resolution Procedure is crucial to enforcing your right to a safe workplace. Detailed information on WHS consultation and issue resolution can be found on Federation's Teachers' Work, Teachers' Health and Teachers' Safety campaign page in the Teachers' Safety section (or scan the QR code below). Alternatively, search for "consultation and issue resolution" on the Department's intranet.

CONSULTATION IS IMPORTANT

Genuine consultation with workers is the foundation of workplace safety. Each Departmental worksite should agree on or reaffirm its Agreed Consultation Procedures each year. Federation has consistently taken the view that the most effective form of consultation for teachers is likely to be achieved through the election of a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and the formation of a Health and Safety Committee. Additional details on these consultation arrangements, including on the HSR role and committee formation, can be found in the sources cited above.

HOW TO USE THE WHS ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Department's WHS Issue Resolution flowchart, which details how WHS issues are raised, resolved and escalated.

It is expected that most issues can be resolved quickly and effectively; however, complex issues in schools regularly stop at the school level, even if the worker does not consider the matter to be resolved.

Lodging an issue resolution notice form escalates the issue beyond the school and involves the Department's Health and Safety Directorate in the process. Under the WHS Act, school principals are also workers. It is the Department, as PCBU, that has the primary duty to resolve the issue.

ACCESS SUPPORT

While any worker can escalate WHS issues, Federation advises you to seek support in your workplace via your Agreed Consultation Procedures, report issues and contact your Federation Workplace Committee in achieving a resolution.

Using the Issue Resolution Procedure when issues can't be resolved otherwise follows the Department's policy, allows you to fulfil your WHS duty as a worker and enforces your legal rights. If you are considering escalating a WHS issue, please contact your Federation Organiser or call Professional Support.

A CASUAL WORD

Frequently asked questions

ANTHONY BRERETON City Organiser

How is the daily salary rate calculated for casual teachers?

Casual teachers are paid an hourly or daily rate of pay. This is determined by dividing the annual salary of a teacher at step 1 (CT1), step 3 (CT2) or step 5 (CT3) by 203 plus a loading of 5 per cent. This loading is to compensate for the loss of short forms of leave available for a temporary or permanent teacher (including sick leave, family and community service leave, special leave and annual leave loading) but not for casual teachers.

What casual service counts for incremental progression?

All days of casual service worked in a NSW Department of Education school (that is, days worked or paid days of leave) count for the purposes of salary progression. Previous service in other school systems recognised by the Department and periods of full-time child-rearing could contribute to your salary level with the Department. Search "Salaries and benefits" on the Department's website.

How is the salary rate calculated for temporary teachers?

For the purpose of salary progression, one year of full-time service is 203 days. Each day the teacher works as a temporary or casual counts towards the total calculation.

How much service must be completed by a temporary teacher to progress to the next step of the salary scale?

The rate of pay will be in line with the teacher's accreditation. For temporary teachers first employed by the Department before 1 January 2016, their casual service prior to transitioning to standards-based remuneration will be combined with their temporary service when they become permanent. For temporary teachers first employed after 1 January 2016, casual and temporary service are combined.

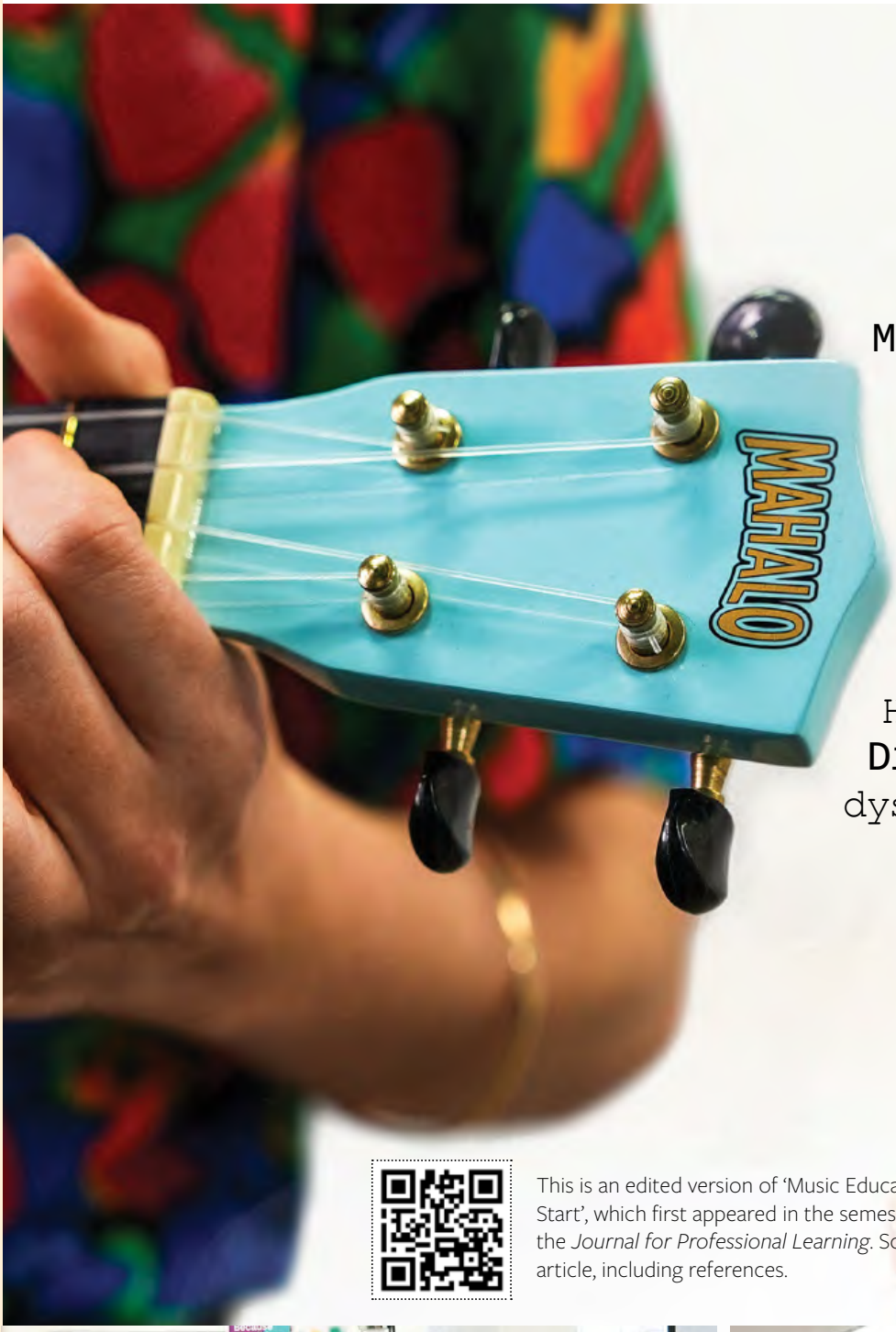
On completion of 203 days (or 195 days in the Western Division NSW) of Department teaching, irrespective of breaks in that service, a temporary teacher achieves the next incremental salary progression.

How can my previous service be counted for salary purposes?

Previous and concurrent service in other school systems recognised by the Department, relevant work experience and periods of full-time child-rearing may contribute to your salary level with the Department. This is particularly important if you have worked as a teacher in another state or country or have worked for a private school in NSW.

A salary determination may be requested at any time, however, backpay only applies within six months of gaining an approval to teach or getting a permanent position and should therefore be pursued as a matter of priority.

Contact Federation for advice on **1300 654 367**.



Music learning can significantly support learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and dyslexia

This is an edited version of 'Music Education: Right from the Start', which first appeared in the semester 2, 2024 edition of the *Journal for Professional Learning*. Scan to view the entire article, including references.

Music learning research has revolutionised our understanding of how we learn

Music teaches students how to learn

Why quality musical education is an essential part of all students' academic development

words *Dr Anita Collins*

Teaching music in primary classrooms doesn't just teach students how to sing in tune and read notes on the board. It also teaches them how to learn.

Research shows that students' ability to learn, their general wellbeing, self-regulation skills and sense of safety and capacity to engage in learning improves when primary teachers are confident to teach music.

Neuromusical research uses music listening and music learning to understand how the human brain grows and learns. In the mid-1990s, researchers who were using then-new technology to monitor brain functioning in real time accidentally discovered that listening to music engaged more parts of the brain simultaneously than any other activity.

In the early 2000s, neuroscientists used music listening to understand how the human brain processes all information, makes, sorts and retrieves memories and heals itself after traumatic injury. The research found that the auditory processing network processes all sounds for musical qualities and that our auditory processing network is our largest information-gathering sense.

In the late 2010s, the same researchers began researching children aged of six to 12 who had learned music, having noticed musically trained students seemed to have brains that learned faster, were more consistently reliable and had greater connectivity, brain density and synchronisation.

Possibly the most important of these traits for teachers to understand is that students who have brains that exhibit higher levels of synchronisation take less time to incorporate new knowledge, are better at problem solving, can maintain their attention for longer and can manage frustration in their learning far more effectively.

Was it just the more able and high-performing students who were attracted to music learning; those you might expect to be exhibiting the higher levels of brain function? Was it the smarter students who happened to be learning music who were the ones being researched? No. Randomised control studies were conducted using music learning as the experiment and improvements in brain structures and functions were observed in all students.

The neuromusical research is about to move into its third decade and the findings have been replicated and rigorously examined.

The consensus is that music learning:

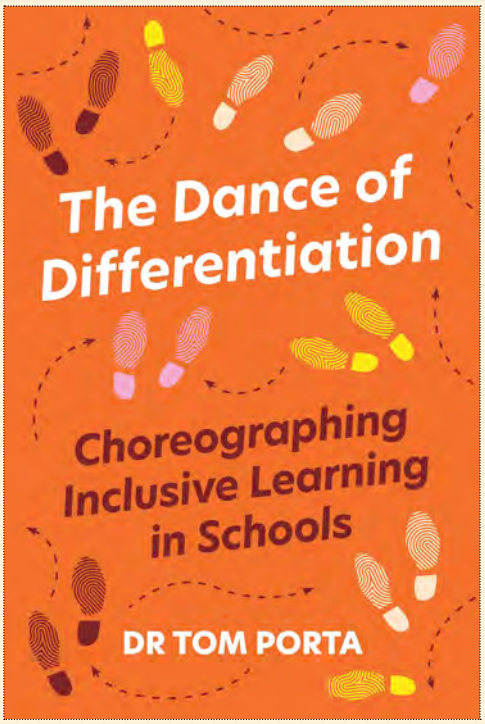
- has a small to moderate effect on a student's ability to learn effectively
- can mediate disadvantage and trauma
- can significantly support learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and dyslexia.

It follows that with this new neuroscientific research pointing to music education as both an enhancement and intervention tool for all students, we should be ensuring that every NSW student is receiving a quality, ongoing and sequential music education.

Such a focus has the potential to improve literacy and numeracy levels, help teachers to manage complex learning needs in their classroom and — possibly the most deeply needed improvement — to make the act of teaching easier, more enjoyable and even more fulfilling.

Dr Anita Collins is an acclaimed educator, researcher and writer in the field of brain development and music education. She is the creative force behind Bigger Better Brains, an initiative aimed at bridging the gap between neuroscience and practical music education globally.

What's hot
in the library



The dance of differentiation: choreographing inclusive learning in schools

BY TOM PORTA. MELBOURNE: AMBA PRESS, 2024

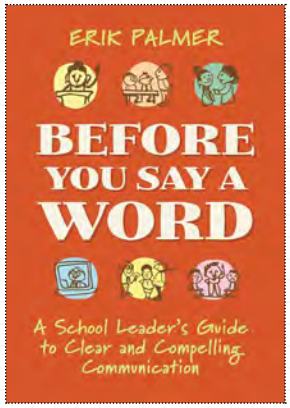
"Dive into the intricacies of differentiation with this handbook designed for primary and secondary school educators. With candid reflections on the challenges and triumphs of implementing differentiation, the author shares invaluable insights and practical strategies to make inclusive education a reality in your classroom. From debunking myths to embracing a transformative philosophy of teaching, this book empowers educators to tailor learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of every student. Whether you're an early career teacher seeking guidance or a seasoned educator looking to refine your practice, Dr Tom Porta offers a roadmap to navigate the dance of differentiation with confidence and purpose."

HOW TO BORROW FROM THE LIBRARY

Contact the library to borrow resources or reserve them via the library catalogue, which can be accessed via the Federation website. A postal service is available. *Hot Topics* Guides on popular subjects and *Library Bulletins* may be found in the Member Portal.

Members can also visit the library to borrow in person:
Library Hours: 9 am – 5 pm Monday to Friday
and 10 am – 1.30 pm on Council Saturdays.

Before you say a word: a school leader's guide to clear and compelling communication



BY ERIK PALMER. ARLINGTON, VA: ASCD, 2024

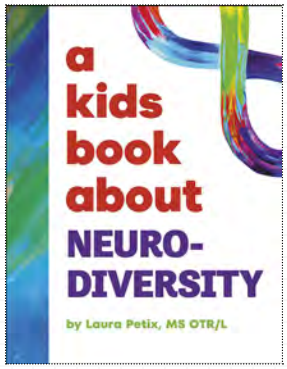
"Packed with practical and actionable advice, *Before you say a word* gives school and district leaders the essential oral communication training that graduate programs leave out. Erik Palmer, a speaking specialist and former teacher, stresses proper preparation and explains everything from the basics of audience analysis to how to rescue a terrible set of presentation slides. You'll learn how to plan for and deliver even complicated and sensitive messages to all kinds of audiences in a way that is professional, clear, authentic, and never boring (back cover)."

Seriously fun maths: the complete guide to motivational mathematics

BY LAURA TUOHILAMPI. MELBOURNE: AMBA PRESS, 2022

The author "changes the narrative of mathematics education into something fascinating, intriguing and something that touches every human. Based on her cutting-edge research, she challenges the outdated ways of motivating students around maths. This engaging book provides teachers with research, resources and activities to teach a lesson a month. The rich activities are accessible to young students and deep enough for secondary students (back cover)."

A kids' book about neurodiversity

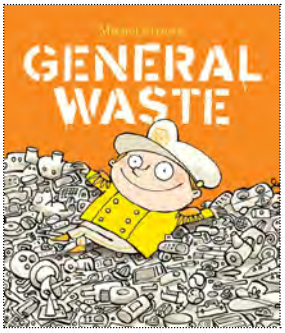


BY LAURA PETIX. MILTON, QLD: JOHN WILEY & SONS AUSTRALIA, 2022

"Everything we do is because of the ways our brains work, and everyone's brain is different. Seriously! But our world doesn't operate in a way that is accepting of each brain type. Neurodiversity is what makes our world beautiful, and this author teaches us the importance of celebrating the unique ways in which our brains help us learn, feel, and experience life!" (back cover).

General Waste

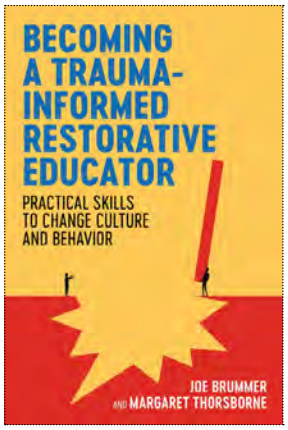
BY MICHAEL STREICH. GOSFORD, NSW: SCHOLASTIC PRESS, 2024.



"General Waste loves stuff! ... he tosses away apples after one bite, he has hour-long showers, he must have the latest uniform fashion, and he rides around in a monster truck! He shares a house with Gram-Gram. She always saves her leftovers, does her own repairs and cycles everywhere! One day, when General Waste finds himself trapped under a mountain of his own stuff, Gram-Gram comes to the rescue" (publisher). Audience: Ages 3–7

Becoming a trauma-informed restorative educator: practical skills to change culture and behaviour

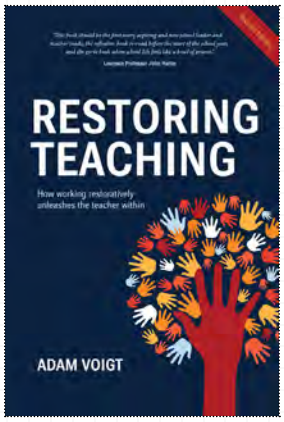
BY JOE BRUMMER AND MARGARET THORSBORNE. LONDON; PHILADELPHIA, PA: JESSICA KINGSLEY PUBLISHERS, 2024.



"This practical book outlines the values, ideas and neuroscience behind trauma-informed restorative practice and its proven effectiveness. Examples of restorative practice feature throughout, as do practical protocols, tools and systems to develop your skills as a trauma-informed educator. It also includes reflection points to aid learning and self-development" (back cover).

Restoring teaching [second edition]

BY ADAM VOIGT. MELBOURNE: HAMBONE PUBLISHING, 2024



The author explores "how you can use the principles of restorative practices to be a better teacher and to run a better school... Restorative practice presents us with a path towards student wellbeing, where conflicts are resolved through empathy and collaboration. This intrinsically leads to better educational outcomes, where students can thrive in an environment where they feel valued and heard... The benefits aren't just felt by students; for teachers, it alleviates the burden of constant stress, offering a framework that is not only effective but is also aligned with the foundational values of education" (pages 1-2).

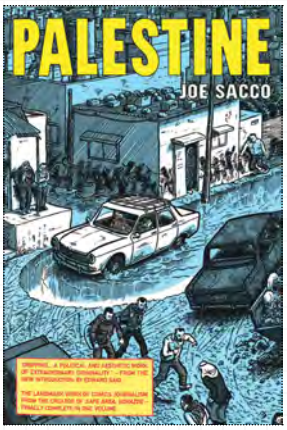
Homeland: My Father Dreams of Palestine

BY HANNAH MOUSHABECK. SAN FRANCISCO: CHRONICLE BOOKS, 2023

Through the bedtime ritual of a father sharing stories of his childhood in Palestine with his three young daughters, Hannah Moushabeck brings the Old City of Jerusalem to life through a story so rich in detail, readers of any age get to journey alongside the family within it. *Homeland: My Father Dreams of Palestine* is a story that reminds us all of the power of love for family, culture, home and country. A beautiful rendition of life that leaves readers knowing that home truly is where the heart is.

Palestine

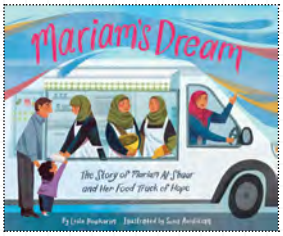
BY JOE SACCO, SEATTLE, WA: FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 1993



Originally published in comic form in 1993, Joe Sacco's award-winning retelling of his time in Israel, the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip was rushed back into print in October 2023. It is a rare work, both in form and substance. The Israeli occupation is seen through Sacco's eyes, as journalist, tourist and outsider. Rather than wish away his own preconceptions and biases for the sake of appearing all-knowing, Sacco forces the reader to sit with them, and their own. From that discomfort comes something much closer to the truth than most Western journalism on Palestine can approach.

Mariam's Dream: The Story of Mariam Al-Shaar and Her Food Truck of Hope

BY LILA BOUKHARIM. SAN FRANCISCO: CHRONICLE BOOKS, 2025



Mariam's Dream is the true story of Mariam Al-Shaar, a Palestinian refugee who founded Soufra — a women-run kitchen and food truck in the Bourj Al-Barajneh refugee camp in Beirut. Lila Boukharim takes readers through Mariam's journey of resilience and perseverance, as a refugee who has spent her life trapped between the walls of a refugee camp in Lebanon. *Mariam's Dream* shows just how dreams can be realised and challenges overcome — a message that can resonate with us all.

Scan for full reviews on these books

NEW ACTIVIST CONFERENCE

Members keen on strengthening their activism attended our annual New Activists Conference in Surry Hills on 1 November

COMMS SKILLS

Left: Federation's Trade Union Training course on helping workplace representatives build role-specific communications skills is always a hit

Local MP Tim Crakanthorp (above, centre) visited Newcastle Teachers Association's stall (right) at Newcastle Pride Fair Day

Left: It was all smiles at Eastern Suburbs TA's campaign training course

Recent Anna Stewart Officers Lora Grear (right), and below, Zahraa Najem and Kara Valentine

CELEBRATING TAFE

Members celebrated National TAFE Day from Cessnock to Canberra

CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

For the latest course listings, information and to apply

DATE	COURSE	LOCATION
13 February	Conversations About Texts in Secondary Schools	Surry Hill
20 February	Supporting Students with ADHD in K–6	Online
25 February	Inclusive Education	Surry Hills
4 March	Early Career Teachers	Wollongong
5 March	Inclusive Education	Wollongong
9 March	Supporting Students with Autism K-6	Online
11 March	Classroom Management through Effective Teaching	Surry Hills
17 March	Empowering Teachers Through the Meaningful Use of Data and Evidence	Surry Hills
19 March	Early Career Teachers	Surry Hills
25 March	Supporting Students with Autism 7-12	Surry Hills
26 March	Inclusive Education	Wagga Wagga
27 March	Classroom Management through Effective Teaching	Wagga Wagga

TRADE UNION TRAINING

For the latest course listings, information and to apply

COURSE	DATE	LOCATION	CLOSING DATE
TAFE Know your Rights at Work	Thursday 29 January	Surry Hills	Thursday 8 January
Work, Health and Safety in Education Workplaces	Wednesday 4 March	Surry Hills	Wednesday 11 February
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Thursday 5 - Friday 6 March	Surry Hills	Thursday 12 February
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Thursday 12 - Friday 13 March	Surry Hills	Thursday 19 February
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Tuesday 17 - Wednesday 18 March	Surry Hills	Tuesday 24 February
Skills for Federation Councillors	Monday 23 - Tuesday 24 March	Surry Hills	Monday 2 March
Beginning Teacher Conference	**Saturday 28 March**	**Surry Hills**	**Friday 6 March**
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Tuesday 31 March - Wednesday 1 April	Surry Hills	Tuesday 10 March

CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Supporting *you* throughout your career with NESA-recognised professional learning opportunities

COURSES AND CONFERENCES	Practical, tested and well-researched approaches to issues teachers face every day
JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING (JPL)	An online professional journal that seeks to enhance the quality of teaching and public education
CPL PODCAST	Professional learning conversations around practical and important aspects of teaching and public education, accessible via the web and podcast streaming
MEMBER RESOURCES	CPL offers a range of teaching and learning resources, from worksheets, videos, programs and more through the Knowledge Centre section of the Member Portal

All attendance at CPL courses and conferences, readings of JPL articles and listening to CPL podcasts can be logged as part of maintenance of accreditation

Please scan QR code for more information

THE NEW SOUTH WALES TEACHERS FEDERATION AUSTRALIA ACKNOWLEDGES THE GADIGAL PEOPLE OF THE EORA NATION, THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND AND WATERS UPON WHICH THE NSWTF STANDS