

Education



JOURNAL OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES TEACHERS FEDERATION

ISSUE 17 2026

QUARTERLY



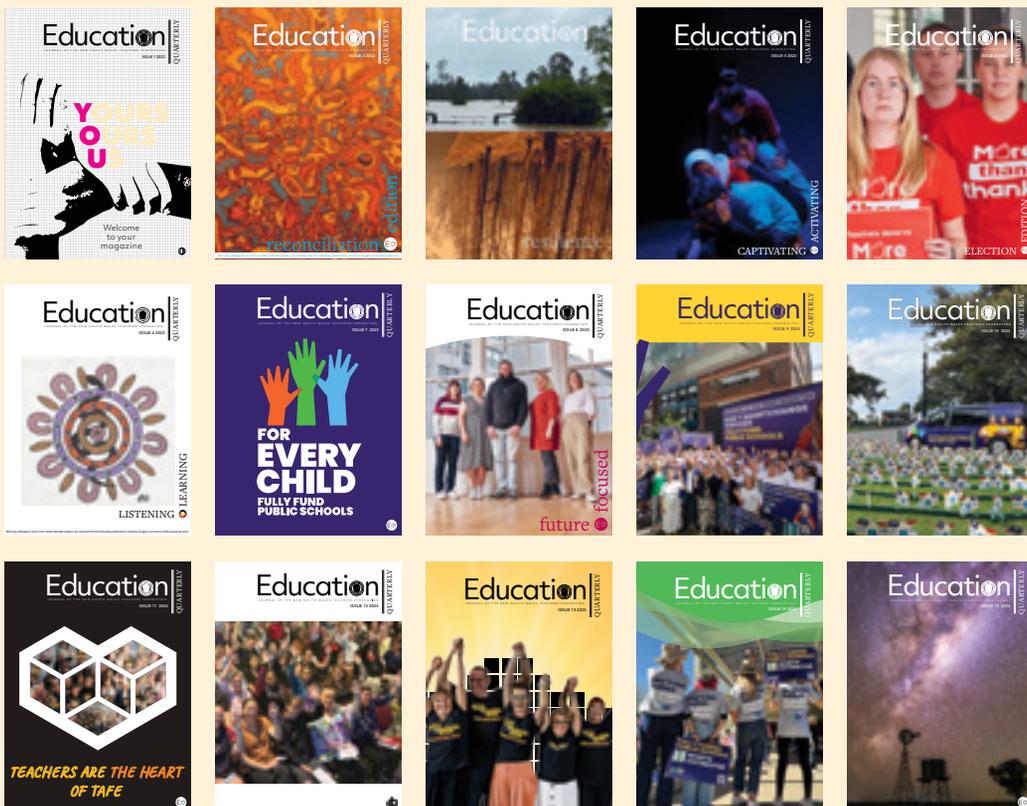


NEED TO UPDATE YOUR DETAILS?

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!](#)



Award-winning member service Now that's super helpful

At Aware Super we're here to help – so you can look forward to the retirement you're working hard for. As **Chant West's Best Fund: Member Services 2025**, being super helpful starts with:

-  Friendly Aussie call centres ready to support your workforce
-  Online tools and our app, making it easy for your people to manage their super and retirement, anytime, anywhere
-  Working to keep their account safe and secure, with advanced security features including multi-factor authentication¹

They're working hard for their retirement. Now let us help them.

With super service, Aware Super is super helpful.



Join today at aware.com.au

CONTENTS

FOCUS

08 WINNERS ARE GRINNERS IN GRIFFITH

The mighty Griffith Teachers Association sees off staffing shortages and a forced amalgamation

10 MORE THAN THANKS — IT'S TIME

Our new campaign for additional preparation time kicks off

18 LIFTOUT POSTER

Get more out of your union membership by joining a Federation special interest group

22 TAFE TALK

How VET students are thriving — and why face-to-face learning is key

24 POWER IN DIVERSITY

The long fight for LGBTIQ+ equality in the classroom and the streets

26 PRIDE IN TEACHING

Federation turns out in style for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

REGULARS

05 PRESIDENT WRITES 28 CPL RESOURCES

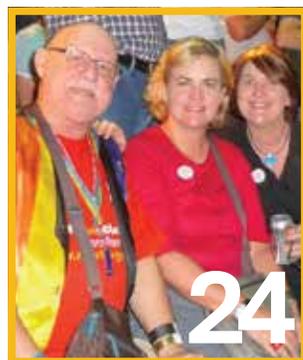
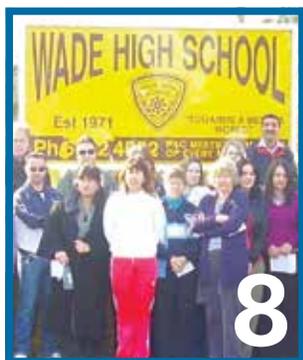
06 NEWS 30 LIBRARY 

14 STARTING OUT AND SETTLED IN  32 SAY CHEESE! 

16 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS  34 LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

20 EQUITY MATTERS 

22 TAFE TALK





YOUR UNION BENEFITS KEEP COMING

Natalie,

Teachers Health and NSWTF member

Teachers Health was founded by the **NSWTF** in 1954. We're now Australia's largest industry-based fund, but our mission has stayed the same: supporting your health and wellbeing with great value health insurance.

To see our latest offer, scan or call **1300 900 301**



TEACHERS HEALTH

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-01/26



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 2026–2027:

PRESIDENT

Henry Rajendra

DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Natasha Watt

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Michael de Wall

EDITOR Julie McMullen

DEPUTY EDITOR Kerri Carr

GRAPHIC DESIGNER Grace Hughes

COPY EDITOR Alex McKinnon

MEDIA AND CONTENT CREATOR Jess de Carvalho

COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT Brontë Burgess

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

HOME PAGE 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: Behind the spectacle of Federation's Sydney Mardi Gras float is always a political message. See page 26 for more.

 @NSWTeachersFederation

 @TeachersFed

 @teachersfed

 nswtf.org.au



PRESIDENT WRITES

Henry Rajendra

TAKING PREPARATION TIME TO THE COMMUNITY

Over the past month, I've been privileged to stand alongside hundreds of teachers in the regions as we campaign for two additional hours of preparation time each week. The support of our members has been powerful, but the depth of understanding and solidarity from parents and the broader community has been just as inspiring.

Parents get it. They understand that teachers' working conditions are their children's learning conditions. They feel teachers deserve adequate time to prepare quality lessons, support individual students and address the increasingly complex needs in today's classrooms.

The conversations I've had with parents in these communities revealed many have teachers in their immediate families or social circles. They see firsthand the work that happens after school hours, during holidays and on weekends. They know about the materials purchased from teachers' own pockets, the late nights marking and planning, the emotional labour of supporting students facing challenges teachers never encountered a generation ago.

What moved me most was hearing parents articulate, unprompted, that improving working conditions for teachers are central to improving education.

These parents and their children are living the modern classroom reality: a 75 per cent increase in students with disability since 2021, with 86 per cent of these students learning in mainstream settings. They see the cultural and linguistic diversity, the varying learning needs, the mental health challenges. They recognise that supporting this diversity requires good intentions paired with adequate time to plan, prepare and individualise learning.

The response to our campaign has reinforced what we've always known: this is an educational equity issue. Parents across all school communities agree that every child deserves access to first-class education. They

understand that achieving this requires teachers who aren't running on empty.

We have powerful allies in our school communities, but we need to do more to ensure they understand both the progress we've achieved together and the work still to be done. We all want to see continued investment in public education and measures that genuinely improve learning outcomes.

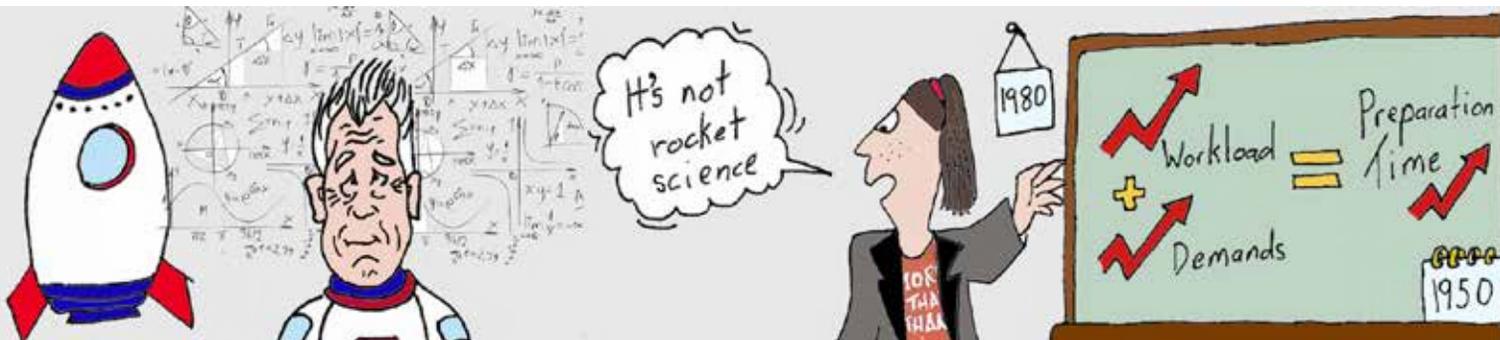
What my interactions with community members have reinforced is that our campaign for preparation time stands on solid ground. It aligns with what parents value: educational equity, teacher wellbeing and quality learning for every student. It acknowledges the reality of today's classrooms rather than pretending we can deliver 2026 education with 1950s time allocations.

The employment of permanent teachers is clearly key to delivering additional preparation time — and the news is favourable. Courtesy of the historic pay rise we achieved with the Minns Government in 2023, teacher shortages are at their lowest level in more than a decade and there has been a significant increase in those entering initial teacher education courses.

As we continue this campaign, we do so knowing that our message resonates beyond our staffrooms and into the broader community. Parents understand that when we fight for adequate preparation time, we're fighting for their children's education. It's a powerful alliance and one we must keep nurturing as we push for the change our students and our profession desperately need.

The question now isn't whether this reform is necessary — parents, teachers and educational research all confirm it is.

The Minns Government has shown decent commitment to starting the job on education reform. Now we must persuade them that it's in everyone's interest to see it through.



IN BRIEF

ADAPTING FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION

How can teachers adapt to an education sector transformed by artificial intelligence (AI)? Federation member Tim Davis Frank will look to answer this as the 2026 recipient of Federation’s Eric Pearson Study Grant.

By examining how teacher unions and education departments are responding to AI, Tim’s research “will aim to protect job security, working conditions and the professional standing of teachers into the future”.

The grant is awarded annually to a Federation member who is committed to examining a topic of industrial and professional relevance to the union and our members.

AEU LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR AMBER FLOHM

Outgoing Federation Deputy President Amber Flohm has been awarded Life Membership of the Australian Education Union (AEU).

Since joining Federation in 1998, Amber served as Federation Organiser/Multicultural Officer before being elected as Senior Vice President in 2019 and Deputy President in 2023.



AEU President Correna Haythorpe, former Federation deputy president Amber Flohm and Federation General Secretary Maxine Sharkey

SPOTLIGHT ON HIDDEN DISABILITIES

Federation is now part of the global Hidden Disabilities Sunflower network, an initiative to empower people with hidden disabilities in public and the workplace.

People are increasingly using Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyards to signal they have non-visible disabilities, conditions or chronic illnesses.

Federation’s Disability Officer John Skene said the program had inspired many of Federation’s staff to be more open about their non-visible disabilities in the workplace. Head to hdsunflower.com/au/ for more information.

FEDERATION TO FIGHT FOR EXTRA TEACHER PREPARATION TIME

Our new campaign to win two hours of additional preparation time per week for public school teachers kicked off at February Council.

More than 18,000 members took part in our recent preparation time survey, the results of which were hugely concerning and demonstrate the urgent need for additional preparation time:

- only 15 per cent of teachers have enough time for lesson planning
- fewer than 1 in 10 have time to collaborate with colleagues
- just 7 per cent have adequate time for curriculum programming.

“Fewer than 1 in 20 teachers say they have enough time to do the work required to meet the needs of today’s students,” Federation President Henry Rajendra said.

“It’s not just teachers sounding the alarm. Parents know this is a serious problem and



AEU CALLS FOR LONG-TERM FEDERAL CAPITAL WORKS PACKAGE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The deep and growing divide in school infrastructure funding is outlined in a new report published by the Australian Education Union (AEU).

The building divide in Australian schools: How capital funding fuels educational inequity report reveals that over the past decade private schools have outspent public schools on capital works by \$38 billion, including \$5.4 billion in 2023 alone.

It shows that capital investment in private schools averaged \$2746 per student per year between 2014 and 2023, compared with \$1237 per student in public schools.

The imbalance dates back to 2017 when the Turnbull Government ceased the Commonwealth’s long-term capital funding stream for public schools.

Between 2017 and 2025, the Commonwealth’s Non-Government School Capital Grants Program





want it fixed so that their kids get a teacher who has had the time to plan for the needs of their students.”

Local Teachers Associations have been using electorate-level findings of the statewide preparation time survey to generate local media to raise the campaign’s profile.

Teachers have made it clear: additional preparation time is crucial to giving students the quality education they need.

Letting teachers properly plan their lessons is vital to stay on top of increasing workloads, avoid burnout and keep teachers in the classroom.

Read more on pages 10–13



delivered more than \$1.6 billion to private schools, and will fund nearly \$3 billion between 2025 and 2034. In contrast, public schools receive no permanent federal capital stream.

In 2023 alone, the highest-spending private schools collectively outlaid sums that exceeded the total capital expenditure of thousands of public schools combined. In some cases, single private schools spent more on building projects than entire public school systems in smaller states and territories.

The AEU is calling on the Commonwealth to:

- provide a significant and immediate injection of capital investment to public schools in recognition of, and partial rectification of, the billions of dollars lost through the abandonment of Commonwealth capital funding in 2017
- create a permanent Commonwealth capital fund to ensure that all public schools have access to the funds they need to provide adequate and safe 21st century learning environments
- negotiate a joint partnership with state and territory governments to invest in new and upgraded public schools and facilities, with the provision that

Commonwealth capital funding for public schools triggers increased investment from state and territory governments

- ensure that all public schools have access to funds prioritising purpose-built learning spaces and school facilities, including modified bathrooms and playgrounds that are accessible for all students with disability
- work with and incentivise state and territory governments to ensure all growth suburbs have public primary and secondary schools that are open and accessible when residents arrive
- ensure that the capital works required to implement the Thriving Kids initiative in public schools are funded through the initiative, not through recurrent or capital schools funding.

“We know that great facilities deliver great results for students and for teachers,” Federation President Henry Rajendra said.

“If the Federal Government want schools to do more, including supporting students with complex needs, they must invest in the buildings and spaces that make that possible.”

Good times and great wins in Griffith

Local Teachers Association shows how it's done

Griffith Teachers Association (TA) members won a significant victory in January, successfully campaigning to increase teaching incentives at schools across the Murrumbidgee region.

The new classification for Murrumbidgee schools under the NSW Department of Education's Incentive Transfer Scheme will entitle local public school teachers up to \$8000 in rural and remote relocation assistance, up to \$10,000 in stamp duty relief and a 50 per cent rental subsidy.

The Rural and Remote Education Strategy provides financial incentives to teachers filling vacancies in rural and remote areas, with greater incentives offered in areas classified as being of greater socio-economic disadvantage.

The new incentives are expected to attract more teaching applications to a region that has long suffered from chronic staff shortages. For more than a decade, Griffith TA members have argued that increasing teaching incentives would help ameliorate the staffing crisis.

For Federation Country Organiser Brett 'Bert' Bertalli, it's been a long road to this victory.

"Teachers could earn up to \$30,000 extra each year teaching 20 kilometres down the road," he said. "We had teachers living together in the same houses and doing the same work who had a \$30,000 difference in their paychecks."

With the new incentives drawing potential applicants to town, Bert is confident the bad old days are over.

"Not so long ago, applicants would call the school asking what incentives were on offer. When the principal had to tell them 'there are none', people would hang up,"

Bert said. "One permanent full-time position was offered to 27 people on the employment list and



they all turned it down. Now Griffith schools will be able to choose from a pool of applicants."

CAMPAINING TO WIN

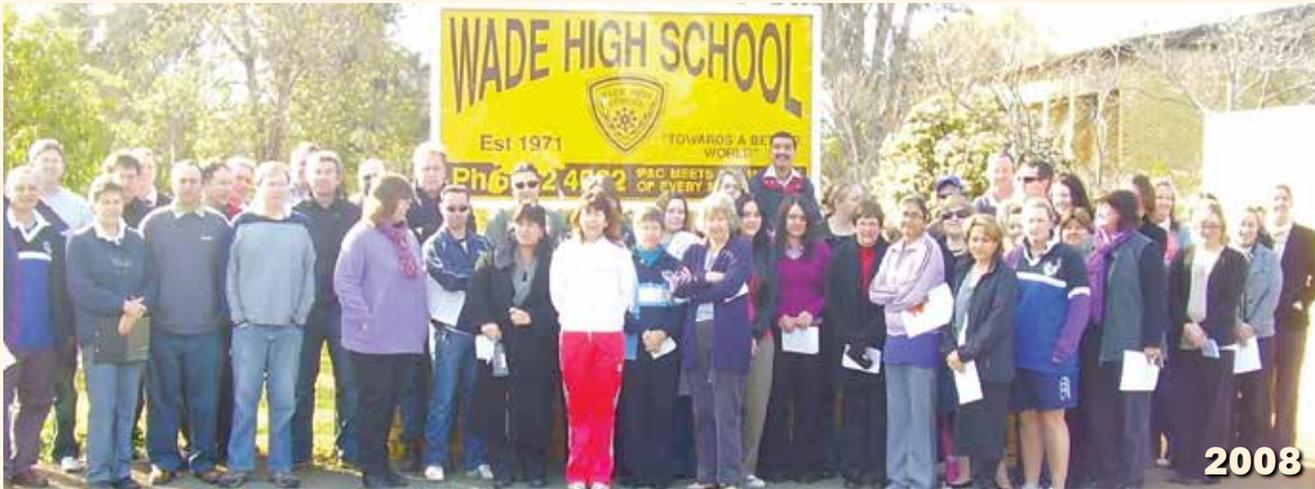
Winning better incentives wasn't the only fight the Griffith TA had to wage. At the same time, the town was battling a failed and deeply unpopular amalgamation of two local high schools that deepened the staffing crisis.

In 2019, the Berejiklian government created Murrumbidgee Regional High School by forcibly merging Griffith and Wade high schools over the objections of teachers, parents and the local community.

It was a costly and damaging experiment in consolidation. Despite the government spending more than \$25 million on major building works at the new school's two campuses, ongoing staff shortages saw school and community morale plummet. At one time, Murrumbidgee Regional HS had the most teacher vacancies of any school in the state. In 2022, the school's Federation Representative Anthony Catanzariti told the ABC the school had lost between 200 and 250 students as parents "voted with their feet".

"One year we recorded the number of lessons that weren't covered or taught due to teacher shortages. It was more than 3000 in the first semester," Bert said. Students were provided with minimal supervision in the playground or for senior students, no supervision at all.

"This win is a tribute to those activists who stuck with it"



EDUCATION QUARTERLY EDITION 17

Faced with a daunting set of challenges, Griffith TA members tied their local fights to Federation’s state and national campaigns, staging multiple stopwork meetings and holding a march down Griffith’s Banna Avenue.

All that campaigning turned Griffith teachers into formidable advocates. The Griffith TA put Federation’s Honour The Deal campaign up in lights in 2023, when NSW Premier Chris Minns was heckled by public school teachers as he hastily flew out of Griffith Regional Airport.

After years of Federation campaigning against the merger, in 2023 the Minns Government announced the schools would be demerged. Last year, the Department announced each school would revert to their original names.

Besides the local members without whom the campaign would never have succeeded, Bert credits Federation with backing the local push when victory was far from certain.

“Federation Representatives and executive members of Griffith TA were constantly under fire from the government, from media outlets and from the Department,” Bert said. “They really stuck their necks out. This win is a tribute to those activists who stuck with it.”



More than thanks





New campaign aims to win more preparation time

In 2021, a wide-ranging inquiry into the state of the teaching profession in NSW made a shocking finding: it was taking teachers more time to document their lessons than to teach them.

Five years on from the Gallop Inquiry, the workload burden on the state’s public school teachers has only gotten worse.

A newly released Federation survey of more than 18,000 NSW teaching staff found that teachers are overloaded with administrative busywork, taking them away from the classroom and leaving them no time to plan or reflect on their work.

Teachers are spending more of their non-teaching time on administrative tasks like data collection and compliance than they are planning lessons, working with other teachers and speaking with parents and carers.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Relieving the pressure of teachers’ ever-rising workloads is the focus of Federation’s new campaign to win two hours of additional preparation time each week.

A resolution passed at Federation’s February Council named the More Than Thanks — It’s Time campaign as “the priority campaign of the union for 2026”.

The campaign aims to build on the successes of the historic More Than Thanks campaign, which won pay rises and improved working conditions for public school teachers.

However, the issue of additional preparation time remains unfinished business.

“Teachers still drown in work that keeps them from teaching,” Federation President Henry Rajendra said in December.

“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.”

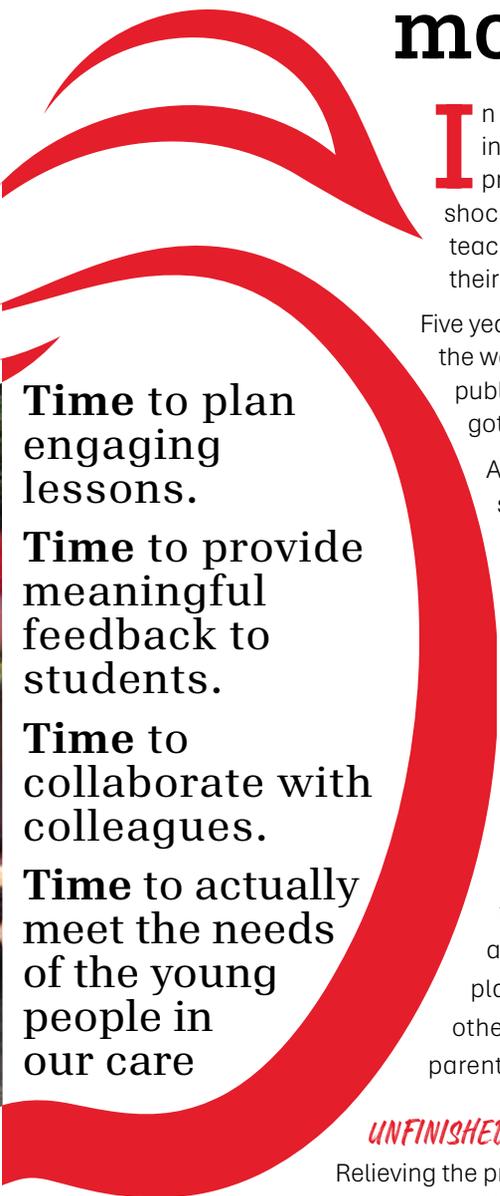
2026 DEMANDS, 1950s SUPPORT

One of the Gallop Inquiry’s most damning findings was that secondary school teachers were still being given the same amount of time to prepare lessons as they were in the 1950s.

Primary school teachers last received an increase to preparation time in the 1980s.

Meanwhile, the demands of the typical public school classroom have increased enormously. Between 2002 and 2019, the number of students with disability in NSW public schools rose by 500 per cent.

Combined with a lack of support, those growing administrative and compliance requirements have contributed to more teaching staff feeling overwhelmed and burnt-out. The NSW Government’s 2025 People Matter employee survey found that a shocking two-thirds of state public school teachers “feel mentally exhausted by their work on most days”.



- 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**

More than th

Survey results show irrefutable case for additional preparation time



More than 18,000 members took the time to complete Federation's preparation time survey late last year — always an extremely busy time of year— illustrating the importance they place on the need for two additional hours of preparation time each week.

OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR MORE PREPARATION TIME

ALMOST **95%**

of teachers agree that an additional two hours of preparation time would be helpful to better meet students' needs

Teachers who believe additional preparation time would encourage more teachers to remain in the profession for longer:

>95%

MORE THAN **95%**

of teachers support halving face-to-face lessons for teaching principals

Teachers who think assistant and deputy primary principals should have the same preparation time as their secondary colleagues:

ALMOST **95%**

TEACHERS JUST DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME

- **More than 97 per cent** don't have time to do the work required to meet the needs of today's students
- **More than 93 per cent** don't have time to address student wellbeing matters
- **More than 93 per cent** don't have time for curriculum planning
- **More than 84 per cent** don't have time to plan lessons



TEACHING WORK IS INCREASINGLY COMPLEX

- **95 per cent** of teachers reported a significant increase in student need
- **More than 87 per cent** cited increasing administration requirements
- **More than 87 per cent** raised reported excessive data collection and reporting responsibilities

THE TOLL IT TAKES

- **More than 95 per cent** of teachers reported emotional and physical fatigue
- **More than 89 per cent** had less time for personal/family life
- **More than 89 per cent** experienced burnout



“Despair at not being able to be the best teacher I can be.”

THE IMPACT OF INSUFFICIENT RELEASE TIME

“Teachers cannot continue to absorb extra workload into our personal lives at the expense of our health, families and students.”

“Students don’t get the best version of their teacher as they are physically, mentally and emotionally burnt out.”

“It is impossible to complete even the basic requirements as a teacher in the work day, meaning the job spills over into family time.”

“In any other work setting, workers would be given adequate time in their work day to complete their work.”

“Students needing more learning support [are] not getting enough attention.”

Source: Survey

WHAT MEMBERS ARE SAYING ABOUT MORE PREPARATION TIME

“When teachers are given more time to prepare, they’re better supported, more likely to stay in the profession doing what they love, and able to deliver the high-quality learning every young person deserves.” **Hannah Archer Lawton, Newcastle TA**

“I love my job. I need more time to adequately know each and every student and how they learn — and have the time to prepare lessons so that our children are getting what they need to thrive.” **Lily Dale, Milton-Ulladulla TA President**

“An additional two hours would allow me to ensure my learners could experience consistent high quality practical lessons.” **Trang Dao, Moree TA**





Starting out and settled in

Welcome to our new regular section dedicated to early career and experienced teachers. Early career teachers should check out our recommended resources, course information, hot tips and more to help prepare and succeed as dynamic teachers in public schools. Experienced teachers can read about how to support beginning teacher colleagues or practicum students.

HOT TIPS FROM TEACHER MENTORS

Hot tip: When you write your reports, keep a log or create a template of your final comments or sentences. Simply redact the names and pronouns so you have a bank of comments that you can adjust the next time you need to write reports.

Even hotter tip: Group together sentences based on each outcome, making it easier to adapt comments based on specific outcomes in the future. Having a bank of solid go-to words and inspiration saves so much time when you're feeling like you're running on empty.

HOW EXPERIENCED TEACHERS CAN HELP

If you want to support early career teachers, encourage them to attend courses or engage in professional discussions. Try inviting new teachers to the next local Teachers Association meeting or social event.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Lanyards aren't just about not losing your keys and swipe cards. They are a great way to express parts of your identity and an easy way to signal to students that you are a safe contact or have an interest in a topic they may connect with. Make sure your lanyard has a safety clip and reflects your vibe.

Many of our conferences have special lanyards and some special interest groups (SIGs) have merchandise to help express your interests and identity, such as lanyards and badges.

Our SIGs are great forums to seek advice and support from like-minded people about issues you are passionate about. Several SIGs have collated relevant resources in the SIGs section of the Member Portal.

You can join SIGs via the Get Involved tab on our website.

See centre pages for our SIG poster



SICK LEAVE DETAILS FOR EARLY CAREER TEACHERS

What are our sick leave entitlements?

Teachers are granted five days of sick leave credit on their first full-time temporary or permanent appointment, as they will not have any accumulated sick leave. After four months' service, teachers begin accruing more sick leave at the rate of 15 days per year of service. Annual sick leave is available for all full-time and part-time permanent and temporary teachers.

Part-time teachers accrue sick leave on a pro-rata basis. All sick leave is fully cumulative, meaning that sick leave doesn't expire and accrued sick days from one calendar year roll over into the next.

For temporary teachers, accrued sick leave balances will be accessible when next employed in a temporary or permanent position.

There is no sick leave entitlement for casual teachers, whose daily rate of pay includes a 5 per cent loading in lieu of leave.

What if I run out of sick leave?

Over the first two years of employment with the Department, as a permanent or temporary teacher,



teachers may be entitled to additional sick leave up to a maximum of 15 days.

Should you run out of sick leave, you are advised to speak to your principal in the first instance. Members can contact our Professional Support team for detailed advice regarding this entitlement and the circumstances for eligibility via professionalsupport@nswtf.org.au or **1300 654 367**.

Do I need a medical certificate?

Where a teacher applies for a period of sick leave of three days or less, it is generally not necessary to state the nature of the illness or provide a medical certificate.

Sick leave of more than three days must be supported with a medical certificate. In some instances, a medical certificate may be required for absences of less than three days.

More detailed advice on medical certificates is available in the Member Portal on Federation's website or by contacting our Professional Support team.

Do I need to prepare lessons while I am on sick leave?

Sick leave is an entitlement to give teachers time to rest and recover from illness and there is no requirement for teachers to work or check emails while they are unwell.

Trade Union Training conferences

9 May	Beginning Teachers Conference	Wagga Wagga
8 August	Beginning Teachers Conference	Newcastle
22 August	Beginning Teachers Conference	Lightning Ridge
19 September	Beginning Teachers Conference	Bundanoon
24 October	New Activist Conference	Surry Hills



Centre for Professional Learning

Early Career Teachers	19 March and 19 August	Surry Hills
Tell me your story: supporting EAL/D students from K-8 (three-day course)	24 July, 7 August and 21 August	Surry Hills
Classroom management through effective teaching	5 May	Tamworth
	14 May	Surry Hills
	21 May	Wagga Wagga
	5 August	Canberra
	13 August	Blacktown
	16 September	Surry Hills
	4 November	Newcastle

More courses and conferences: page 34

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Your questions answered

Q What are my hours of duty?
A Hours of duty are defined and specified by Determination 1 of 2026 — Attendance and Supervision, and clarified in the Attendance and Student Supervision factsheet (2026).

The factsheet goes into further detail about consultation in developing the school supervision plan, conditions deemed reasonable for requiring a teacher to be on duty beyond the school day and what is deemed reasonable notice.

Members are advised to carefully read the Determination and factsheet and seek clarification from their Organiser or Professional Support, if any issues are encountered.

Q I am a primary teacher. How many hours am I required to teach face-to-face each week?

A The Department’s Attendance and Student Supervision factsheet states that a primary school teacher may be required to teach face-to-face for 4 hours and 45 minutes each day.

“Over a week this equates to 21 hours and 45 minutes face-to-face teaching time per week for a full-time teacher, excluding RFF time,” the factsheet states.

Q Will I go back down the pay scale if I have an extended break in my teaching as a casual or temporary teacher?

A No. Any teacher who is being paid a lower rate as a result of a break in service should

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

If you gain work as a temporary teacher, you should be placed on the same band of the salary scale as you were on for your previous permanent or permanent part-time teaching position with the Department.

Backpay for salary determinations will only apply when made:

- within six months of receiving an approval to teach;
- within six months of becoming permanent; or
- for teaching service since approval to teach was granted, or between periods of employment with the Department, from your date of application.

There could be limited provision to recognise relevant industry experience in fields other than teaching, particularly where the teacher has been in a Department retraining scheme.

The Department does not recognise some overseas teaching experience.

Q Three new students have just enrolled in my class. How many students can I be asked to teach?

A The Staffing Agreement 2024–2029 states: “Class sizes will be planned generally on the following basis and will have regard to the needs of the school.”

Primary schools and primary departments of central schools

- Statewide average class sizes are 20 in kindergarten, 22 in year 1 and 24 in year 2
- No class need exceed 30 students for years 3–6



High schools and secondary departments of central schools

Years 7–10: The principal, in consultation with staff, is responsible for determining actual class sizes based on the curriculum needs of the school, student needs, community expectations, and the expertise of the teachers. Principals also take account of work health and safety issues when forming classes.

No class need exceed 30 students.

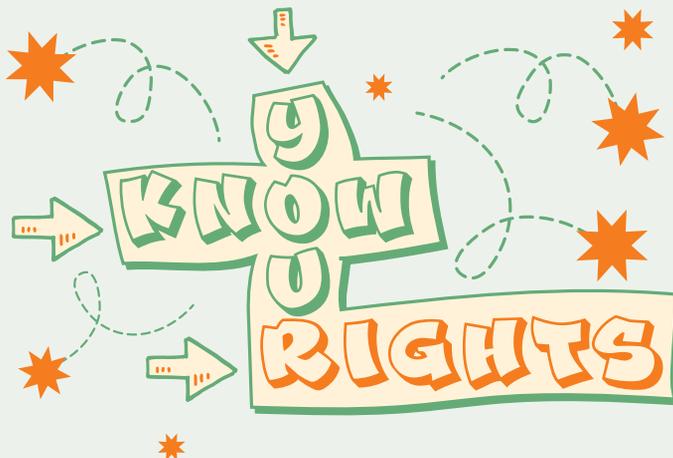
Practical classes years 7–10:

- The organisation of industrial technology, agriculture and visual arts on the basis that no class need exceed 20 students
- The organisation of food technology and textiles technology in years 7–10 on the basis that no class need exceed 24 students
- The organisation of technology (mandatory) classes in years 7–8 and design and technology (elective) classes in years 7–10 on the basis that no class need exceed 22 students

When forming classes, principals of secondary schools also take into account the following advice:

Years 11–12: No class need exceed 24 students.





Other schools: Class sizes not listed above will be determined by the principal in accordance with formulae current as at the commencement of this agreement.

If you have concerns after reading the information above, please contact your Federation Organiser or Professional Support on **1300 654 367**.



Q A nearby school has an elected Health and Safety Representative (HSR) who has helped to sort out an issue with their staffroom facilities. Why doesn't my school have an HSR?

A Your school is not unusual. Despite the HSR position being created in NSW as part of the Work Health and Safety Act in 2011 for all workplaces, only around 8 per cent of public schools have an HSR. It may be a surprise, but the reason that most schools and TAFEs do not have an HSR is that the workers have not requested one.

Q What are the face-to-face teaching hours for a high school teacher?

A The Attendance and Student Supervision factsheet (2026) states the Award provisions as follows:

Teachers (other than teachers in training, head teachers and deputy principals in high schools) may

be required to teach the following periods (or their time equivalent):

Classification	Teaching periods per week	Periods per week, as determined by the principal, for sport (refer to subclause 16.6)
Teachers in high schools	28	Up to 3
Head teachers in high schools	22	Up to 3
Deputy principals in high schools	14	Up to 3

A 'period' in a high or central school is defined in Clause 2.42 of the schools Award as a 40-minute teaching period.

Where schools have operational arrangements such as periods of a one-hour duration, cyclical timetables etc., the time equivalent or average number of minutes over the week, fortnight or cycle length must remain the same.



For information relating to teaching high school classes outside normal school hours, in lieu of duties, alternate periods and sport allocation please refer to Clauses 15–17 of the Award, which can be accessed at Awards and determinations.

Have you got a question for us?
Email journal@nswtf.org.au

REFERENCES

- Hours of Duty (Determination 1 of 2026)
- Attendance and Student Supervision factsheet (2026)
- Staffing Agreement 2024–2029
- Salary determination procedure

Go online for live links to the reference documents



Questions are answered by:

- Anthony Brereton, Officer attached to Casual Teachers
- Sam Clay, Deputy Secretary (Research, Industrial and Professional Support)
- Damian Purins, Work Health and Safety Officer



Make a SIG



**Join
Federation
Special Interest
today**

Special Interest Groups are a great way union members can come together to create a better future for themselves.

Joining a SIG is a great way for like-minded professionals to come together about your passions and interests. It's your chance to make your union more relevant to you.

From sport to science, there's a SIG for you.



Not a Federation member? Join today!

ians

LGBTIQA+



Special Education Teachers



Careers Advisers



Sport



Technology and Applied Studies/Industrial Arts



VET in Schools



Significant difference

in a Education Interest Group today!

Groups (SIGs) are just one way to come together to help improve public education. It's a great way to meet other professionals, learn more about the industry and get more out of your membership.

Special education,
G for everyone



Scan here for
information on
each of the SIGs
and how to join.



EQUITY MATTERS

Your questions answered

Q What behaviours are acceptable for me to deal with in my classroom?

A A teacher shouldn't feel ashamed in reporting concerning behaviours taking place in their classroom. While it can be tricky at times, we need to change the idea that 'if it doesn't break the skin, it's not worth reporting'. Teachers need to be more proactive, asking 'What can we do as a membership to support students more effectively?'

Is your school following proper reporting, suspension and expulsion procedures to meet the needs of students and staff in your school? If you're not sure, talk to your Federation Representative or Federation Workplace Committee and see what processes can be changed or updated. If there are still concerns, contact your Workplace Organiser.

Q I've heard the word inclusion used in lots of different contexts. What does it mean?

A It's a word that changes meaning often. Take a read of *JPL*'s article "Is Inclusion Truly Inclusive?" (Semester 2, 2025) to help start conversations in the staffroom and provide professional reflection on inclusion in your classroom, stage or school.



Q I'm getting ready to return to work after having a baby. What are my rights regarding lactation?

A Under state and federal legislation, there are protections for people who are still breastfeeding or need to express breast milk when they return to work. The provision for NSW public school teachers is for up to two paid 30-minute lactation breaks within a full working day to breastfeed or express breast milk. These breaks may align with student meal breaks.

Before you return to work, you should discuss with your principal your intention to use lactation breaks. The principal is required to support you for this to occur but also needs to balance the operational requirements of the school. Not everyone's routine will match school break or coverage times. For example, if covering your class or duty, you may need time to plan ahead.

Importantly, every effort must be made to provide access to suitable facilities to support breastfeeding. This includes a private, lockable, hygienic room with a power point, comfortable seating and facilities for convenient storage of breast pumps and related equipment. There must be facilities for washing hands and equipment. There should also be refrigeration for storage of breast milk. Unfortunately, the design of most schools means these may not be all be in the same room. It is important to discuss what is needed, particularly to ensure that there is clear

"In Use" signage for privacy and that cleaning and storage facilities are close by.

Refer to *Determination 3 of 2011 — Lactation Breaks and Breastfeeding and Lactation Breaks in Schools* — *Guidelines for Principals and School Staff* (2019) if needed.



Q I'm worried about saying the wrong thing. How do I talk about disability?

A Generally, it is best to use 'person-first' language when talking to individuals with a disability, especially in the first instance.

However, there are some groups or individuals that prefer 'disability-first' or 'identity-first' language. When in doubt, talk to the individual (or parent/carer), get to know them and ask how they would like to be spoken to.

Q I am a relieving principal and there has been some anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment after Mardi Gras. What resources can I access to help respond to parents and broader community?

A The Department of Education has a toolkit, 'Supporting LGBTIQIA+ communities in schools', designed to help principals and school leaders take positive action to respond to sentiment that may compromise safe, inclusive and respectful environments for all students and staff.

While this toolkit can be used to respond to any sentiment or concerns relating to any topic that may compromise safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments, the focus is on responding to sentiment about gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Q I need to attend Sorry Business. Is there any leave that I can take?

A As stated in the *Teachers Award Update 2024*, family and community service leave of up to two days per occasion will be granted as an entitlement, and cannot be declined, where the teacher is seeking additional leave on the death of a family member for the purposes of Aboriginal kinship, in accordance with family and community service (FACS) leave provisions.



Q Our school celebrates Harmony Day (21 March), but I have also heard the term International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. What is the difference? Are there any suggestions for engaging in meaningful anti-racism?

A While they share the same day, Harmony Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination share two different meanings. While Harmony Day focuses on inclusivity, respect and cultural diversity, the latter aims to drive home the need for combatting systemic racial discrimination.

Critics argue that Harmony Week (16–22 March) shows how language

can be used to reframe anti-racism and how the word 'harmony' can operate to reinforce inequality and maintain the status quo.

We all have a responsibility to call racism out and to interrogate the various ways it operates. No matter where you are in your individual anti-racism journey, the It Stops With Me website can help you learn more about racism and take meaningful action to create change.

We've also put together a list of suggested readings about the history of Harmony Day and the original intention of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which acknowledges the reality and harms of racism and strategising for change. You can find it within the Member Portal.

Q I'm new to special education. What documents do I need for my students?

A The Department's 'Strengthening planning for students' page provides templates for use to assist in your programming and planning for individual student needs. These documents can assist you to streamline your information and help others knowing how to engage with and work with students.

Please note: The Health Support Plan is mandatory.



REFERENCES

- "Is Inclusion Truly Inclusive?"
- Determination 3 of 2011 — Lactation Breaks
- Breastfeeding and Lactation Breaks in Schools — Guidelines for Principals and School Staff (2019)
- Supporting LGBTQIA+ communities in schools
- Teachers Award Update — Member Portal
- It Stops With Me
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — Member Portal
- Strengthening planning for students

Links to the reference documents



Questions answered by Federation's Equity Team:

- Russell Honnery, Aboriginal Education Officer
- John Skene, Disability Officer
- Mandy Wells, Multicultural Officer
- Leeanda Smith, Women's Officer
- Mel Smith, Officer attached to LGBTIQIA+ matters

Students thrive with face-to-face learning at TAFE



Student success stories abound from TAFE NSW's high-school equivalent education programs. Students are thriving in a TAFE college environment that offers inclusivity, flexibility, adult learning principles, hands-on experiential learning, small class sizes and relational face-to-face teaching with dedicated teachers and support staff.

TAFE PROVES A BETTER MATCH FOR CHLOE

Armidale student Chloe Porter realised midway through her HSC studies that it wasn't the right fit for her. At the end of year 11, she made the switch to Armidale TAFE's Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC) course and is now celebrating an ATAR equivalent of 99 or higher.

"The classes were much more one-on-one and the teachers genuinely cared about you and your learning," Chloe said. "They really took the time to get to know us and that support made all the difference."

Her mum Shell credits TAFE's Tertiary Preparation Certificate with turning Chloe's education around.

"The more personalised, invested approach she experienced from the teachers there really made a difference," Shell said. "She felt empowered to learn in the TAFE environment and we would certainly recommend the Tertiary Preparation Certificate course

at TAFE as a robust, quality pathway for students who do not gel with mainstream school settings."

"As a public school teacher and a proud Federation member, I am very pleased that our public education system provides a holistic range of pathways to engage students from all backgrounds and walks of life to ensure their success," she added.

MORE STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

On the Central Coast, six TAFE Tertiary Preparation Certificate students scored an ATAR equivalent exceeding 95, including Cora Logan, who plans to study Biomedical Science at university. In the Hunter, four students scored more than 95, including Josh Culjak, who has just signed a National Premier League football contract and is about to begin an electrical apprenticeship. Five students across the South Coast and Illawarra scored more than 95, including 30-year-old Robert Chatel, who is now pursuing an engineering degree at university.

"It has provided so much for the community," Federation Women's Contact and Armidale TAFE Tertiary Preparation Certificate coordinator Jan Hall said. A graduate of the course herself, Shell often runs into "my old graduates around town who have been so successful at university and now work".

FUTURE SUCCESSES AT RISK

But the potential for future success stories like these risks being undermined by a push to replace face-to-face teaching for years 10–12 courses with screen-based delivery.

Post-Schools Organiser Melissa O’Meara warned that shifting to screen-based learning at TAFE would “impose a one-size-fits-all solution that ignores the diversity of student backgrounds, learning needs and community contexts that campus-based education exists to serve”.

“The so-called blended delivery model — presented as a limited pilot yet already rolled out at scale — is not a new or innovative idea,” Melissa said. “Students attend TAFE campuses while instruction is delivered by a single teacher remotely broadcast across multiple sites.

“This model raises serious equity concerns, disproportionately disadvantages regional and remote students and undermines local responsiveness.”

FACE-TO FACE LEARNING IS KEY

TAFE Teachers Association Secretary, Armidale TAFE Tertiary Preparation Certificate head teacher and Federation Representative Ben Parsons warned that Armidale TAFE’s success was at risk.

“I’m concerned that the replacement of face-to-face teachers with screens fails to meet the diverse needs of these students and communities,” Ben said. “It will result in poorer educational outcomes and more young Australians like these being deprived of an education.”

CALL FOR COMMITMENT FROM TAFE NSW

At a recent TAFE TA Executive meeting, members resolved unanimously to call on TAFE NSW to “immediately renew its commitment to fully funding and resourcing face-to-face education in High School Equivalent programs”.

Read more



Nathan, Shell and Chloe Porter, Ben Parsons and Jan Hall



TAFE PROGRAM DIARIES AND APPROVED PROGRAMS

Federation reminds all teachers, head teachers, disability teacher consultants, assessors, education support officers and counsellors of the requirement to submit their Approved Program into the TAFE Program Diary (TPD) for approval in advance rather than retrospectively.

Members will be aware that prior to semester 1, 2026, TAFE NSW requested that all teachers submit a TPD that reflects their Approved Program by the end of Teaching Week 3 of Term 1 2026.

Clause 22.2 of the TAFE Commission of NSW Teachers and Related Employees Enterprise Agreement 2025–2028 (the EA) states: “All Teachers, Head Teacher Band 2 (excluding Head Teacher Band 3), Adult Literacy Officers and Special Program Coordinators must have an Approved Program to meet TAFE NSW’s needs.”

The same clause details the total annual hours in an Approved Program based on a full-time teacher in a table on page 20 of the Enterprise Agreement, with pro-rata for teachers.

Clause 22.3 outlines how teachers “may flexibly undertake their direct teaching and the non-teaching components provided under sub-clause 22.2 over a period of twelve months.”

An Approved Program is discussed and agreed on by the teacher and their direct supervisor and represents the teacher’s contracted hours.

No teacher should be unilaterally handed a timetable without discussion.

CHANGES TO APPROVED PROGRAM

Additional hours are hours that permanent and temporary part-time teachers may work on top of their contracted hours in any given week up until they reach a full-time program.

Additional hours are to be entered in TPD by the teacher at the end of the week that they are worked, including teaching hours and the corresponding additional related duties.

Heading into semester 2, 2026, members should consider clause 22.3 of the Enterprise Agreement, which states that “an Approved Program developed under this sub-clause may be reviewed for genuine operational reasons on a semester basis”. Again, this should be done in consultation and negotiation with the teacher.

Scan for the TAFE agreement



Changemaking is challenging, but worth the effort

Collective member advocacy is the catalyst for improvements

When teachers who identified as gender and sexuality diverse felt despair at the discrimination they faced, they began working together with their allies to achieve equality.

Their sustained action has slowly shifted the status quo. Speaking in a 2023 podcast series for the Diversity in Education Conference, former Federation president Maree O'Halloran reflected on the historic role of allyship within the Federation: "I acknowledge all the people who went before me in the Teachers Federation and... created a space where I could be a president with a same-sex partner."

Federation pioneer Frank Barnes echoed this sentiment noting the enduring presence of support: "We have the advantage of there always being good people around."

SETTING THE AGENDA THROUGH POLICY

Member advocacy in Federation led early opposition to discrimination against same-sex attracted people, formalised in the 1978 Sexual Discrimination Policy.

Members continued to shape this work over time, contributing to the Sexual Orientation and Gender Preferred Identity Policy in 1996, followed by the Gender, Sexuality and Identity Policy in 2011. This policy was updated in 2022 to reflect more inclusive language and practice. The union established the LGBTIQ+ Restricted Committee in 2011 to work on LGBTIQ+ policy and/or put a LGBTIQ+ lens on broader union policy.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group (SIG) was officially established in the 1980s with members providing advice to Federation regarding the civil rights and liberties of rainbow people. It has since evolved into the LGBTIQ+ SIG, reflecting broader community change and a growing focus on



Above: David Wynne and Mel Smith. Far right: Member activists, including Frank Barnes, Maree O'Halloran and Waine Donovan

inclusion. Later in the same decade, another SIG was established in response to HIV/AIDS.

NEVER BACK DOWN

Federation's advocacy has often required members to challenge prevailing attitudes. Frank recalled speaking at an early HIV/AIDS conference, where he argued for age-appropriate sex education, including information around HIV/AIDS, from kindergarten onwards.

"Well, can you imagine the response," he said. While suggestions were initially limited to senior students, Frank pushed back and despite resistance, his persistence eventually led to movement within the Department.

Maree also reflected on the political climate of the early 2000s, often described as the "culture wars" where teachers faced public and political pressure to stay silent. "We did not let them stop our voice," she said.

TRAINING AND RESOURCES

As a Trade Union Training Officer (2002–2014), David Wynne introduced LGBTIQ+-friendly courses.

"When the New Activist Conference was established, I made sure one of the workshops related to supporting LGBTIQ+ members," he said. Federation

works with organisations such as Twenty10, Wear It Purple and the Trans Justice Project. Federation develops practical resources and deliver training that supports LGBTIQ+ students and teachers.

EDUCATING MEMBERS AND STUDENTS

Federation has played a key role in raising awareness of sexual and gender diversity across the profession.

Our journal, *Education*, was particularly important during the early years of the HIV/AIDS crisis. “There was a lot of education that need to be done, so we used *Education*,” David recalled. The journal helped reach members in rural and isolated areas and published articles to address fear and misinformation.

VISIBILITY

While Federation members participated in Mardi Gras as part of union floats previously, 2010 was the first time Federation engaged with the Mardi Festival — first with Fair Day and then a float in the parade in 2015.

“It’s really lovely to hear people cheer for the teachers,” Mel Smith said.

“To feel all that love and positivity walking up the parade route is really buoying for a lot of teachers... (it’s) why we keep doing it.” (Read more about our Mardi Gras float on pages 26 and 27.)

Members also participate in other regional rainbow events.

EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

For many members, involvement in Federation has been personally empowering. LGBTIQ+ SIG member Waine Donovan reflected on how perceptions towards LGBTIQ+ issues had shifted and he felt his involvement in the union had contributed to this meaningful change.

Federation members contributed to the successful Yes campaign for same-sex marriage during the federal government’s postal survey in 2017.

Alongside attending rallies and marches, Mel shared that members made phone calls as part of the ACTU’s campaign, linking the issue to union values of fairness, equality and human rights. “Having a win like that was really, really great,” Mel said.

Frank added that long-term advocacy played a key role in shifting public debate.

EQUALITY FOR EVERYONE

Maree said Federation advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights doesn’t take away from the fight in another area — “in fact, it supports it”.

“In the end, it’s all one: equality for everyone,” she said.



THE FUTURE

While progress has been made, members continue to identify new goals through Federation’s forums and activities.

Looking ahead, Maree said she was hopeful that “every young person in schools, no matter how they identify, feels safe, strong and visible” and that Federation continues to work for equality and equity.

Check out all the Diversity in Education podcasts



Glitz, glamour and going your own way

Teachers celebrate identity, creativity and empowerment at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade.

A whirl of colour, excitement and spectacle, the parade is an important symbol for progress, hope and unity in a world more divided by every news cycle.

It's almost unrecognisable from its origin: a protest in 1978 at which numerous participants were arrested.

Many original participants ("78ers") were teachers, which might be why Federation doesn't shy away from advocating for the rights of others!

Federation has had its own float in the annual event since 2015, our members' proud voices drawing media attention to our deep political messages.

This year's was no different. Our float's theme, "Teachers EMPOWER the future", celebrated the potential of young people in our classrooms, empowering them to be who they are and grow into adults who shape the world around them through kindness and empathy. It also recognised the lasting impact teachers have on identity, work and freedom of expression.

It's a theme that touched a chord with Mardi Gras co-host and former AFL player Mitch Brown.

"When I came out last year, the very next day, the thing that hit me most were the messages from my teacher friends and teachers that are strangers, and it just meant the world," Brown told the ABC.

"They shared with me the conversations from their young people [in] the corridors, in the classrooms that just meant the world. Shout-out to the teachers out there; they're doing amazing work."

The theme spoke to teachers too: the importance of bringing your whole self to work, being visible and acting as role models for students and the wider community.

Visually, the float was a fun twist on teacher chic: a classic teacher look, but with



sparkle, glitz and glamour. For LGBTIQ+ young people, it signalled recognition and support within school settings. For LGBTIQ+ teachers, it was a public show of solidarity and a celebration of queer identity.

The idea originated from the slight stir in media spaces to the gender-neutral pronouns poster in edition 14 of *Education Quarterly*. The resource simply reminded us that "there have always been non-binary, transgender or gender non-conforming people in our public school system and communities".

"It is our responsibility to create and foster an inclusive environment without making assumptions or generalisations," the poster stated.

"This is not to say that teachers shouldn't use gendered language that matches the individual's identity, but rather that we should reconsider the assumptions and generalisations we make. It is a chance to try and avoid defaulting to gendered terms."

This year, float participants were encouraged to break out of the teacher mould and embrace their personality — however extravagant or reserved they were comfortable with — in the knowledge they'd be seen, heard and loved just as they are.

This isn't the first time our float has cheekily referred to criticism from media commentators. In 2021, using a blend of creativity and humour, our float celebrated LGBTIQ+ teachers and students with a whimsical motif of SEA Life Aquarium's two gay penguins, Spheh and Magic, representing visibility and solidarity. It also showed the power of community support and how to "clap back" with integrity to negativity.



"When I came out last year, the very next day, the thing that hit me most were the messages from my teacher friends and teachers that are strangers, and it just meant the world"



Scan QR code (left) for more parade pics and (right) for an extended article



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



*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.



Language and literacy development through play

Words **Kathy Rushton** and **Joanne Rossbridge**

When children play and perform the moves associated with traditional songs and rhymes, they learn to use language to satisfy their needs.

Exploration of the written text of songs and rhymes also provide opportunities to develop language and literacy.

Drama strategies like readers' theatre, freeze frame and drawing, puppet theatre and interviewing, integrated with the use of quality children's literature, provide contexts for playing with ideas and language.

Connecting speaking, listening, reading and writing in real world scenarios is an effective and engaging way to draw upon the language skills that students bring to classrooms.

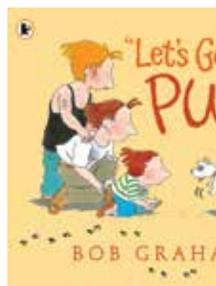
TALK AND PLAY AS A CONTEXT FOR READING DEVELOPMENT

Take *Let's Get a Pup* by Bob Graham (2001, Walker Books), which tells the story of a family who visit a rescue centre to get a puppy but also end up with old, grey Rosy. This

book, used in conjunction with play and before, during and after shared reading strategies, provides opportunities for comprehension, vocabulary development and an explicit focus on sound and letter knowledge.

Extending access to a range of texts ensures students are exposed to a range of genres. Reading can be further supported through shared reading of a range of other texts related to the picture book. In the case of our example, these may include:

- looking at websites on dogs for adoption
- viewing videos on how to care for dogs and dog training
- reading information texts on dog breeds
- locating pet products on pet shop websites
- comparing online reviews and star ratings of possible food and pet toys
- watching cartoons with dogs as characters.



Play provides a context that can foster creativity and student agency as they engage with the challenges and rewards of becoming literate

PLAY AS A CONTEXT FOR WRITING

Play opportunities can stimulate the creation of a range of real-world scenarios that provide a purpose for writing.

Purposes for writing could include:

- a shopping list before going to the pet shop
- description of a favourite dog
- an animal meal plan or pet menu
- instructions on how to care for a pet
- recount of events with a pet
- narrative about a problematic adventure with a pet.

WRITING FOR A PURPOSE AND JOINT CONSTRUCTION

To prepare for writing, students can be involved in independent play such as visiting the vet, introducing a pet to other pets or friends and family or shopping at the pet shop. This can be developed through use of props, costumes, toys and puppets.

A toy vet kit provides opportunities for students to take on the role of a vet, client or pet. Students will need to make different oral language choices given their roles. The props, such as a stethoscope or thermometer, also stimulate talk appropriate for the context. The mobile phone, clipboard and medication provide numerous opportunities for roleplaying both literacy and numeracy practices.

From this play students are then able to transfer their experience and oral language to jointly constructing a text such as recounting an experience visiting the vet, writing a list of supplies and equipment needed by a vet or writing instructions on how to care for a pet. In doing so, language choices move from the spoken to more written choices along the mode continuum and possibly from a home language or dialect to include English.

When joint construction occurs with students there is a balance between the talk of the teacher and the students. The teacher acts as a guide to make thinking explicit whilst the students contribute ideas and discuss choices.

During joint construction the teacher can support explicit discussion about the purpose and audience for the writing as well as the use of specific metalanguage. For example, when writing instructions, action verbs will tend to be at the beginning of commands. When writing a recount, the focus will also be on the actions undertaken but in past tense. When writing a list, the language will be noun groups such as ‘medicine’, ‘dry food’ or ‘dog treats’. Even if students don’t have this language, they are able to share experiences with other students through play, which not only supports ideas for writing but also the development of vocabulary and metalanguage.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the early learning experience is that it should be engaging, inclusive and enjoyable for all young students. Play provides a context that can foster creativity and student agency as they engage with the challenges and rewards of becoming literate.

Joanne Rossbridge is an independent language and literacy consultant working in primary and secondary schools and with teachers across Australia. She has worked as a classroom teacher and literacy consultant with the NSW Department of Education.

Dr Kathy Rushton is an honorary lecturer at the University of Sydney. She provides professional learning and is an experienced TESOL and classroom teacher, having worked in primary and secondary schools, at TAFE and with preservice teachers.

This is an edited version of ‘Learning in the early years: Do, perform, portray — play!’, which first appeared in the semester 1, 2024 edition of the *Journal for Professional Learning*. Scan to view the entire article, which includes engaging and inclusive activities and resources to foster creativity and student engagement in the early years of schooling, plus references.





Join our Online Book Club!

HELD QUARTERLY VIA ZOOM

Join like-minded teachers and connect through discussions and analysis of one of our library books.

In each edition of *Education Quarterly* we will announce what the next book will be. (Members must source their own copies.)



Register your interest for access to the Zoom links.

THIS TERM'S BOOK

How to Suppress Women's Writing

JOANNA RUSS

By the author of *The Female Man*, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* is a provocative survey of the forces that work against women who dare to write.

"She didn't write it. She wrote it but she shouldn't have. She wrote it but look what she wrote about. She wrote it but she isn't really an artist, and it isn't really art. She wrote it but she had help. She wrote it but she's an anomaly. She wrote it BUT..."

How to Suppress Women's Writing is a meticulously researched and humorously written "guidebook" to the many ways women and other minorities have been barred from producing written art.

In chapters entitled "Prohibitions," "Bad Faith," "Denial of Agency," "Pollution of Agency," "The Double Standard of Content," "False Categorisation," "Isolation," "Anomalousness," "Lack of Models," "Responses" and "Aesthetics", Joanna Russ names, defines, and illustrates those barriers to art-making we may have felt but which tend to remain unnamed and thus unsolvable.

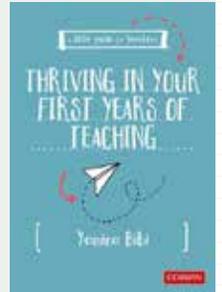


How to Suppress Women's Writing by Joanna Russ

Thriving in your first years of teaching

BY YAMINA BIBI. LONDON: CORWIN, 2024

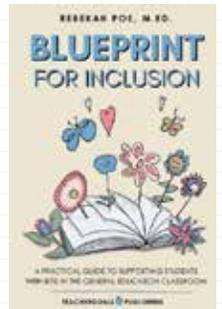
"Being new to the teaching profession can be overwhelming. Taking charge of a classroom for the first time, building new relationships and planning for lessons are some of the challenges you'll encounter. But never fear! This new LGT [Little Guide for Teachers] will support you as you take the first steps in your career. This book will give teachers useful strategies and ideas that they can use, not just to survive in their first few years as a teacher, but thrive" (publisher).



Blueprint for inclusion: a practical guide to supporting students with IEPs in the general education classroom

BY REBEKAH POE. BEECH GROVE, IN: TEACHERGOALS PUBLISHING, 2025

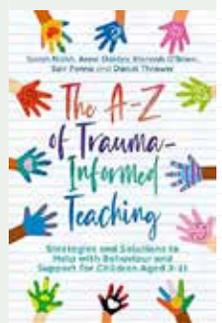
"Whether you're a new teacher or a seasoned pro, Rebekah Poe, M.Ed., provides real-world solutions for integrating students with IEPs into your daily instruction — without overwhelm or guesswork ... [This book] equips educators with the legal knowledge, mindset, and practical tools to confidently support inclusive practices" (publisher).



The A-Z of trauma-informed teaching: strategies and solutions to help with behaviour and support for children aged 3-11

BY SARAH NAISH ET AL. LONDON; PHILADELPHIA, PA: JESSICA KINGSLEY PUBLISHERS, 2023

"This dip-in A-Z guide gives you a wide range of strategies for a variety of behaviours. Part 1 provides you with jargon-free explanations on trauma, how it affects behaviour and development, and most importantly what trauma-informed teaching actually involves. Part 2 lists an A-Z of issues and behaviours for you to flip to in your busiest moments, ranging from Aggression and Lateness right through to Zzz (sleep issues). Guidance on strategies to avoid and resolving compassion fatigue enables you to give all children in your classroom the support they need with renewed optimism and strength".

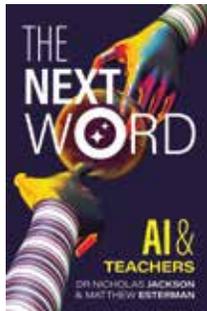


What's hot in the library

The next word: AI & learners

BY NICHOLAS JACKSON, MATTHEW ESTERMAN AND AMY WALLACE. MELBOURNE: AMBA PRESS, 2025

“The authors dive deep into the science of learning and investigate the crucial question: is AI a helpful prosthetic or a dangerous crutch? Most importantly, this isn't just another book about students — it's a book with them. [Year 12 student] Amy's perspective illuminates how young people actually want AI to shape their futures and what authentic learning looks like when machines can seemingly learn everything. With practical insights for educators and real-world tools for navigating education's AI-integrated future, *The next word: AI & learners* ensures you're part of the conversation that's reshaping how we think about learning itself” (back cover).



There's a prawn in Parliament House: the kids' guide to Australia's amazing democracy

BY ANNABEL CRABB; ILLUSTRATED BY FIRST DOG ON THE MOON. CAMMERAYGAL COUNTRY; CROWS NEST, NSW: ALLEN & UNWIN, 2025

“Every three years, Australians come together on a Saturday to elect a government. We do this because having a government is the best way for large groups of people to live in peace and enjoy things like roads and airports and hospitals and delicious food without having to personally arrange all the boring stuff. But how do we elect a government? How does the government make decisions? And what is so special about our system of democracy? Political writer and commentator Annabel Crabb explores, explains and examines Australia's unique democracy from the smallest shrimp to the largest coathanger” (back cover).

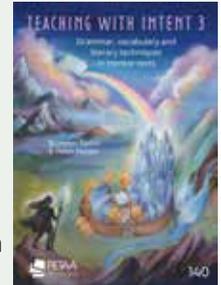
Audience: For ages 8-12 years



Teaching with intent 3: grammar, vocabulary and literary techniques in mentor texts

BY BRONWYN PARKIN AND HELEN HARPER. NEWTOWN, NSW: PRIMARY ENGLISH TEACHING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA (PETAA), 2025

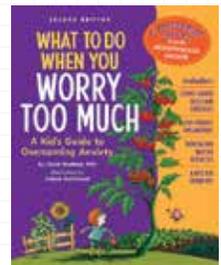
“Designed as a practical introduction to teaching narratives, this text bridges the Literature and Language strands of the Australian Curriculum: English. It supports teachers to notice and name the literary techniques and grammatical choices that shape meaning in children's literature, and to make those insights explicit in classroom discussion and writing instruction. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics and following on from the popular *Teaching with intent 1 and 2*, this book offers clear explanations, model texts and professional learning prompts suitable for early years and primary classrooms, as well as pre-service and EAL/D contexts”.



What to do when you worry too much: a kid's guide to overcoming anxiety [second edition]

BY DAWN HUEBNER; ILLUSTRATED BY SABINE ROTHMUND. WASHINGTON, DC: MAGINATION PRESS, 2025

“*What to do when you worry too much, second edition* guides children and parents through the cognitive-behavioural techniques most often used in the treatment of anxiety. Now revised and expanded, this groundbreaking bestseller includes metaphors and humorous illustrations that make the concepts and strategies easy to understand, while clear how-to steps and prompts to draw and write help children learn new skills ... Includes a note to parents and caregivers by psychologist author Dawn Huebner”.



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.





YABUN

Federation's Presidential team (foreground), Officers and members at our stall at the Yabun Festival in January

FAIR DAY



Our Fair Day stall in February was a big hit



1972

Members at a Federation softball match in Hay in 1972. These get-togethers were organised by school counsellor Paul Kirkwood and/or the local Organiser. Do you have a photo from the archives to share? Send us your photos and information to journal@nswtf.org.au or scan the QR code. One lucky person will have their photo featured next edition!





Beechwood PS members won the perpetual trophy for the most members at Hastings River TA's welcome-back event



PROJECT OFFICERS



SAFE

Above, below, left: Our Trade Union Training courses for 2026 are off and running



Above: Our new Project Officers, Timothy Butler and Jesseline Ingold, hit the road



Above: Federation celebrated joining the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower network in December



For the latest course listings, information and to apply



DATE	COURSE	LOCATION
Monday 16 March	Functional Behavioural Assessment in the Classroom	Surry Hills
Tuesday 17 March	Assessment — The Judicious Use of Data and Evidence	Surry Hills
Thursday 19 March	Early Career Teachers	Surry Hills
Monday 23 March	Supporting Students with ADHD 7–10	Online
Wednesday 25 March	Supporting Students with Autism 7–12	Surry Hills
Thursday 26 March	Inclusive Strategies: Teaching Students with Disabilities	Wagga Wagga
Wednesday 29 April	Women and Leadership: Examining Leadership Skills, Capacity and Context	Surry Hills
Tuesday 5 May	Classroom Management through Effective Teaching	Tamworth
Wednesday 6 May	Inclusive Strategies: Teaching Students with Disabilities	Tamworth
Wednesday 13 May	Functional Behavioural Assessment in the Classroom	Surry Hills
Thursday 14 May	Classroom Management Through Effective Teaching	Surry Hills
Monday 18 May	Supporting Students with Autism K–6	Surry Hills
Tuesday 19 May (day 1) and Tuesday 2 June (day 2)	Leading Assessment Practice in Schools	Surry Hills
Thursday 21 May	Classroom Management Through Effective Teaching	Wagga Wagga
Friday 22 May	Conversations About Texts in Secondary Schools	Wagga Wagga
Wednesday 27 May	Supporting Students with Autism 7–12	Online
Tuesday 2 June	Supporting Students with Autism in K–6	Online
Friday 5 June	Secondary English Conference	Surry Hills



For the latest course listings, information and to apply



COURSE	DATE	LOCATION	CLOSING DATE
Beginning Teacher Conference	Saturday 28 March	Surry Hills	Friday 13 March
Foundations for Women’s Contacts	Tuesday 31 March–Wednesday 1 April	Surry Hills	Tuesday 10 March
Foundations for Women’s Contacts	Thursday 30 April–Friday 1 May	Surry Hills	Thursday 2 April
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Tuesday 5–Wednesday 6 May	Surry Hills	Thursday 2 April
Association Women’s Contact Course	Thursday 7–Friday 8 May	Surry Hills	Thursday 2 April
Beginning Teacher Conference	Saturday 9 May	Wagga Wagga	Monday 20 April
Communication Skills for Workplace Representatives	Tuesday 12–Wednesday 13 May	Surry Hills	Tuesday 21 April
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Monday 18–Tuesday 19 May	Surry Hills	Monday 27 April
Work Health and Safety in Education Workplaces	Wednesday 20 May	Surry Hills	Wednesday 29 April
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Thursday 21–Friday 22 May	Surry Hills	Thursday 30 April
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members Conference	Saturday 23 May	Surry Hills	Monday 4 May
Association Executive (Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers)	Monday 25–Tuesday 26 May	Surry Hills	Monday 4 May
Foundations for Workplace Representatives	Monday 1–Tuesday 2 June	Surry Hills	Monday 11 May

Sowing seeds of peace

Sam
2026 Lewis
PEACE PRIZE



THEME Sowing seeds of peace

- Total prize pool \$5400
- Categories for:
 - K-2, 3-6, 7-10, 11-12
 - TAFE/Corrective Services/post-schools students
 - Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander students
 - Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander-themed entries
- Entries may take many forms including posters, poetry, short stories, essays, performances and multimedia
- Submissions close Friday 11 September

FIND OUT ALL THE DETAILS





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