



IEU STATEMENT

WORK, FAMILY, AND FINDING THE BALANCE.

A well overdue debate is emerging in Australia about the crisis of work and its impact on people's lives. In the recent ACTU "Reasonable Hours" case before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, the Full Bench accepted the ACTU's evidence that Australians are now working longer hours than ever before. The Commission also acknowledged a direct relationship between unreasonable hours of work and the physical, social, and emotional life of employees.

There is no disputing that Australia now ranks as one of the few OECD countries where the working day is lengthening. There is a parallel growth in the intensification of the work environment – a combination of the pervasiveness of technology, the more multi-skilled requirements of being a worker, the restructuring of work to fit an "efficiency" model that ultimately places even more strain on all.

"With long hours growing in many workplaces, many employees find themselves either trying to meet the new standard, or failing in comparison to it – carers especially fall into this category. Unreasonable hours injure family life. They debilitate individuals, intimate relationships, children's lives, and our community fabric. There are strong arguments for the re-creation of model worker standards in a new image that allows family life to occur without strain, and without taking on 'exceptionalism' status in the labour force. Workers with families are not exceptions in our labour market. Most workers will have dependents for significant portions of their working lives. This study provides a strong argument for reigning in unreasonable hours cultures and practices that injure healthy individuals, families and communities." *(Barbara Pocock, Fifty Families, Chapter 2)*

Schools are no exception to these general truths. The demands of being a professional or para-professional in what is one of the most important roles in society – that of educating students - are intense. The contemporary teacher works in a challenging and often pressured environment – with students of vastly different abilities and experiences, complex reporting and accountability

requirements, in a role that the law defines as having equal obligations to that of a parent.

Whilst there has been progress made in improving and regulating the working conditions for teachers and support staff, the IEU believes that much more needs to be done. Even acknowledging the huge component of a teacher's life that is difficult to regulate – such as planning, correction, counselling, reporting, liaising with parents, participating in particular school events – there is need for strengthened regulation of the work that staff undertake on a daily level. Such regulation should address not just reducing the volume of work that is expected, but analysing the relevance, frequency and purpose of the work.

The Union will continue to seek reductions in class sizes, limits on the amount of face to face teaching required, reasonable limits on co-curricular and other school based events, improvements in specialist support, and opportunities to professionally develop the already valuable expertise that staff bring with them to their role.

Similarly, the IEU is committed to ensuring that our members have genuine choices and power about balancing the needs of the workplace with those of their own lives – be they involved with bringing up families, carer's roles, participating in their community. The rationale for doing so is unarguable. We have a collective responsibility for ensuring that the profession is strong, healthy, and able to continue to contribute to the lives of students in a meaningful way. We have a responsibility for ensuring that those who take time out of the profession to be with their families are not disadvantaged, but encouraged, and able to on returning to their work, negotiate fair and reasonable conditions. We have the right to insist that workplaces genuinely consult with their employees about workloads and take into account family and broader community lives. Finally, we have an obligation to eliminate any form of direct or indirect discrimination employees suffer because of family or carer responsibilities.

The following are core industrial goals in relation to parental leave, carer's leave and part-time provisions that the IEU will seek to achieve in all Australian non-government schools.

Parental Leave

The IEU is committed to ensuring that all eligible members:

- Receive 14 weeks paid maternity leave as per the International Labour Organisation standard. Such leave should also be available for placement

and known adoption, and for members who adopt through permanent care orders. In all of these adoptive circumstances, the age of the child should not be a barrier to receiving the leave.

- Accrue all standard entitlements when accessing paid parental leave, such as long service leave accrual, superannuation
- Receive a minimum of 10 days paid paternity leave
- Access up to three years parental leave per child
- Access accrued long service leave either prior to or after paid parental leave
- Have the right to return to work part-time until the child reaches school age
- Return to a position at school commensurate with their previous position

Right to return to work part-time on return from parental leave

Where an employee chooses to return to work part-time, they shall be entitled to:

- A reasonable and agreed time fraction and spread of hours
- Hours of work shall generally fall within the following parameters: up to 0.2 FTE – attendance on one day of the week, greater than 0.2 and less than 0.4 FTE – attendance up to two days of the week, greater than 0.4 and less than 0.6 FTE – attendance up to three days of the week, greater than 0.6 and less than 0.8 FTE – attendance up to four days of the week.
- Any other arrangement or subsequent variation shall be by consent of the employee
- Appropriate support, professional development and mentoring to cope with the transition
- Provision of a private and appropriate place for breast-feeding or expressing, if required.

Part-time conditions generally

Consistent with the IEU's Part-time and Job share Policy, the IEU recognises that in the span of a staff member's life, there will be a range of reasons necessitating part-time employment or job sharing arrangements. The relevant provisions above shall also apply, particularly those relating to spread of hours, consent of employee regarding variation, and a reasonable and agreed time fraction.

In addition, all part-time or job share employees shall have the right to:

- Hold a position of responsibility
- Receive payment for child care and for work should they be requested and agree to work on a non-employed day.
- Access appropriate training, professional development and counselling

Carer's leave

The IEU will work towards ensuring that members are able, in times of difficulty, illness or crisis, to meet their family or carer obligations without jeopardising their employment. This will include achieving the right to:

- Paid carers' leave, including the right to access any or all accrued sick leave in particular circumstances
- Accrued long service leave prior to or after accessing carers' leave
- Leave without pay should paid leave options be exhausted
- In extended periods necessitating care, the right to work part-time, with right of return to a full-time position

Ratified IEU Federal Council, April 10, 2003