



IEU Statement on Human Rights and Equity

The IEU and its state branches have a long history of activism around issues which affect not just the industrial and professional rights of our members but also the legal, political and human rights which must prevail in any democratic and civil society.

The Union believes that it would be a false dichotomy to draw a line between any of these areas of human endeavour. Trade unions have used their collective power to fight for the civil and human rights of women, children, indigenous and ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups and around issues such as peace and disarmament.

Teachers know that education is fundamental to a democratic and just society. There is no doubt that the vigorous national and international community debates on issues such as refugees and asylum seekers, mandatory sentencing, Aboriginal reconciliation, the right to independence and self determination in East Timor and other countries, also find their way into classrooms and must be managed in a professional way by teachers.

To give some insight into the range of work undertaken to achieve a more just world, the following are noted.

The IEU has taken a proactive leadership role in a number of areas, including the need to strengthen our Anti Discrimination legislation so that all groups in the community have their human rights under the law protected, support for the new nation of East Timor, participation in the struggle for National Reconciliation and Aboriginal self determination, and opposition to the racist agendas promoted by the One Nation Party and to the racist mandatory sentencing legislation.

Most recently, we have criticized the Howard Federal Government for its Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill 2007 entitled *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill 2007* and four related bills concerning the Northern Territory National Emergency response intended to deal with the outcomes of the Anderson/Wild Report *Little Children Are Sacred*. The Union's concern was not just the draconian nature of the legislation and the government's failure to properly reflect the advice of Aboriginal leaders on the very complex problems but also the government's assault on the democratic parliamentary processes. By introducing this omnibus legislation into the parliament on the day it was to be debated (without its being available to members of either the House of Representatives or the Senate), the Howard government showed absolute disrespect for the proper democratic processes of the Australian parliament.

The IEU supported the struggle for nationhood by the East Timorese and along with other groups within the community, pressed the government to refuse to be compromised in this endeavour by its relationship with the Indonesian government. The Union coordinated a national fundraising effort through its membership and in

collaboration with other unions, APHEDA and other non government organisations, funded a substantial number of projects on the ground in East Timor.

For example, in cooperation with a number of Catholic education employers, the Union organised and co-funded a systemic program of groups of teachers to go to East Timor to teach English as a second language in high schools and at the University. The IEU also supported the development of local carpentry workshops and network support across districts, including the provision of tools, vocational educational training and management training.

In liaison with East Timorese authorities, there was collaborative work with APHEDA, the Victorian Government and a number of Australian Universities to resource and assist in the establishment of the National University of East Timor. Non government schools have "twinned" with East Timorese schools and have undertaken fundraising to support their colleagues restart schooling across the East Timor. It has been an enriching experience for the Union, teachers and their students alike.

The Union also provided support to efforts to establish an independent and democratic Teachers' Union in the country.

If globalisation is to mean anything positive, it must give a sense that our interests, rights, struggles and aspirations are no different to those in communities across the nation and across the world. The IEU and its members will continue to support and campaign for a humane and civil society