Independent Education Union of Australia

Speaks on...

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Workplace gender equity makes some gains, but education leadership remains deeply unequal

The latest Insights Report from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) highlights both progress and persistent challenges in building more equitable workplaces. While there have been modest improvements in the gender pay gap by industry, significant inequities remain in managerial and leadership roles within the education and training sector.

Clearer data on the underlying causes of the gender pay gap

The report identifies that the unacceptably high national gender pay gap of 21.8% is being largely driven by entrenched occupational segregation. Many industries remain heavily gendered, with women concentrated in lower-paid roles in in health, care, and service sectors, while men dominate higher-paid technical, trades, and leadership positions.

The wage analysis does show some progress, with many industries now within 5% of pay parity and most occupations reporting gaps of less than 10%.

Our union campaigns, led by over 50,000 women workers who make up 72% of IEU members, will continue to fight for fairer pay and greater financial recognition of our female dominated schools and early childhood workplaces.

Gender equity goes backwards in education leadership roles

Of particular concern is the education sector, where leadership and managerial roles remain disproportionately male, despite the workforce being overwhelmingly female.

Gender balance in education leadership has actually declined. The sector experienced one of the largest drops in gender balance in management - down 3.1% - since 2022.

Male appointment rates to management roles remain 7% higher than those for women, even though education is one of the most feminised sectors in Australia. The gender pay gap in educational leadership, stuck at 8.6%, continues to devalue and disempower our female leaders.

We need long-term structural and cultural change in education to break down the remaining barriers to gender equity in leadership. Employers must lead by example through transparent promotion processes, normalising flexibility in managerial roles, leadership mentoring and inclusive workplace cultures.