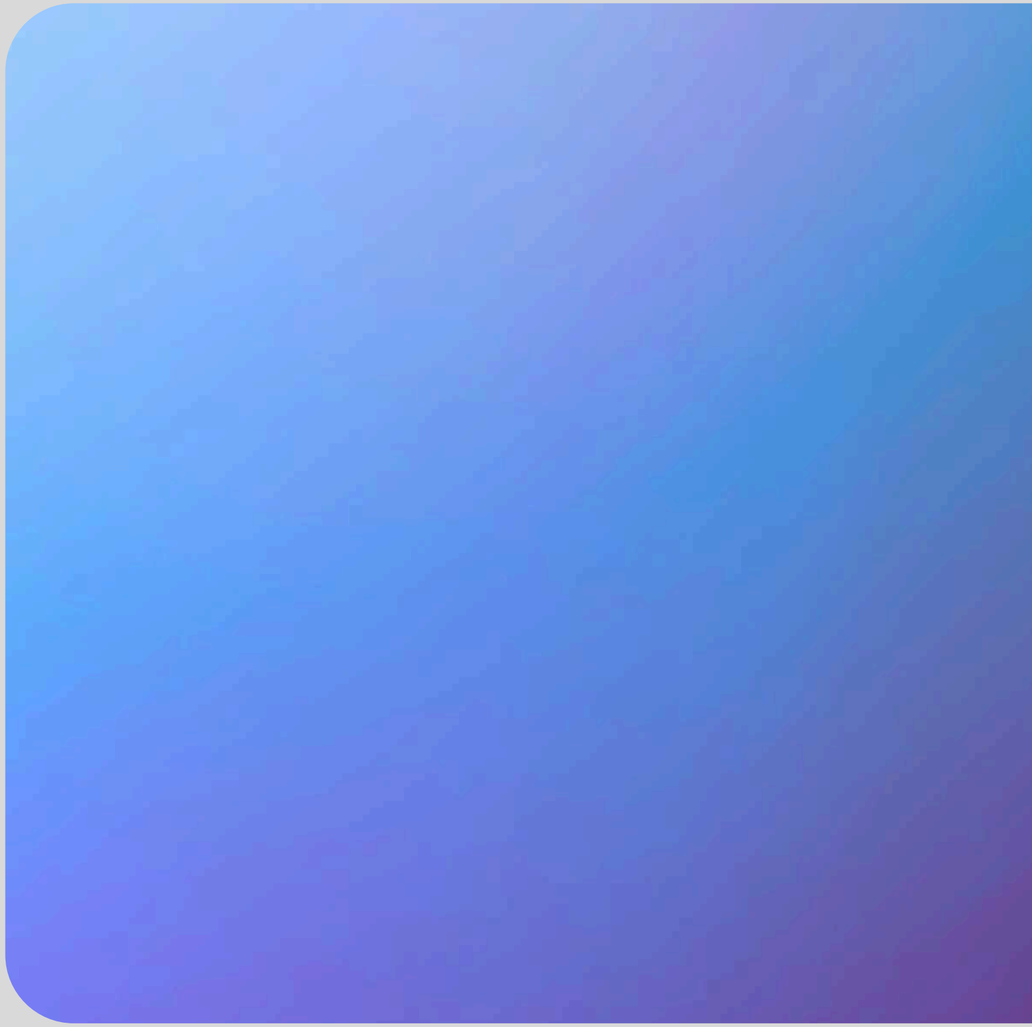
IEU FEDERAL SECRETARIAT REPORT

Independent Education Union of Australia

Federal Council Meeting
27 August 2026



THE ISSUES DRIVING IEU ACTION IN 2026

The past year has once again seen major member wins, while work continues on the next phase of reforms and protections for education workers.

Wages, cost-of-living and housing affordability

As always, our union is carrying a heavy bargaining load, including extensive negotiations in the Catholic and independent sectors. Cost-of-living pressures remain a major concern, with inflation at 4.2% in danger of outpacing wage increases. Housing affordability also remains a nation wide challenge, with many members priced out of the communities they serve. In regional areas, a shortage of rental housing is driving rents to record highs amid strong competition for limited accommodation.

Teacher workload and excessive compliance demands

A multi-pronged response to teacher workload remains a critical national priority. This includes addressing the drivers of workload before additional demands are imposed on staff, alongside improved release time and workplace protections at the local level.

A key workload driver - duplicative and excessive NCCD demands - remains the focus of extensive engagement with education authorities and policymakers. This work is essential to clarify and limit compliance demands that go beyond the reasonable collection of student disability data, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens on teachers and school leaders.

Unfinished union business: gender undervaluation, anti-discrimination exemptions and reproductive health leave

The legal process to address gender undervaluation in the ECEC sector, post-secondary workplaces and among school support staff is now underway.

Our union is also actively campaigning at the national level to finally resolve the issue of outdated religious discrimination exemptions and secure the introduction of paid reproductive health leave for all Australian workers.

The Independent Education Union

Independent Education Union of Australia

IEU BY THE NUMBERS

75,000 members

72% women members

5 IEU Branches
NSW/ACT, VICTAS, QNT, SA, WA

1.5 million students educated by our members

840 collective agreements
negotiated by IEU, setting wages and conditions in thousands of workplaces

WHO WE ARE. WHAT WE DO.

IEU members are teachers, principals, school support staff, early childhood education teachers and assistants, ELICOS staff and RTO providers.

Our members work in:

- Faith-based schools
- Independent colleges
- Indigenous community schools
- ELICOS colleges
- Early childhood education (ECE)
- Flexible learning centres
- Private RTOs

THE ASK

- Education funding based on need: Funding certainty for non-government schools and 100% SRS for public schools.
- Legislate an entitlement to paid reproductive health leave for all workers.
- Reduce teacher workload through government action on excessive compliance and apply workload impact tests on new policies.
- Restrict discrimination exemptions for faith-based employers in line with community standards.
- Restore a fair process for members trying to take industrial action and stop employers denying work and pay for minor work bans.

www.ieu.org.au

Professional Engagement Key Priorities 2026

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CLARIFYING COMPLIANCE FOR THE NCCD

Engagement with federal authorities regarding the proposed updates to the *NCCD Evidence Requirements Fact Sheet*, provision of exemplars, transparency of funding, and potential review of the QDTP category.

EARLY YEARS STRATEGY & ACECQA: WORKLOAD IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The IEU will continue to advocate for urgent relief from the burden of compliance tasks, particularly those related to the Assessment and Ratings process, Transition to School Statements, and the implementation of national child safety initiatives.

REVIEW OF THE TEACHING STANDARDS

The IEU will seek representation in stakeholder engagement forums established to inform the review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and will facilitate direct engagement between AITSL and IEU members.

THE AUSTRALIAN TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMISSION (TLC)

The IEU will continue to represent member concerns during stakeholder working group meetings in 2026, with particular emphasis on the TLC's role in eliminating duplicative and excessive documentation requirements, regardless of their origin.

AI IN EDUCATION

Beyond the legal, ethical and educational issues, the IEU is working with authorities and employers to reduce workload pressures, improve safety protocols, and put in place procedures for inevitable system failures as students interact with AI.

THE IEU QUALITY EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

Work will continue on the finalisation of this resource, including development of a preamble.

Independent Education Union of Australia

Women and Equity Key Priorities 2026

CLARIFYING COMPLIANCE
Women are disproportionately impacted by workload intensification in the education workforce. Achieving improvements to compliance is a women's issue and will continue to be a focus of the Federal Women and Equity Committee.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES TO REINVIGORATE BRANCH WOMEN & EQUITY COMMITTEES with a focus on increasing women's participation and supporting clear pathways into union leadership.

FOCUS ON RECRUITMENT
Development of strategies to increase member engagement as the basis of ongoing recruitment.

ENGAGEMENT WITH COPE particularly by supporting the new Women's Network Co-ordinator. A review of the activities of the Alisi Fusi Wightman Scholarship events in Australia will be conducted, incorporating any feedback from previous participants.

PARTICIPATION IN THE ACTU REPRODUCTIVE, MENSTRUATION AND MENOPAUSE LEAVE & WORKING ENTITLEMENTS WORKING GROUP
Ongoing engagement with the promotion of the ACTU model clause on reproductive health and wellbeing entitlements in IEU enterprise agreements.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ACTU "It's for Every Body" Campaign to advance reproductive health leave entitlements as part of the National Employment Standards.

CONSIDERATION OF WGEA and ACTU DATA to evaluate potential focus areas for the Women and Equity Committee during 2026 and beyond.

IEU Priorities 2026
Organising & Campaigning

Next phase of IR reforms
Pursue next phase of key workplace reforms for IEU members: simplified protected action, end employer lockouts, close SIA loopholes and universal access to reproductive health leave

Deep dive into workforce data
Continue our annual analysis of sector and school workforce trends to support Branch campaigns, bargaining & recruitment targets

Update anti-discrimination laws
Sweeping and unnecessary exemptions that allow religious schools to discriminate must be narrowed. Every IEU member & every student deserves basic discrimination protections

Bargaining for growth: a how to guide
Assessment of growth opportunities under multi-employer streams. What's worked? Where else can it work? Collate case studies from within the IEU & broader movement

Embed delegates' rights
Identify the strongest uses of delegates' rights beyond just member training - how are Branches applying the rights in bargaining, campaigning & growth

Member retention strategies
Following on from previous research & recruitment plans, continue to build a playbook on retention strategies and further analysis of member data to reduce churn

Training and PD opportunities
Program of PD to share best practice activities across Branches, national online sessions & the 2026 National Conference

IEUA INDUSTRIAL AND LEGAL PRIORITIES 2026

Branch Support

- Provide advice & support to branches, including interpreting and advancing IR reforms through the ILC.
- Organise delivery of PD and other similar mechanisms to keep Industrial staff up to date on law & best practices.
- Update and share national IEU resources - teacher & support staff salary comparisons, innovative bargaining provisions and case research.

Modern Award Review

The gender undervaluation review of support staff classifications and post secondary training staff.

Safe Workplaces for Workers

Promote safe working environment for members that minimises risks of harm to physical and psychological wellbeing e.g. violence from students, high needs students, excessive workloads

Union Rules & Governance

Activities to ensure contemporary rules and governance standards will continue. Immediate focus will be on updating eligibility rules.

Anti-Discrimination Exemptions

Ongoing advocacy on the removal of outdated exemptions for faith-based schools. Combined federal & state solutions are needed.

Securing Next IR Wins

- Industrial support, case studies & research to advance key IR reforms for our members - simpler protected action, ending employer lockouts, fixing SIA bargaining.
- Gender reforms: universal access to reproductive health leave; flexible work arrangements; non-gendered clauses.
- Strategic litigation.

The IEU has a leading role within the broader union movement in setting precedents, providing cases, research and support for reforms. This will continue in 2026 within the ACTU, the ILC and with our colleague unions.

IEUA 2026

HEAVY BARGAINING LOAD DELIVERS GAINS & CHALLENGES

Multi-employer bargaining

Multi-employer bargaining remains a vital tool in an education sector comprising thousands of employers. New multi-employer agreements have been struck by the IEU in the Queensland ECEC sector, providing a much more efficient bargaining model for multiple small workplaces.

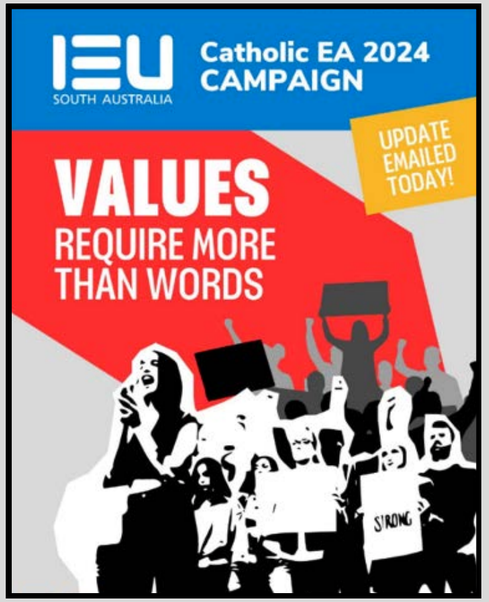
While many employers now see the benefit in multi-employer negotiations, some continue to frustrate the process and deny employees full bargaining rights. Workplace laws still hand employers excessive control over bargaining and limit lawful industrial action. Thousands of IEU members in Victoria and NSW are denied the right to strike. This remains a major flaw in Australia's workplace relations framework. The IEU continues to campaign for reforms that restore full bargaining rights to all members.

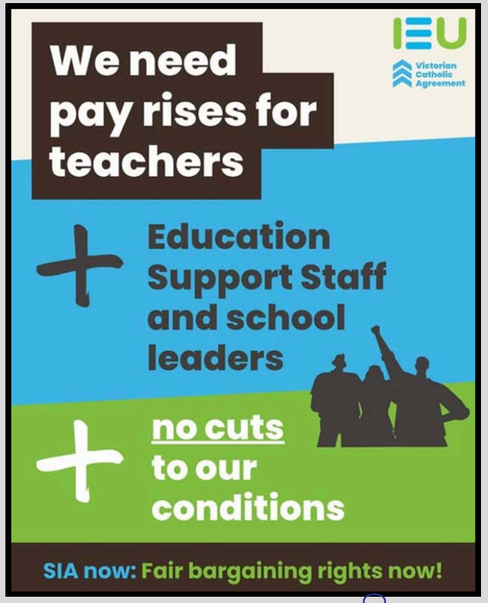
Supported bargaining stream extends to new sectors

Current NSW preschool negotiations represent an important extension of the supported bargaining stream, building on earlier success in long day care. The *Start Strong, Pay Fair* campaign is calling for government supported pay rates that properly recognise the value of preschool staff, who continue to earn significantly less than their counterparts in schools.

Remaining employer lockout loophole must be closed

In addition to reforms to single-interest bargaining (see above), action is needed to address the practice of employers withholding work and a full day's pay from members taking minor work bans. This disproportionate employer response is being used across numerous industries, including Queensland Catholic schools. These quasi-lockouts have no place in any sector, particularly when deployed by faith-based school employers.





RESPONDING TO THE RAPID RISE OF AI IN EDUCATION

The pace of AI uptake in education has accelerated over the past year as an increasing number of EdTech providers view schools as a lucrative business opportunity. This has coincided with the adoption of AI by teachers and students, both with and without school or system approval.

While AI offers benefits in streamlining some administrative duties and non-core teaching tasks, there have also been cases where teacher workload has initially increased as new assessment models are developed to maintain academic integrity in an environment where students are using AI.

Combined with the circulation of AI explicit material and inadequate employer consultation on mandatory AI programs, the picture is far from entirely positive.

Our national union has engaged extensively on AI through policy forums, government inquiries and professional dialogue, including:

- Joint Union Parliamentary Hearing – AI Impacts on Australian Workers
- Microsoft and ACTU Affiliates Agreement and Worker Summit
- Is AI Working for Workers? AI Employment and Workplaces Forum
- National AI Safety Institute Union Briefings
- Productivity Commission Recommendation: Access to EdTech and AI
- Consultation Forum Minister for Technology and Digital Economy
- Jobs and Skills Australia: Developing an AI-Capable Workforce
- Digital Duty of Care: Gendered Violence and Online Safety Forum with the Minister for Communications

Regardless of the nature of the engagement, our union has argued that AI in education must be founded on meaningful consultation with members and their union, transparent employer policies and procedures, online safety protections for female staff and girls and guarantees that any efficiency gains through AI do not come at the expense of job security or staffing levels.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND ACTION

APHEDA Union Aid Abroad

The IEU is a proud member of APHEDA and encourages members to join in building workers' rights around the world. The IEU provides annual support as a UnionLink Partner of Timor Leste Farm Workers Union. Additional support was provided to women's groups and worker unions in Myanmar in 2025 and 2026.

Education International (EI) and International Union Partners

The IEU maintains membership of EI, the global voice of education workers comprising 380 unions and 30 million members. EI activities has included work on AI in education, global trade union and human rights, and implementation of the UN Teaching Profession Report. In October 2026, the IEU will attend the EI Asia-Pacific (EIAP) Conference, which is held every four years to develop policies on education and workers' rights, as well as elect the EIAP Executive.

Council of Pacific Education (COPE)

COPE provides advice and support on professional, industrial and human rights issues impacting the nineteen member unions. COPE Executive met in Samoa in June 2026, with Assistant Federal Secretary Veronica Yewdall attending in her capacity as Assistant to the COPE Women's Network Coordinator.

Executive also participated in *Go Public! Fund Education* sessions, where PNG, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Island unions reported on the Australian Government funded project delivered by APHEDA and EI. All participating unions had increased membership and aim to increase representation by women and young workers in leadership and delegate structures.

COPE Executive focused on governance, strategic planning and organisational development. Key outcomes included the creation of a finance committee, updated staff contracts and role descriptions, Country and Women's Reports, and a strategic plan to implement the 2025 COPE Triennial resolutions. The next Executive Meeting will be held in the Solomon Islands in June 2027.

FEDERAL OFFICE RESEARCH, ADVOCACY AND POLICY SUPPORT

Professional Engagement, reviews and submissions

Our union maintains membership of a wide range of government reference groups, steering committees and engagement forums:

- Commonwealth Ministerial Group for the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan
- Ministerial Committee: Commonwealth School Reform Agreement
- Shaping Our Future - ACECQA Stakeholder Reference Group
- Early Childhood Education and Care Child Safety Reference Group
- Department of Education consultations on the NCCD
- Thrive by Five National ECEC Forum
- IEU Stakeholder Consultation - Department of Education and Deputy Secretary for Schools
- Enabling Teacher Professional Agency Research Project Partner
- Schools as Safe School Workplaces Research Project Partner
- HumanAbility Industry Advisory Committee for ECE
- HumanAbility - Union Governance Panel
- Antisemitism Education Taskforce – Stakeholder Reference Group
- Australian Teaching and Learning Commission Working Group
- Department of Education Anti-Bullying Feedback Committee
- AITSL Australian Professional Standards Review Reference Group
- AITSL Future Teachers Future Leaders Group

All IEU submissions are at https://www.ieu.org.au/policy-submission:

- Productivity Commission: Skilled and Adaptable Workforce 2025
- Independent Review of Remote HELP Reduction Program 2025
- Inquiry into Child Safety and Quality of Care in ECEC 2025
- Inquiry into the Thriving Kids Initiative 2025
- Inquiry into the operation and adequacy of the NES 2026
- Parliamentary Education Committee: Inquiry into the factors driving educational attainment
- Is AI Working for Workers: AI Employment and Workplaces Forum

School staffing, enrolments and union membership

ABS data, ATWD and National School Statistics Collection have been the principle sources of data for mapping school staffing and membership trends at national and state levels. Research reports have been prepared and delivered to IEU Branches and Federal Executive.

Research projects: data analysis & NPS member survey

Two major research projects have been undertaken to support and inform Branch operations, bargaining, new member recruitment and campaign activities.

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) member survey and analysis have been completed nationwide. In addition, a new member data project is currently being undertaken in conjunction with ACTU Insights to identify membership trends and demographic factors to consider for union growth, member engagement and delegate development.

Industrial relations advice and support

The Federal Office has developed central resources for Branches on national teacher salaries, workload and agreement provisions to support bargaining. Briefings and advice have been provided on a range of legal and industrial matters including union rules, coverage disputes, Award reviews, multi-employer bargaining, anti-discrimination, delegates' rights, protected action and flexible work.

Updating Union Rules

A considerable amount of work has commenced to update the Federal IEU Rules, both in relation to administrative matters (such as union election procedures) and the more substantive issue of union coverage and eligibility. The membership eligibility rules, in particular, will require extensive drafting, research, collation of membership evidence, and liaison with other affected unions.

ANOTHER YEAR OF INSPIRING UNION ACTIVISM

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UNION GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

2026 IEU election and new Federal Executive

Federal IEU elections were held in 2026. Congratulations to our national IEU leaders elected for for the new term of 2026-2029:

- Federal President: Carol Matthews
- Federal Secretary: Brad Hayes
- Assistant Federal Secretary: Veronica Yewdall
- Assistant Federal Secretary: Amanda Hioe
- Deputy President: Terry Burke
- Vice President: Rebecca Collopy
- Vice President: Dave Brear
- Executive Member: Tim Oosterbaan
- Executive Member: Dave Towson

A special welcome to Amanda Hioe, who joins our national union after exemplary service with the NSW/ACT Branch, where she held a range of industrial and leadership positions.

ACTU Executive and Affiliate Committees

Brad and Veronica continue to serve on the ACTU Executive, as well as other ACTU committees, including the National Campaign Committee, Women's Committee and AI Reference Group. Amanda represents the IEU on the ACTU Industrial and Legislation Committee, which coordinates national submissions, research and political engagement on industrial relations reforms, major disputes and FWC matters.

The Federal Office thanks the many other Branch officials who represent our union on a range of national union bodies dealing with matters such as climate change, First Nations workers, international solidarity, young workers, and work health and safety.