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Integrated branch endorsed by Federal Council

The next steps in the process of integrating the IEUA-NT and IEUA-Q branches continue to occur expeditiously following recent official endorsement of the integration by the IEUA Federal Council.

The integration was endorsed by the IEUA Federal Council at its recent meeting in Darwin and came after the IEUA-NT Branch Executive put forward a resolution calling for the integration of the two branches given the 93 per cent "yes" vote at the IEUA-NT plebiscite earlier in the year.

Endorsement by IEUA Federal Council was needed as it has the responsibility under the IEUA Rules to determine Branch structures within the national union.

As a result of this endorsement, an application to the Federal Registry has been made seeking permission to make changes to the Rules of each Branch and subsequently combine them into one set of Rules.

The draft Rules ensure the identity of Northern Territory members is maintained within it, with the establishment of a Northern Territory Division Advisory Committee.

As these changes affect the IEUA-Q rules, IEUA-Q Council has also given consideration to the new rules at its recent meeting in Brisbane.

In turn, IEUA-Q has sought further application to the Federal Registry for the official amendment of its rules to enable formal integration of the IEUA-NT and IEUA-Q Branches.

Once formal certification of the Rules for the integrated Branch occurs, the election of members to the various bodies within the integrated Branch will take place.

This will include the election of members to the Northern Territory Division Advisory Committee.

Made up of a total of nine (9) persons, the Committee will be comprised of the five (5) persons from the Branch Executive including the Senior Vice-President (Northern Territory Division).



Members of IEUA Federal Council which recently endorsed the integration of the IEUA-NT and IEUA-Q Branches

The Committee will ensure members' professional and industrial issues are represented to the integrated Branch Executive to enable the undertaking of appropriate action and resolution of matters when and where necessary.

Further information will be sent to IEUA-NT members regarding the election of office bearers once formal certification of the integrated Branch has occurred.

With the additional resources and support received as part of the integrated Branch, IEUA-NT members will continue to build a stronger union in order to protect our working rights and conditions and ensure the quality of education for future generations.

Performance Based Pay:

The federal government's plan for education

The federal government has confirmed its intention to link federal funding to the introduction of performance based pay for teachers from 2009.

Education Minister Julie Bishop has announced that the federal government would use outside consultants to investigate performance based pay structures, including mechanisms used to "assess" and "reward" teachers.

Minister Bishop also outlined a series of pilot programs to trial different performance based pay structures in schools in each State and Territory during 2008.

Yet despite its plans for the education sector, the federal government will not pay for the full implementation of such a system, giving only 50 per cent of the administration costs of implementing the pilot program.

The federal government will also not provide additional dollars for the incentive payments teachers would access if deemed to be "performing".

While the details of such a structure are yet to be outlined, previous comments by Minister Bishop indicate that the government favours a model which includes using student outcomes (based on exam results), uptake of additional responsibilities and reviews by colleagues, principals, students and parents as mechanisms to "assess" and "reward" teachers.

However, the model foreshadowed by the federal government thus far has been proven to fail in other countries – destroying the collegial nature of schools where teachers work together to ensure the best quality educational outcomes for students.

Formal research and anecdotal reports point to the ineffectiveness of such arrangements given the myriad of factors, including the particular character of student cohorts and available resource levels, which contribute to students' learning.

International research has also revealed that "rewarding" a quota of teachers (as has also been foreshadowed by the federal government) undermines the collaborative approach which characterises their work.

Teachers find themselves competing with colleagues, which in turn can lead to an unproductive work environment and adversarial relationships amongst staff.

These mechanistic approaches are characterised by a "carrot and stick" view of the world which pays little regard and negligible respect to teachers as skilled practitioners committed to enhancing their skills and promoting quality education.

The decision by Minister Bishop to implement such a flawed performance based pay structure, which has been consistently and unanimously rejected by State governments, only serves to show the federal government's lack of commitment to providing quality education.

In fact, the federal government's policy has not been developed in collaboration with the teaching profession, has no sense of a cooperative approach with employing authorities, and totally disregards the work of education professionals and the standard of education in schools.

Northern Territory members will soon receive further information regarding the federal government's plan and what educational professionals can do to ensure a more just and fair structure for recognising accomplished teachers is achieved.

Members wanting to find out more about the federal government's plans for performance based pay should email enquires@qieu.asn.au or call 1800 351 996 to speak with one of your union organisers.

Make the change to direct debit and protect your membership

Under the federal government's industrial relations legislation your right to use payroll deduction to pay your union membership fees is no longer guaranteed.

To ensure your membership is protected there are a number of options available to members choosing to make the switch from payroll deduction including direct debit – an easy way to manage your payments while saving money at the same time.

Direct debiting your union contributions from your bank account in either fortnightly or monthly instalments (which can be scheduled for the Friday of your pay week) works in the same straightforward way as if the deduction was made by your employer from your pay.

Direct debit is also a cheaper way to pay your membership. Members using this payment option typically make a saving of 5 per cent on their union membership fees.

Payment of your union contributions can also be arranged in credit card instalments (either monthly, quarterly or half yearly) so it is still a manageable deduction on a regular basis; however, there is no reduced membership rate for this payment option.

If you want to protect your membership and make the switch to direct debit or credit card payment, please contact our membership department by calling 1800 351 996 or email members@qieu.asn.au to discuss the best option for you.

Connecting regional and remote members

Education workers in regional and remote schools have identified the need for a stronger member communication network to discuss and address issues specific to those working in these areas.

Members working in areas such as Wadeye, Bathurst Island, Daly River, Ltyente Apurta and Yulara recognise the impact of the isolated nature of these communities and the limited information exchange with colleagues in major centres.

Members in these schools recognise the need for a strong union in their workplaces in order to ensure that these and other professional and industrial issues can be properly addressed.

As such, members have expressed interest in creating a "Remote Area Network" which would connect members via teleconference to discuss the issues facing remote and regional education workers.

Catherine Blackmore from St Francis Xavier School, Daly River is one member looking forward to being part of such a network.

"With members in remote and regional schools so separated by distance, having this kind of network in place would provide us with a good opportunity to discuss and have a greater voice regarding the similar issues we face," Catherine says.

"It will allow remote and regional members the chance to network with others and to get to know what is happening within the sector," she says.

To find out more about the "Remote Area Network", or to register your interest, please contact Nick Holliday on 1800 351 996 or email nholliday@qieu.asn.au for more details.



Members (including those from St Francis Xavier School, Daly River pictured above) look forward to a new opportunity to keep in touch with fellow remote and regional workers through the "Remote Area Network"

DUTY OF CARE

Given the increasingly litigious society in which we live and work, knowing your rights and responsibilities as an education professional is essential in order to avoid issues relating to duty of care and negligence.

The law regards the student-teacher relationship as one that attracts a special standard of care.

While there is no clear cut definition of what this standard of care is, courts look at two elements when deciding cases where an injury has occurred:

1. Whether the injury was reasonably foreseeable; and
2. Whether or not the person accountable carried out their duties in a sufficiently responsible manner.

The law does not require that we predict and prevent any accident from occurring, rather it requires a level of care to be exercised commensurate with what a "reasonable person" would discharge.

It should be noted that the level of care expected from an education professional with years of training and wide experience in managing student behaviour may be greater than that expected from another adult.

Common duty of care issues arising in schools include care of students on excursions and school camps, during school sporting activities, playground duty and administration of medication.

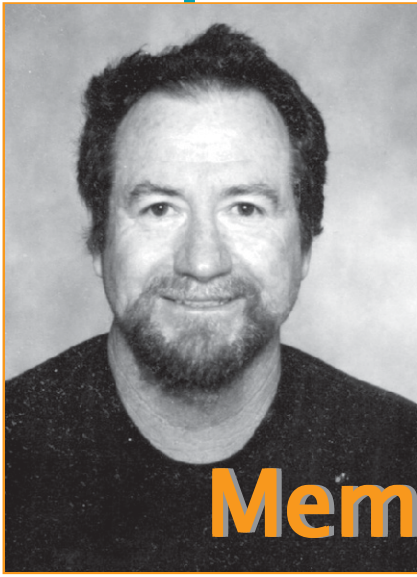
It is important that when students participate in activities where a risk is present, teachers warn of possible dangers, give and repeat instructions and ensure that instructions are complied with through careful supervision.

Following this advice in addition to any other instruction from your employer regarding student safety will minimise the risk of litigation.

However, should an injury occur it is important to seek advice from your union before supplying any statement if the assignment of liability for the injury is a possibility.

Please note that this summary article is not intended as a comprehensive guide.

If you and your colleagues are interested in learning more about duty of care issues, please email enquires@qieu.asn.au or call 1800 351 996 to discuss scheduling an information session at your school.



Member Profile

Name: Sam Typuszak

School: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Alice Springs

Position: Teacher

IEU-NT Member: 21 years

What is your role at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College and how have you found the experience of teaching in the Northern Territory?

I am a part-time physical education (PE) teacher at the College and started teaching there in 1986 after moving to Alice Springs from South Australia. Initially I was employed as a transition to Year Six PE teacher then over the years, with various changes, I've just decided to go part-time. Alice Springs is a bit of a melting pot of people – you've got teachers, staff members and parents that come from all over Australia with their different ideas and expectations so it's a very interesting place to teach and I have enjoyed the experience very much.

How long have you been a member of the IEUA and what led you to become a member of your union?

I joined the IEUA when I started at the College in 1986. Previously I had been a member of the state school education union in South Australia, so when I moved up here I joined the IEUA straightaway. Being part of my union is something I've always believed in. I am fully aware of the people before me who have fought very hard to win the rights and conditions we have today and I know that through being part of my union I am contributing to ensuring such achievements continue. Knowing that you have the support of your fellow union members if you do need help is also reassuring.

What are the positive benefits or changes that you have seen as a result of members being part of their union and working together?

Coming together in your union gives employees a strong voice on issues affecting education workers and the education sector generally. At my school I have seen a definite improvement with regard to the issue of class sizes. It has gone from being at around the 1:30–32 mark down to a more

manageable level of around 1:25–28. Wage enhancements and increased release time have also been achieved. Being part of the IEUA means being part of a collective where we're all trying to get the best for everybody.

What do you think the federal government changes to industrial relations laws have meant for workers?

They're taking away far too many rights that workers should have and shifting the balance too much toward employers. John Howard may be able to say he's got everyone working but they are most likely to be a working poor rather than people working to get a liveable wage which in turn gives you few choices to make in your life. It is putting in jeopardy our way of life and the standard of living that we have.

Australia has typically been the place of the "fair go" and in the past people have generally respected that anyone could put forward a suggestion in the workplace and it would be regarded and that you had a right to be involved in what goes on. Now we are getting into the situation where instead you get told what to do and are not able to say anything. On top of this we are also seeing a lot of educational agendas being tied up with federal government funding.

What are your feelings then, regarding the federal government's plan to tie performance based pay for teachers to school funding from 2009?

Again this is another area where they are looking to force teachers into something the government deems to be necessary without really taking into account the wisdom and the knowledge that comes from people who are either academics in the area of education or from the teachers on the ground who know what the experience of teaching is really like. The teaching industry and workplaces in general should be based on cooperation and working collectively, not competing with your colleague next door.

Finally what is your advice to non-government education workers in the Territory who are yet to become members of their union?

They really need to be aware of the issues affecting education and the resulting ramifications for what happens to us in our workplaces. Being part of your union enables you to be more informed and have a say on those things.

"The Northern Voice"

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